



FORESTRY

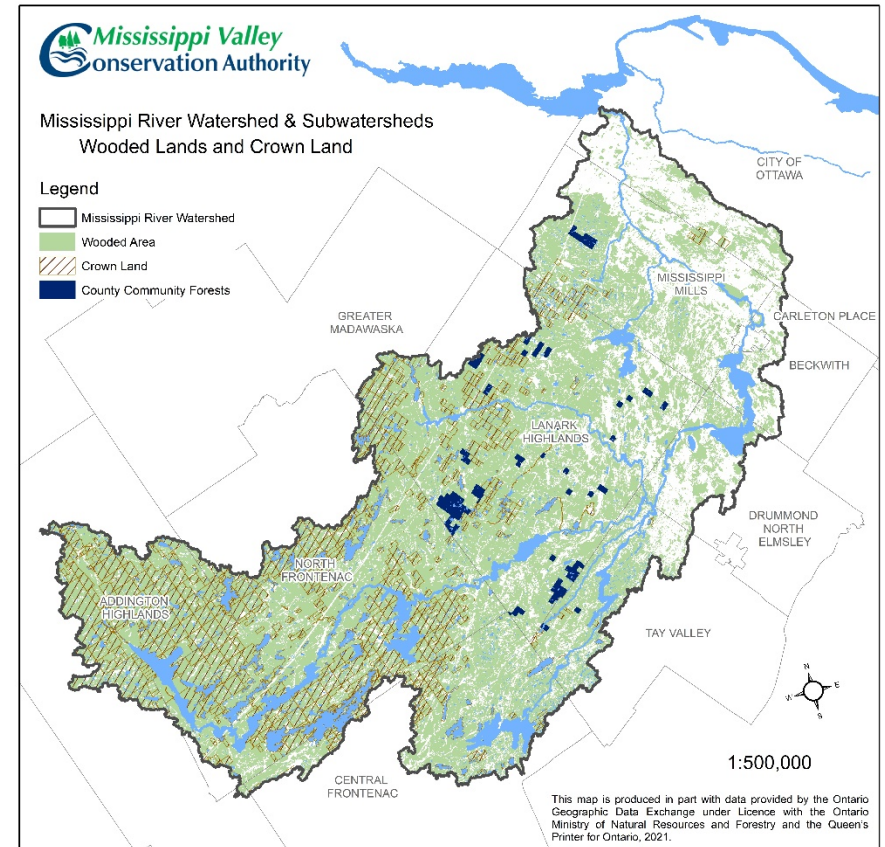
Mississippi River Watershed Plan Discussion Paper Series

FORESTRY IN THE MISSISSIPPI WATERSHED

The Mississippi River watershed is rich in forest and woodlands. As well as providing economic, recreational and social benefits, forested lands play a vital role in sustaining the health of the river by lessening flooding and erosion and protecting water quality by filtering runoff.

KEY FACTS:

- The watershed is two thirds forested. Most of the forest cover is in the west with much less in the east, where the woodlots are generally unconnected fragmented patches.
- 70% of the forest is on private land, 28% on crown land, and 2% on municipal/county lands and land trust managed properties.
- With reduced demand for pulp wood and consumer shift to non-local (big box) timber products, local markets focus on specialty products such as firewood, cedar posts, red pine for hydro poles and pressure treated products. With the depleted market, local timber harvest (crown and private land) fall well below the allowable sustainable limits.
- Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNR) manages **crown land** timber harvest. The crown forests are licensed to a private company, Mazinaw-Lanark Forest Inc. (MLFI) as an FSC certified forest. A Forest Management Plan sets harvest limits and reforestation requirements, and operations are audited regularly.
- Lanark County **'Community Forests'** are used for timber harvest, recreation, education, research, and natural and cultural heritage. These are FSC Certified Forests under the Eastern Ontario Model Forest group certificate and harvests are currently managed by Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) under contract with the County.



- In **private woodlots**, forestry is generally not regulated. Tree harvest is permitted without license unless the stand is deemed significant under other legislation (ex. significant wetland, or subject to a municipal tree cutting by-law). Landowners are encouraged to have a prescription written by a forestry professional and marked by certified markers.

FORESTRY - CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

In terms of watershed management, **climate change** is the most significant challenge facing forestry. Woodlands are vulnerable to the stresses of extreme weather events, droughts, forest fire risk, and changes to species composition. The local Maple Syrup industry has experienced extreme climate impacts first hand. Lanark County is one of the leading producers of maple syrup and the Ice Storm of 1998 had devastating and long lasting impacts for local producers.

Pests, diseases and invasive species, such as the Emerald Ash Borer, are also of significant concern.

While vulnerable, woodlands also provide resiliency to climate impacts. They absorb greenhouse gases, mitigate flooding and erosion by slowing the spring snowmelt and intercepting storm runoff. They also ease drought conditions by providing shade and holding moisture in the soil.

The watershed has a healthy supply of forest but there is a marked **geographic disparity**, from an abundance of forest in the western watershed to much less in the eastern watershed. Here, the wooded areas are mostly isolated smaller patches, lacking vegetated corridors to connect them. This **'fragmentation'** greatly impacts ecosystems by limiting the movement of wildlife between habitats. The woodlands in the lower watershed are mostly privately owned.

With a shared interest in maintaining healthy forests, there are ongoing opportunities for MVCA and the forestry sector to collaborate in furthering stewardship of forest resources, including: woodlot management, reforestation, invasive species monitoring and prevention, education and outreach, etc.

Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) has an FSC Certified Forest License. Lanark Community Forest and many local landowners fall under this group certificate which has standards which must be followed. Operations under this license are regularly audited by a third party under internationally recognized standards.

Regional Forest Health Network (under EOMF) focusses on Forest Health issues such as invasive species. It gathers and disseminates information, coordinates training of practitioners, and the development and delivery of communications and outreach products and activities directed at woodlot owners and urban and rural residents.

Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) assists property owners in managing their woodlots and their objectives (4 Ha min). The provincial program provides reduced property tax to landowners who commit to following a managed forest plan.

Tree planting programs such as the RVCA program and the 50 Million Tree Program, fund large-scale tree planting for private landowners. MVCA is a partner in the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) program.

Invasive species programs including the Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program and EDDMaps (Early Detection & Distribution Mapping Systems) monitor and document invasive species to support prevention and management initiatives.

The **Mazinaw-Lanark Sustainable Forest License** presents opportunity to work closely with their experienced staff and to protect sensitive areas

The **Lanark County Community Forests** provide opportunity for education and awareness.

PARTNERS IN FORESTRY

Many organizations have an interest in forestry. In addition to engaging area municipalities, provincial agencies, and neighboring Conservation Authorities, the MVCA has been working with a Watershed Public Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of representatives from key communities in the watershed including: agriculture, development, forestry, hydro producers, lake associations, tourism and the general public. Other potential partners include the following:

- Counties within the Watershed
- Canadian Institute of Forestry
- Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF)
- Mazinaw-Lanark Sustainable Forest License
- Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFR)
- Ontario Professional Foresters Association
- Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA)
- Regional Forest Health Network (under EOMF).
- Lanark County Stewardship Council
- Lanark Maple Syrup Producers
- Forests Ontario
- Watersheds Canada

35 DRAFT ACTIONS

MVCA has identified 35 potential actions designed to address the goals and objectives identified through the watershed planning process. A much longer list was reviewed and culled in consultation with the Watershed PAC. The following actions are relevant to forestry. To see all 35 draft actions visit: <https://mvc.on.ca/watershedplan>

Action 1. Extend the role of the MVCA Public Advisory Committee (PAC) for implementation and update of the Watershed Plan. (committee is made up of agriculture, development, forestry, hydro power, lakes, tourism)

Action 12. Work with municipalities, landowners and other partners to quantify, value and protect wetlands as hydrologic and natural assets.

Action 23. Review existing environmental monitoring programs and identify opportunities for improvement. *This may include:*

- *Determine if current monitoring is sufficient in supporting climate modelling and vulnerability assessments and adjust where needed.*
- *Improve forest and wetland cover monitoring and reporting through more frequent updates to mapping and ensure reporting systems include clear environmental targets.*
- *Improve monitoring, analysis and reporting of changes/trends in land use including both natural features (wetland and forest cover)*
- *Improve monitoring of growth and development features (lots/subdivisions, drainage infrastructure, etc.*
- *Work with industry partners to research and document changes on the landscape.*

Action 24. Continue annual analysis and reporting of water quality conditions presented at a subwatershed scale and adjust reporting cycles, parameters, and geographic coverage where needed.

Action 25. Set measurable environmental targets. *This may include:*

- *Work with municipalities to achieve zero loss in wetland area and function.*
- *Through MVCA plan review/advisory services, continue to support municipalities in protecting natural heritage features and systems, and promote municipal policy to include Environment Canada 2013 targets for wetland and forest cover.*
- *Align monitoring and reporting to track progress against environmental targets.*

Action 29. Value the ecosystem services and climate resiliency provided by natural asset features and functions (wetlands, woodlands, etc.).

Action 30. Work with municipalities and public agencies to improve the application and coordination of regulatory tools for the protection of wetlands, riparian areas, woodlands and natural systems.

Action 31. Support counties and municipalities in fulfilling Provincial Policy Statement (PPS 2020) requirements for Natural Heritage Systems.

Action 32. Develop and implement a 3 Year MVCA Stewardship Program Pilot for protection of where needed for water quality, wetland and forest cover, and other environmental features. *This may include:*

- *Work with Stewardship Council(s) to review current stewardship programming, needs, overlap and gaps.*

- *Promote participation in existing stewardship initiatives by other groups.*
- *Collaborate with municipalities in expanding implementation of a Rural Clean Water Program to include watershed areas outside of Ottawa.*
- *Find and work with champions in the agriculture community to supporting farmers in implementing stewardship best practices.*
- *Collaborate with ALUS and other partners to support implementation ALUS or similar program within the watershed.*
- *Promote participation in land conservation incentive programs such as the Rideau Valley Cons. Auth.(RVCA) Tree planting Program, Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP), the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) and the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program.*
- *Work with the province, agricultural community, and other owners of large land holdings, to protect and enhance wetlands, woodlands, and natural corridors through land retirement and restoration programs and incentives.*

Action 33. Work with the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry to identify crown holdings and develop strategies to ensure the protection of crown natural assets.

Action 34. Develop a Land Conservation Strategy to mitigate flood, erosion and other natural hazards, and to support the ecological services provided by natural systems. *This may include:*

- *Continue partnership with Lanark County in the sustainable management of the Community Forests.*
- *Support the promotion of land trusts as a means of protecting natural features and systems.*

- *Pursue acquisition of natural features and systems, and suitable corridor holdings, either by MVCA, land trusts, municipalities, or other appropriate bodies.*

Action 35. Develop and implement an MVCA Education Strategy. *This may include:*

- *Facilitate information sharing opportunities to advance collective understanding of impacts and opportunities for adaptation.*
- *Consult with specific communities (agriculture, development industry, indigenous community, lake communities, etc.) to determine tailored strategies for effective communication and messaging.*
- *Develop and implement innovative approaches to communicating the fundamentals of Mississippi River water*

management for a broad audience. (a possible example - computerized graphic representations of the impact of different water level/flow and weather scenarios - a potential academic project (thesis) for computer modelling student).

- *Use the inventory of watershed natural assets and the services they provide to create an interactive online Atlas of the Watershed; To help build the Atlas, conduct surveys of the watershed communities and sectors to determine the natural assets and services they value and why.*
- *Investigate opportunities to create Stewardship/Best Management Demonstration Projects at MVCA properties (Administration Centre and Conservation Areas) or other public properties (municipal lands).*