

Check out our Discussion Papers on:

[Agriculture](#), [Growth & Development](#), [Forestry](#), [Municipal Infrastructure](#), [Natural Systems](#),
[Tourism](#), [Water Management](#), and [Waterfront Properties](#)

MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERSHED

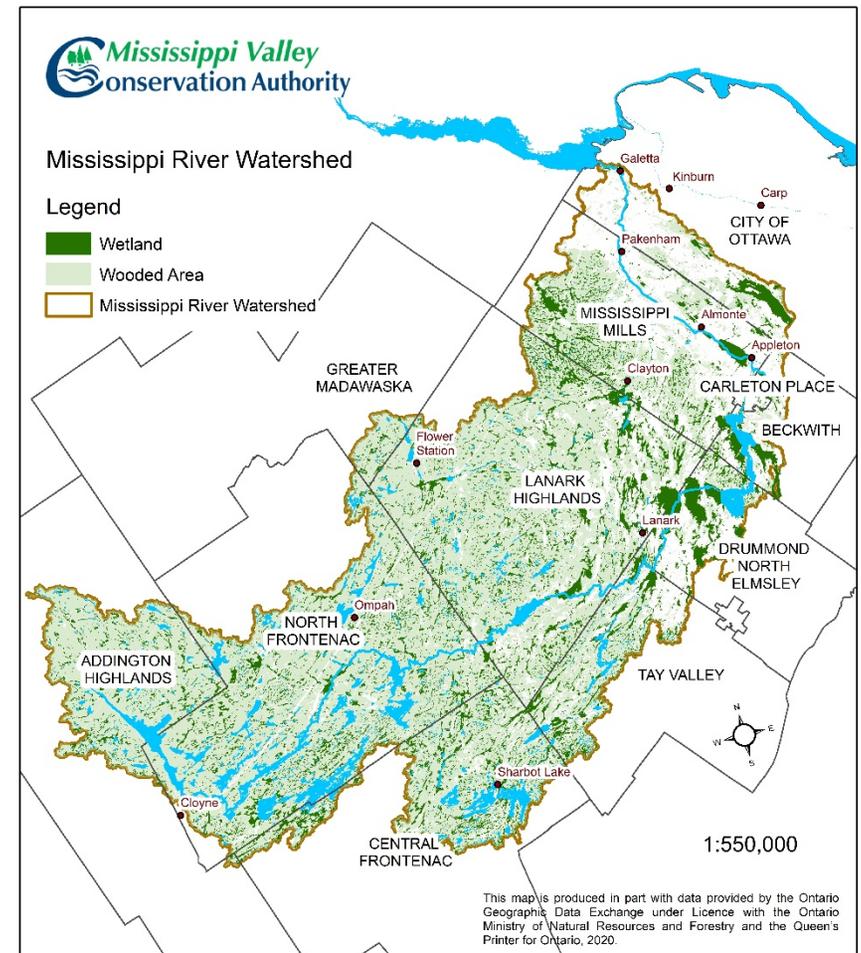
The Mississippi River watershed is 3,765 km² and encompasses eleven municipalities serving the needs of over 42,000 people. The river drops 430 m over 212 km and has roaring rapids in springtime. The health of the river and watershed are vital to the wellbeing of residents and the natural environment. It provides drinking water, habitat for humans, fish and wildlife, supports recreation and tourism, provides water for agriculture, and hydroelectric power.

WATERSHED PLANNING

Human activity places direct and indirect stressors on ecosystem functions and natural values. Watershed planning provides an opportunity for people to discuss their use of the river and the watershed, the impacts of use, and to agree on priorities for watershed management in the future. A watershed plan identifies the challenges and sets goals, objectives, and actions for the protection of water resources, and the management of human activities and resources in the watershed. Because watersheds boundaries are based on elevations not political boundaries, planning and action are the responsibility of many players.

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

MVCA is a watershed-based organization responsible for flood and erosion control, flood forecasting and warning, and providing expertise on and regulating land use planning matters related to flood and other hazards. MVCA also monitors and reports on water quality and delivers various programs aimed at protecting the health of the watershed. As such it is well positioned to facilitate watershed-level discussions and to help coordinate actions amongst the many players involved in water protection and management.



PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

In Fall 2019, a Watershed Plan PAC was formed comprising 10 representatives from several sectors including agriculture, land development, forestry, hydro power, lake associations, tourism as well as the general public. The Committee has met several times over the past 18 months, and is chaired by a member of the MVCA Board of Directors. Committee members have played a critical role in helping MVCA to identify and explore issues and to assess possible actions. The Discussion Papers series reflects the significant time and investment of Committee members.

WATERSHED STRESSORS

Four background reports were released in 2020 that document the current state of the watershed:

1. [Physical Environment](#)
2. [People and Property](#)
3. [Natural Systems](#)
4. [Asset Management](#)

The Backgrounders identify key facts and issues including the following.



6 large flood in past 21 years



4 droughts in past 7 years



aging infrastructure



harmful algae blooms in recent years



high growth rates



invasive species on the rise

PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Since completing the Backgrounders, MVCA has worked closely with PAC members and MVCA's Policy and Priorities Committee to identify priority areas for action. The following themes emerged from those meetings and are reflected in the actions presented in the Discussion Paper Series.

- MVCA must collaborate and coordinate its work with municipalities, residents, the business sector, and community organizations to achieve mutually beneficial results in the management of water and watershed features and functions.
- Robust water management and municipal infrastructure are needed that are designed to respond to climate change impacts, and operated in a coordinated manner under extreme conditions.
- Climate change adaptation requires acknowledging and protecting the water storage and flood mitigation and drought attenuation functions provided by wetlands and other natural features.
- Urban expansion and land development must consider and plan for sustainable water use and management.
- Stewardship of the river, the watershed, and natural features on the landscape is the responsibility of everyone.

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