

Policy and Planning Committee Meeting

Hybrid meeting (via Zoom)

1:00 pm

November 29, 2023

MVCA Boardroom

AGENDA

ROLL CALL

Declarations of Interest (written)

Adoption of Agenda

MAIN BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes: Policy and Planning Committee Meeting May 1, 2023, Page 2
2. Wetland Offsetting Policy Update, Report 3372/23, (M. Craig & K. Stiles), Page 9
3. Stewardship Program Review & Update, Report 3373/23, (M. Craig & M. Okum), Page 17

ADJOURNMENT



MINUTES

Via Zoom and In Person Policy and Planning Committee Meeting May 1, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT

- J. Mason
- B. Holmes
- J. Karau
- S. Lewis
- H. Yanch
- C. Kelsey (remote)
- T. Popkie
- G. Gower (remote)
- D. Comley

MEMBERS ABSENT

- J. Atkinson, Vice-Chair
- C. Kelly

STAFF PRESENT

- S. McIntyre, General Manager
- J. Cunderlik, Director of Engineering
- J. North, Engineering Technologist
- S. Lawryk, Property Manager
- A. Broadbent, Manager of Information, Communications and Technology
- B. Moy, Planning Technician
- J. Perkins, Planning Technician
- K. Stiles, Biologist
- A. Symon, Watershed Planner
- M. Craig, Manager of Planning and Regulations
- R. Clouthier, Recording Secretary

J. Atkinson was absent from the meeting. As such, S. McIntyre called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

S. McIntyre proposed to hold the election for the position of Chair and Vice Chair of the 2023 Policy and Planning Advisory Committee prior to the review of the agenda. No objections were received.

PPAC23/05/01-1

MOVED BY: D. Comley

SECONDED BY: H. Yanch

Resolved, That Sally McIntyre be appointed as Chair for administering the Election of Officers for the Policy and Planning Advisory Committee for 2023.

“CARRIED”

S. McIntyre declared both positions of Chair and Vice Chair as vacant.

J. Mason nominated B. Holmes for the position of Chair. B. Holmes accepted the nomination.

S. McIntyre asked members 3 times if there are any other nominations. None received.

PPAC23/05/01-2

MOVED BY: J. Karau

SECONDED BY: H. Yanch

Resolved, That nominations for the position of Chair be closed.

“CARRIED”

B. Holmes moved to the Chair’s seat in the Boardroom and proceeded with the election for Vice Chair.

J. Mason nominated D. Comley for the position of Vice Chair. D. Comley accepted the nomination.

B. Holmes asked members 3 times if there are any other nominations. None received.

PPAC23/05/01-3

MOVED BY: J. Mason

SECONDED BY: J. Karau

Resolved, That nominations for the position of Chair be closed.

“CARRIED”

Declarations of Interest (written)

Members were asked to declare any conflicts of interest and informed that they may declare a conflict at any time during the session. No declarations were received.

Agenda Review

Board members had no comments on the agenda for the May 1, 2023 meeting.

PPAC23/05/01-4

MOVED BY: H. Yanch

SECONDED BY: D. Comley

Resolved, That the agenda for the May 1, 2023 Policy and Planning Advisory Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

“CARRIED”

MAIN BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes: Policy and Planning Advisory Committee Meeting, February 17, 2022

PPAC23/05/01-5

MOVED BY: J. Karau

SECONDED BY: J. Mason

Resolved, That the minutes of the Policy and Planning Advisory Committee Meeting held on February 17, 2022 be received and approved as printed.

“CARRIED”

2. Natural Systems Monitoring & Reporting Program Review, Report 3322/23 (K. Stiles)

K. Stiles described the importance of natural systems monitoring and reporting and what such monitoring can indicate about environmental health. Report 3322/23 provides a review of the current program and proposed changes. Included in the report is a detailed Program Review document.

J. Mason asked how this will be affected when the new regulation changing the funding to category 2 and 3 programs and services comes into play. K. Stiles responded that some things were not fitting the previous definitions of categories 2 and 3 as MVCA does only has an MOU with the City of Ottawa for the City Baseline Surface Water Quality Sampling program, everything else does not have an MOU. MVCA is suggesting that programs and services such as

the lake and stream biotic monitoring be bumped up to category 2 and MOUs be created with the member municipalities.

J. Karau commented that he understands why the focus of the monitoring is on water quality however when we look at issues like climate change, water quality is not a sole indicator that gets analyzed. J. Karau suggested that section 6.6.5 should be reviewed as it may discredit the value of citizen science and the importance of building relationships with volunteers. K. Stiles thanked J. Karau for his feedback and replied that this is still a draft document and any suggestions will be reviewed and potentially changed.

G. Gower asked K. Stiles what kind of stakeholders or organizations typically request data and how this could expand in the future. K. Stiles replied that data is typically requested by lake associations, the Ottawa River Keeper, neighbouring universities and engineering firms.

J. Karau asked where are we in terms of open GIS data. S. McIntyre replied that we do not have any policies on open data yet, although we are making sure that our regulations mapping and water level maps are up to date and available on our website. We recognize that this is an area of improvement and the authority needs to work towards an efficient data sharing process.

J. Mason commented on Section 6.6.2, the Ontario Power Generation. The bio blitz is for a whole year and not just a point in time. The Ontario Field Naturalists do have some experts in their field, and the sections should be reviewed as their results will be very useful to MVCA.

PPAC23/05/01-6

MOVED BY: G. Gower

SECONDED BY: D. Comley

Resolved, That the Policy and Planning Committee recommend that the Board approve continuation of MVCA's monitoring and reporting program with the recommended changes set out in this report and the attached Program Review document.

"CARRIED"

3. **Section 28 Compliance Strategy, Report 3323/23 (M. Craig)**

M. Craig summarized the Section 28 Compliance Strategy and the regulations. M. Craig also detailed the steps employees follow to ensure compliance and the requirements of enforcement officers.

S. Lewis asked if it is possible to build a house or a structure in a floodplain. M. Craig explained that some areas in the watershed, such as Mississippi Lake and Constance Bay, have a 2-zone policy differentiating between a flood way and a flood fringe. In the 2-zone policy areas you

cannot build on a vacant lot in the flood way but you can in the flood fringe. This line is determined by depth of flooding and flood.

S. Lewis inquired about MVCA comments during the City of Ottawa Committee of Adjustment hearings and asked what, if anything, will be changing with Bill 23. M. Craig replied that Bill 23 has been pretty prescriptive of the authority's ability to comments. We still comment on natural hazards however we cannot comment on the ecological impact. We still comment on wetlands but only from a natural hazard perspective and not an ecological perspective.

S. Lewis highlighted that the ecological comments take the same amount of work because we can determine a lot of the ecological impact based on the natural hazards impact. The workload will not be lessening for the conservation authority. M. Craig replied that a lot of the changes are affecting the municipalities and we are working with them as much as we can.

S. McIntyre added that while we no long provide formal comments municipalities staff continue to ask us questions. Of concern is that some municipalities believe they are no longer required to circulate planning documents for comments. MVCA still has regulatory responsibility to comment on behalf of the province of natural hazards.

G. Gower asked about communications and if there is a standard practice and how the authority approaches public notice about enforcement activities. M. Craig replied that generally when we are completing an investigation on a property, we do not notify the public besides the fact that we are in the process of investigating as to not jeopardize the investigation. If we are successful in court, which is the last option for the authority, we release a notice to the public as it is a public court record. We are very guarded when people ask for information over the phone as the vast majority of offenders work with the authority.

G. Gower suggested that staff add a small section or paragraph that would outline and explain the general approach of public consultation.

J. Karau asked if people submit photographs or if we are seeking photographs of violations. M. Craig responded that people do submit photographs often and we accept them on our online reporting tool. If the report requires an investigation, the officer will take their own photographs so we know they are authentic. Community photographs need to be validated so there is a chance that we do not use submitted photographs.

J. Karau asked if the authority replies when someone submits a concern or a complaint. M. Craig replied that we generally follow up and let them know that we are investigating, but these matters tend to be long and we do not give out information pertaining to the investigation.

4. Conservation Strategy: Scope & Methodology, Report 3324/23 (S. McIntyre)

S. McIntyre summarized the Conservation strategy and the Mississippi River Watershed Plan and their recommendation of a Land Conservation Plan.

J. Mason is concerned that the Core Area thresholds for off-shield are too high. She noted that the City of Ottawa has documents that show more expansive core areas and some areas are missing, for example the Constance Creek Corridor and the South Marsh Highlands, and more. A second concern expressed was regarding the broad scope. There could be too many outcomes and with resource restraints, staff should consider narrowing it down to more specific topics. There also may be some matters that would be considered to be outside the Authority's scope.

J. Karau suggested that one way to tackle the scope or use mechanisms for prioritizing is to do site-specific collaboration and create a list of the partnerships we have. This could assist with the workload and the resources and create collaborations with other organizations. Another idea for collaboration is the bio-sphere model.

J. Mason noted that she is also concerned about the restrictions placed on the Authority, for example with the new regulations, the Authority is no longer the lead on the Carp River Conservation Area. If the Authority is required to distance itself from a high-profile project, there is a chance this can happen with other projects. J. Mason is part of a group that is trying to make Ottawa-Gatineau become one of Canada's first urban bio-sphere reserves.

S. McIntyre highlighted that there is no plan for conservation at the scale that we are doing it, and that this study will provide local municipalities with the information needed for informed decision-making.

J. Karau restated that the two major stressors right now are development pressure and climate change adaptation. This could also help with the scope allowing the authorities to create agreements.

ADJOURNMENT

PPAC23/05/01-6

MOVED BY: S. Lewis

SECONDED BY: J. Karau

Resolved, That the Policy and Planning Advisory Committee Meeting be adjourned.

"CARRIED"

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 pm.

R. Clouthier, Recording Secretary

B. Holmes, Chair

REPORT

3372/23

TO:	The Chair and Members of the Policy & Planning Committee
FROM:	Kelly Stiles, Biologist & Matt Craig, Manager, Planning and Regulations
RE:	Wetland Offsetting Policy Update
DATE:	November 14, 2023

Recommendation:

That the Policy & Planning Committee recommend that the Board of Directors approve revision of the wetland offsetting policy and other changes to MVCA's *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Policies*, as set out in this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval of:

- Changes to *Section 9.6: Offsetting of MVCA's Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Policies*¹; and
- A new appendix to the Policies that contains implementation objectives to inform when and how wetland offsetting will be permitted and implemented.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, legislative changes to Ontario's land-use and environmental planning system provided for ecological offsetting to compensate for the loss of natural assets during land development approved via Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs) and Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator Orders (CIHAOs). In response, MVCA's Board approved a Wetland Offsetting Policy and establishment of a Wetland Offsetting Compensation Reserve to enable implementation of the new regulatory tools.²

¹ These policies direct how staff will implement *Ontario Regulation 153/06: MVCA Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses*.

² Refer to Staff Report 3283/23.

To date, MVCA’s experience with ecological offsetting has been limited to a number of small-scale compensation projects. However, staff expect there to be increased pressure for offsetting in the coming years due to:

- Increased demand for residential development due to the ongoing housing crisis.
- The trend towards applications on increasingly constrained properties (i.e. with wetlands) because most “easy to develop” land is already in use.
- Increasing demand for offsetting by developers operating in other CA jurisdictions.

For this reason, greater clarity in corporate direction is needed to support staff in the administration of offsetting as a tool under the Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

DISCUSSION

The *Conservation Authorities Act*, *Planning Act*, and *Provincial Policy Statement* require conservation authorities and municipalities to direct development away from hazard lands and areas of natural significance. Wetlands are considered to be both—hazardous (unstable soils prone to flooding), and valued natural assets that serve significant hydrologic functions (they provide overland water conveyance, recharge ground water supplies, retain and slow water during high flow events, and release water and help to maintain base flow during seasonal dry periods.)

Section 3 (1) of *O.Reg. 153/06* states that a permit may be issued when “the control of flooding, erosion, pollution or the conservation of land will not be affected by the development.” Some of the challenges faced in administering wetland offsetting policies under this regulation are the following:

- Ideally, an offsetting project is implemented on or in close proximity to the development site to maintain hydrological and ecological features and functions. Site constraints and surrounding development can make it challenging to find a location that is suitable and available for offsetting activities.
- A constructed wetland may never achieve an equivalent level of hydrological and ecological function due to: different geological conditions; high plant mortality rates; an influx of invasive species due to the heavily impacted environment; and poor to no maintenance and long-term sustainment.
- Vegetation planted as part of an Offsetting Plan can take many years to achieve the desired hydrologic and ecological functionality.
- In terms of determining replacement site size or cash compensation, there is no single method within the land use planning sector for quantifying the financial value of wetlands, their hydrological and ecological functions and “equivalencies”, for determining “no net loss”, and calculating potential gains.

- The cost to implement an Offsetting Plan can be very high, and landowner willingness to undertake the work or pay an equivalent fee is often based upon a combination of their understanding of the proposed Offsetting Plan and the costs and margins assumed during drafting of their development proposal.

For these reasons, every application must be assessed on a case-by-case basis and clear direction is needed in the form of policies, implementation objectives, and operational guidelines.

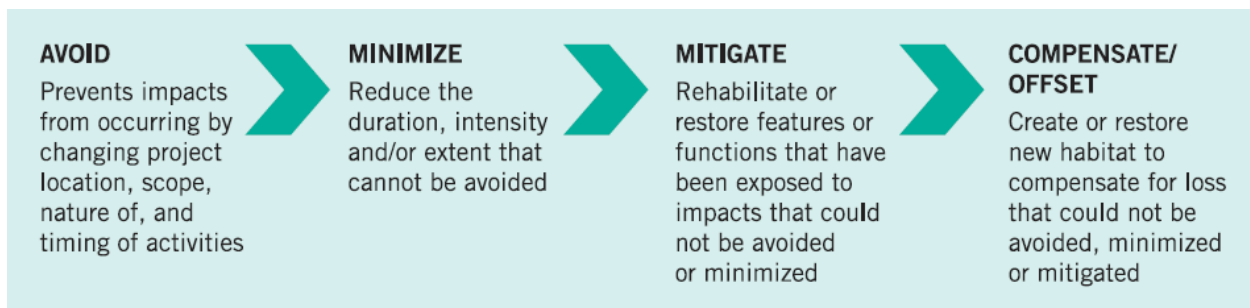
Proposed policy changes

Attachments 1 and 2 provide details of the proposed changes:

1. Amendments to Section 9.6 of MVCA’s *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Policies* to:
 - introduce the Mitigation Hierarchy and Ecological Offsetting Plans (EOPs); and
 - harmonize policies with offsetting agreements mandated by provincial orders.
2. A new Appendix to MVCA’s *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Policies* to provide Implementation Objectives.

The Mitigation Hierarchy is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Mitigation Hierarchy³



In summary, the hierarchy requires that development proposals implement the following measures in this order:

- **Avoid** impacts (development does not impact hydrological and/or ecological features and functions).
- **Minimize** impacts (in scale and over time).

³ Source: Ducks Unlimited. 2018. *Considerations for the Development of a Wetland Offsetting Policy for Ontario, a Report of the wetland Conservation Strategy Advisory Panel.*

- **Mitigate** impacts to features and functions (generally involves rehabilitation actions taken during construction as set out in landscape, grading and drainage, and stormwater management plans).
- **Offset** impacts (where they are long-term or permanent) to provide for “No Net Loss”.
- **Compensate** (financial/other) for net impacts, which recognizes that 1:1 and even 2:1 offsets often do not result in equivalent ecological function.⁴

The proposed policy changes would provide for the following replacement ratios:

- 1:1 – for replacement of regulated buffer areas
- 2:1 – for replacement of regulated wetlands
- Greater replacement ratios where warranted.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

These policy changes provide for implementation of the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Asset Management – revitalize watershed management activities and invest in our legislated mandate.

a) Strengthen our risk analysis and management capacity to include climate change and development impacts.

b) Implement priority actions identified in the Mississippi River Watershed Plan

Goal 2: Community Building – engage local partners to foster connections, leverage our resources, and strengthen our “social license” to operate.

a) Demonstrate MVCA to be a trusted, client-centered, resourceful, and helpful partner.

⁴ Note, CA’s do not allow offsetting for hydrological function unless impacts are confined to the applicant’s own property.

Attachment 1

Proposed edits to Section 9.6: Wetland Offsetting Policy

1. Applicability

This policy applies to any application for *development* within a *regulated area*, including where a Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator Order or Ministerial Zoning Order has been made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing under section 34 or section 47 of the *Planning Act* authorizing the *development* under that Act and any permission granted under Section 28.0.1 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

2. Mitigation Hierarchy

Development proposals and infrastructure projects requiring a permit under O.Reg. 153/06 shall adhere to the following Mitigation Hierarchy:

- a) **Avoid** – avoid negative alterations to and impacts on hydrological and ecological features and functions.
- b) **Minimize** – unavoidable negative impacts to hydrological and ecological features and functions should be minimal and temporary.
- c) **Mitigate** – ecological features and functions should be restored to the greatest extent possible on-site as part of the development plan.
- d) **Offset** – where full onsite restoration is not possible, off-site compensation proposals should be in close proximity and result in a net environmental gain.
- e) **Compensate** – where the combination of restoration and offsetting work(s) may not achieve a net environmental gain, a financial contribution to MVCA’s Wetland Offsetting Compensation Reserve may be required to support the protection, restoration, enhancement or creation of wetlands elsewhere in MVCA’s jurisdiction.

3. Ecological Offsetting Plans (EOP) and Related Agreements

- a) An Ecological Offsetting Plan (EOP), prepared by a qualified professional to the satisfaction of the Authority may be required for development proposals and infrastructure projects that will result in the long-term or permanent loss of hydrological or ecological features and functions at the development site, as determined through technical studies prepared in support of an O.Reg. 153/06 permit application.
- b) An EOP will only be considered where the applicant has demonstrated compliance with the Mitigation Hierarchy. Nothing in this policy requires MVCA to authorize proposed offsetting and contributions, approve an EOP or enter into a related agreement.

- c) The EOP shall achieve the objectives set out in Appendix J of this document and shall be prepared in accordance with operational guidelines established to support implementation of this policy.
- d) Approval by the MVCA Board of Directors may be required before approval of an EOP and entering into an agreement.

4. ~~Agreement~~ Costs

All costs incurred by MVCA for the negotiation, drafting, review, and registration of an EOP and compensation and offsetting related agreement shall be borne by the applicant.

5. ~~Scope of Compensation~~

Offsetting and financial contributions will not be considered for bogs, fens or features that contain rare vegetation communities as defined by the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (MNRF, 2010).

MVCA may require wetland compensation or offsetting to address impacts associated with the control of flooding, hydrologic and ecological features and functions, and erosion. The type and scale of compensation/offsetting required shall be based upon the following:

- a) the hydrologic characteristics and the significance of the regulated area affected; and
- b) the scale, proximity to, and severity of the impacts on the regulated area; and
- c) the characteristics of the proposed land use.
- d) Should not be applied to the re-establishment of natural ecosystems and not used to install or otherwise improve engineered green infrastructure or community amenities

In general terms, MVCA will apply the following offsetting/compensation ratios:

- e) 1:1 – for replacement of regulated buffer areas
- f) 2:1 – for replacement of regulated wetlands

Greater replacement ratios may be applied where warranted.

6. Use of ~~Compensation~~ Funds

Any funds received under an EOP and related agreement ~~as compensation~~ must be directed to offset permitted impacts and loss of wetland area and/or function with actions that ensures no net loss of wetland function. Wetland compensation ensures that when wetland area and/or functions are lost, they are restored, enhanced or created elsewhere within the same catchment, sub-watershed or within MVCA's jurisdiction. This can include the enhancement of an existing wetland to achieve specific management objectives, the increasing of functionality of a wetland, or the creation of a wetland in an area where one did not exist.

7. Guidelines

Staff will develop guidelines to support ~~negotiation and~~ implementation of ~~Offsetting/Compensation Agreements~~ this policy.

Attachment 2:

Proposed Addendum J: Offsetting Implementation Objectives

Ecological Offsetting Plans (EOP) and related agreements should achieve the following objectives:

1. “No Net Loss” of hydrological and ecological functions in perpetuity.
2. Wetland ecosystem functions considered for offsetting should provide biological habitat structures as well as maintain hydrologic balances, flood mitigation and groundwater infiltration within the local landscape.
3. The size of replacement wetlands and buffer areas should provide for resiliency during the projected establishment period.
 - a. The replacement of regulated wetlands shall be a minimum of two times the size of area lost (ratio of 2:1).
 - b. Regulated buffer habitat shall be replaced at a minimum ratio of 1:1.
4. The preferred location of the offsetting work should conform to the following site selection hierarchy:
 - a. On-site in the same catchment area,
 - b. Off-site within the same catchment area,
 - c. Off-site within the same watershed,
 - d. Off-site elsewhere within MVCA’s jurisdiction.
5. Lands used for offsetting should be currently owned by or transferred to a public agency (including by easement) for protection from future development.
6. The EOP shall be subject to an agreement between the proponent, MVCA, and other regulatory agencies when required.
7. The EOP shall outline the ecological and hydraulic goals, rationale, size, location and features of the proposed offsetting works; post-construction effectiveness monitoring; contingency funding; and adaptive management.
8. EOPs and associated agreements should include all works and costs that are needed to achieve No Net Loss, including but not limited to MVCA’s review, legal costs, long-term property inspection and monitoring, and site sustainment.

REPORT**3373/23**

TO:	MVCA Policy & Priorities Advisory Committee
FROM:	Marissa Okum, Stewardship Technician & Matt Craig Manager of Planning and Regulations
RE:	Stewardship Program Review & Update
DATE:	November 17, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

That the Policy & Planning Advisory Committee recommend that the Board of Directors endorse continued delivery of a year-round Stewardship Program until December 31, 2028.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2021 the *Mississippi River Watershed Plan* (MRWP) recommended the development and implementation of a “Three-Year MVCA Stewardship Program Pilot” for the protection of water quality, wetland cover, forest cover, and other environmental features.

The three-year pilot was approved by the board as part of the 2021 Budget process and a financial commitment made to establish a comprehensive program. Additional funding allowed for existing programs to be strengthened and expanded, while bringing in new programs and projects. A Stewardship Plan was developed to guide the scope and focus of the pilot. The Stewardship Plan was presented to and approved by the Board of Directors in October of 2021.

The purpose of this report is to present the results of a program review and to seek approval to continue the Stewardship program for a further five years. This period aligns with the terms of municipal agreements recently approved by MVCA’s eleven municipalities that provide for continued municipal levy support for Stewardship and other Category 2 and 3 programs.

2.0 PROGRAM REVIEW RESULTS

MVCA has varying geographic regions, each with unique challenges and needs. Stewardship programming was adapted to meet the needs and priorities of each geographical region. Below is a summary of program outcomes over the past few years. More comprehensive results can be found in Attachment 1 to this report.

The Upper Watershed (wooded uplands): Township of Addington Highlands, Township of North Frontenac, Township of Central Frontenac, and Township of Greater Madawaska. Highlights from the program are noted below.

- 190 shrubs and trees were planted and 1,432 were distributed through the shoreline naturalization program and lake tree day events.
- 285 septic re-inspections in North Frontenac and Central Frontenac.
- Continued outreach by attending lake association meetings and the annual Lake Links conference.

The Middle Watershed (transition zone): Township of Lanark Highlands, Tay Valley Township, and Township of Drummond/North Elmsley. Some notable successes in this region are below.

- ALUS Lanark officially launched in 2022, establishing 12 projects since inception. Four projects were completed in the middle watershed, and included tree planting, riparian planting, a wetland restoration, and delayed haying incentives.
- 44 shrubs/trees were planted and 643 were distributed through the shoreline naturalization program and lake tree day events.
- 44 septic re-inspections were conducted in Tay Valley.
- Continued outreach by attending lake association meetings and the annual Lake Links conference.
- Over 60,000 trees planted through RVCA's large-scale tree planting program

The Lower Watershed (agricultural/urban): Municipality of Mississippi Mills, Town of Carleton Place, Township of Beckwith, and City of Ottawa. Highlights from the program in the lower watershed are noted below.

- ORCWP continued to be delivered to rural landowners within the City of Ottawa, with 35 projects across multiple categories being approved since 2021.
- ALUS Lanark established three projects in the lower watershed, including two tree planting projects and one wetland enhancement.
- 958 shoreline trees and shrubs have been planted in the lower watershed.
- City Stream Watch reinstated in 2023, with focus on Carp Creek and Watts Creek.
- Over 180,000 trees planted through RVCA's large-scale tree planting program
- Invasive Plant removal and volunteer stream clean ups.

3.0 PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

MVCA has accessed various funding sources and grants to sustain the stewardship program. These have included long-term funding for programming, such as funding from ALUS Canada to implement ALUS Lanark, and short-term grants, such as the OCF grant to coordinate an erosion control workshop in Constance Bay. The stewardship program has also benefitted from many partnerships, including:

- Partner conservation authorities, including RVCA for the delivery of ALUS Lanark
- Local municipalities
- ALUS Canada
- Local agricultural organizations (e.g. 4H Ontario, Lanark Federation of Agriculture, National Farmers Union, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, OMAFRA)

- Local Environmental/Stewardship Organizations (e.g. Climate Network Lanark, Water Rangers, DUC, and Ottawa Riverkeeper)
- Lake stewards and lake associations through lake AGMs and outreach events

As noted above, MVCA's eleven municipalities have agreed to allow up to 14% of their annual municipal levy to go towards delivery of Category 2 and 3 programs, including Stewardship. Between continued municipal funding and ongoing efforts to secure grants, MVCA is confident that it can continue to provide a cost-effective stewardship program.

4.0 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Delivery of the MVCA's Stewardship Program supports achievement of the following corporate goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Asset Management – revitalize watershed management activities and invest in our legislated mandate.

- c) Implement priority actions identified in the Mississippi River Watershed Plan.

Goal 2: Community Building – engage local partners to foster connections, leverage our resources, and strengthen our “social license” to operate.

- a) Demonstrate MVCA to be a trusted, client-centered, resourceful, and helpful partner.
- b) Strengthen relationships with municipalities and community stakeholders, First Nations, the agricultural sector, developers, not-for-profits, and academia.



**Review of Stewardship
Program and
Objectives
2023**

November 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of a conservation authority is to deliver programs “to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources.”¹ An important course of action in achieving conservation and restoration goals is that of land stewardship: the act of caring for the land, air, water, and biodiversity in order to maintain collective ecological, social, and cultural benefits.

In 2021 the *Mississippi River Watershed Plan* (MRWP) recommended the development and implementation of a “Three-Year MVCA Stewardship Program Pilot” for the protection of water quality, wetland cover, forest cover, and other environmental features. A plan was needed to guide MVCA’s stewardship activities across the Authority’s jurisdiction and to address goals of the MRWP.

The three-year pilot was approved by the board as part of the 2021 Budget process and a financial commitment was made to establish a comprehensive program. Additional funding² allowed for strengthening and expansion of existing programs, while bringing in new programs and projects. In 2021, a *Stewardship Plan* was developed to guide the scope and focus of the pilot. The purpose of this report is to review the results of the pilot.

2.0 REVIEW OF RESULTS

The *Stewardship Plan* divides MVCA's jurisdiction into three areas as shown on Figure 1:

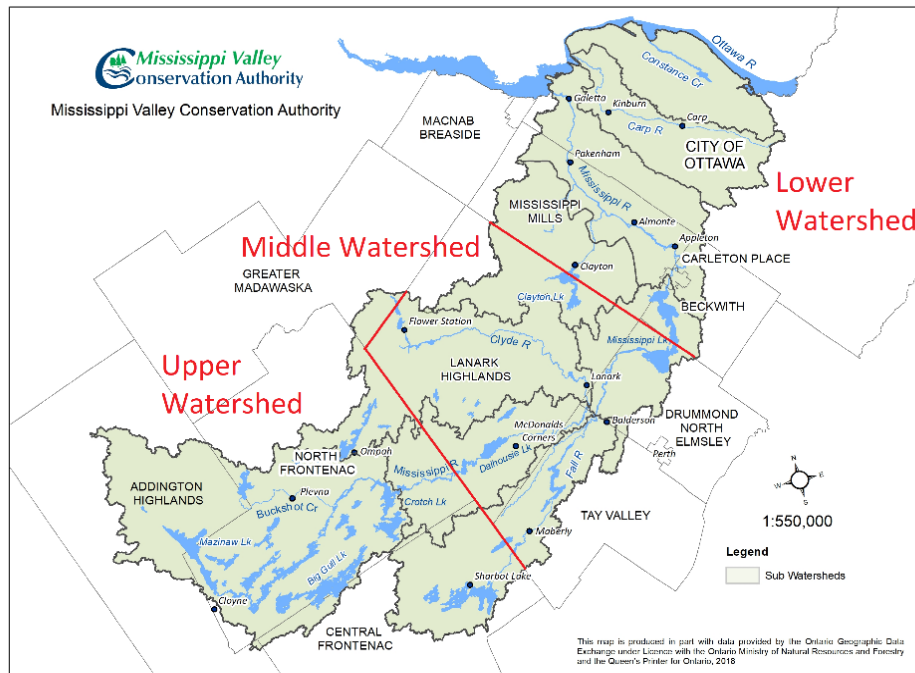
- **The Upper Watershed (wooded uplands):** Township of Addington Highlands, Township of North Frontenac, Township of Central Frontenac, and Township of Greater Madawaska.
- **The Middle Watershed (transition zone):** Township of Lanark Highlands, Tay Valley Township, and Township of Drummond/North Elmsley.
- **The Lower Watershed (agricultural/urban):** Municipality of Mississippi Mills, Town of Carleton Place, Township of Beckwith, and City of Ottawa.

This allowed for a targeted approach to stewardship projects and programs, as not all programs are suitable and applicable across the entire watershed. The following sections list the objectives for each area and the successes and challenges encountered during implementation.

¹ [Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.27 \(ontario.ca\)](#)

² A combination of municipal levy and primarily dollar-matching grants.

Figure 1. The MVCA jurisdiction divided into the Upper, Middle, and Lower Watersheds.



2.1 Upper Watershed: Areas of Focus

The Upper Watershed contains many lakes, rivers, and streams with small wetlands scattered within forested cottage-country and crown-owned lands. The main focus in this area is to protect and enhance already existing habitat features. Table 1 outlines the objectives from the 2021 Stewardship Plan, whether the objectives were met throughout the pilot program, and what the successes and challenges were.

Table 1. Upper Watershed objectives from the Stewardship Pilot Plan and their 2023 status

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
Promote and deliver Shoreline Naturalization Program	Completed	Shoreline naturalization continues to be promoted and implemented, with 190 shrubs/trees planted and 1,432 given away in the upper watershed since the pilot program began. The program has been promoted at 4 Lake Tree Day events and two Lake AGMs.
Participate in Lake Associations meetings	Completed	Two AGM's were attended at Mazinaw Lake and Malcolm/Ardoch Lakes, with stewardship staff also participating in Mazinaw's Blue Lakes Committee to aid in tackling Eurasian Milfoil.
Support Lake Links annual meeting	Completed	While led and attended by monitoring staff, stewardship assists in report and presentation writing for these annual meetings.

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
Promotion and tracking of the Water Rangers water testing program	Completed	MVCA tracked seven lakes in the Upper Watershed that used Water Rangers kits. These include Buckshot Lake, Mazinaw Lake, Sunday Lake, Sharbot Lake, Grindstone Lake, Palmerston Lake, and Canonto Lake.
Distribute educational materials, e.g. <i>Grow Me Instead</i> publication ³	Completed	Educational materials have been distributed at events, including at four tree/shrub giveaways at Sharbot Lake, Mazinaw Lake, Palmerston and Canonto Lakes, and Malcolm and Ardoch Lakes. Materials are also shared at lake association AGM's and the Lake Links meeting.
Use EDDMapS mapping ⁴ database and app and other tools to log sightings	Completed	EDDMapS was both promoted and used to log sightings of invasive species. The mapping database was also used to confirm the prevalence of invasive species, such as Eurasian Milfoil, throughout the watershed.
Promote Low Impact Development (LID) and participation in water storage program	Ongoing	LIDs measures were recommended through Plan Review for single lot development. This included installation of rain barrels and soak away pits for any development near waterbodies.
Promote the development of Forest Management Plans	Ongoing	Forest Management Plans were suggested to landowners, but there is a lack of financial incentive available in this area of MVCA's jurisdiction.
Promote and deliver Septic Re-inspection Program (per MOUs)	Completed	Between January 2021 and September 2023, 85 septic re-inspections were conducted on a voluntary basis in North Frontenac, and 200 on a mandatory basis in Central Frontenac. ⁵

2.2 Middle Watershed: Areas of Focus

The Middle Watershed features many lakes, rivers, and streams along with both small and large wetlands, many of which are deemed Provincially Significant (PSW). Most notable is the abundance of agricultural land use in the eastern area of this section. Table 2 lists the key stewardship objectives and outlines the successes and challenges in meeting each objective

³ Grow Me Instead is a guide published by the Ontario Invasive Plant Council that provides landowners with information on invasive species and alternative native plant options for home gardens.

⁴ EDDMapS is an invasive species reporting tool that relies on citizen scientists to report sightings. Reported sightings are reviewed by trained staff before being confirmed.

⁵ These inspections exclude inspections conducted since September 2022 when MVCA assumed responsibility for delivery of septic approvals on behalf of the following municipalities: North Frontenac, Central Frontenac, and Tay Valley

Table 2. Middle Watershed objectives from the Stewardship Pilot Plan and their 2023 status.

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
Promote and deliver ALUS Lanark	Completed	<p>ALUS Lanark officially launched in 2022, and has established four projects in the middle watershed since its inception. These include tree planting, riparian planting, delayed haying, and wetland restoration projects.</p> <p>ALUS Lanark was promoted through 3 events in the middle watershed, including the Lanark Farmers Breakfast, the Perth Climate Action Info Session, and the ALUS launch event. It was also promoted through various social media posts and news releases.</p>
Promote and deliver Shoreline Naturalization Program	Completed	<p>Shoreline naturalization continues to be promoted and implemented, with 44 shoreline trees and shrubs planted and 643 given away within the middle watershed since the pilot program began.</p> <p>Promotion of the program took place at 4 events by distribution of materials and speaking to interested landowners. Such events included Lake Tree Giveaway days at Bennett and Fagan Lakes, Silver Lake, and Dalhousie Lake. Materials were also shared at the Lake Links meeting. Social media posts were created and shared to promote programming.</p>
Participate in Lake Associations meetings	Completed	<p>Stewardship and monitoring have participated in three Lake Association AGM's to guide and inform members of best practices and how our programs can assist their needs. These included two at Dalhousie Lake and one at Bennett and Fagan Lakes.</p>
Support Lake Links annual meeting	Completed	<p>While led by monitoring staff, stewardship assists in report and presentation writing for these annual meetings.</p>
Promotion and tracking of Water Rangers water testing program	Completed	<p>MVCA tracked three lakes in the Middle Watershed that have been using Water Rangers kits, at varying consistencies. These include Mississippi Lake, Silver Lake, and Robertson Lake.</p>
Distribute educational materials, e.g. <i>Grow Me Instead</i> publication	Completed	<p>Educational materials were distributed at events, including at three lake tree giveaway days at Silver Lake, Bennet and Fagan Lakes, and Dalhousie Lake. Materials are also shared at lake association AGM's and the Lake Links meeting.</p>

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
Promote Low Impact Development (LID) and participation in water storage program	Ongoing	LIDs were recommended for single lot development and larger scale development where applicable and in partnership with municipalities.
Use EDDMapS mapping database and app and other tools to log sightings	Completed	EDDmapS was both promoted and used to log sightings of invasive species. The mapping database was also used to confirm the prevalence of invasive species, such as Eurasian Milfoil, throughout the watershed.
Promote the development of Forest Management Plans	Ongoing	Forest Management Plans were suggested to landowners, but there is a lack of financial incentive available in this area of MVCA's jurisdiction.
Promote and deliver Septic Re-inspection Program (per MOUs)	Completed	Between January 2021 and September 2023, 44 septic re-inspections were conducted on a mandatory basis in Tay Valley.

2.3 Lower Watershed: Areas of Focus

The Lower Watershed is characterized by a high concentration of agricultural land use, limited forested cover that is primarily privately owned and fragmented, large wetland complexes (some PSWs), and a high concentration of rural and urban land use. This region is where the majority of urban growth has taken place. Table 3 outlines the 2021 stewardship objectives, and the successes and challenges in meeting these objectives.

Table 3. Lower Watershed objectives from the Stewardship Pilot Plan and their 2023 status.

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
Promote and deliver ALUS Lanark	Completed	ALUS Lanark officially launched in 2022, and has established 12 projects since its inception. These have included wetland enhancements and restorations, tree plantings, riparian buffer plantings, and modified agricultural practices. ALUS Lanark was promoted at 3 events in the lower watershed, including the Ottawa Valley Farm Show and two Lanark Harvest Festivals (2022 and 2023). It was also promoted through various social media posts and news releases.
Promote and deliver Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program (per MOU)	Completed	ORCWP continues to be delivered to rural landowners within the city of Ottawa. 35 projects across multiple categories have been approved since 2021. ORCWP has been promoted at events such as the Ottawa Valley Farm Show, the Constance Bay Erosion Control Workshop, and the Stittsville Native Plant Workshop. It has

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
		also been promoted through the City of Ottawa's social media.
Promote and deliver Shoreline Naturalization Program	Completed	Shoreline naturalization continues to be promoted and implemented, with 958 shoreline trees and shrubs planted within the lower watershed since the pilot program began. In the lower watershed, this program was promoted at events such as the Constance Bay Erosion Control Workshop, the Stittsville Native Plant Workshop, and at the 2022 and 2023 Lanark Harvest Festivals.
Promote and deliver City Stream Watch Program (per MOU)	Completed	City Stream Watch returned in 2023 after a 3-year hiatus, with Watts Creek and Carp Creek being sampled and analyzed. MVCA used social media to attract potential volunteers.
Identify opportunities for river and stream restoration	Ongoing	The reintroduction of City Stream Watch allowed stewardship staff to note areas in need of restoration. Staff will apply for grants and work with outside organizations to implement restoration projects.
Promote and deliver stream clean-up events using volunteer efforts	Ongoing	Three stream clean ups were implemented at Poole Creek over the course of the 3-year pilot. There are continuing opportunities to further these efforts in the coming years, including at other locations.
Identify, investigate, and facilitate habitat enhancement of public lands	Ongoing	Identifying and investigating is ongoing, however, many of the habitat enhancement projects throughout the pilot have taken place on private lands.
Analyze City Stream Watch data and prioritize removal of invasive species	Ongoing	City Stream Watch returned in summer of 2023. Data analysis of the 2023 streams has begun and will continue into early 2024.
Organize and deliver volunteer invasive removal events	Completed	Multiple volunteer and staff invasive removals took place, particularly at Poole Creek. Invasive species removal focused on Garlic Mustard. There are several ongoing opportunities to facilitate more invasive removals in the coming years.
Promote the development of Forest Management Plans	Completed	The Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program has provided 18 grants for Forest Management Plans since 2021. MVCA works closely with local foresters to ensure landowners are informed of this grant opportunities.
Distribute educational materials, e.g. <i>Grow</i>	Completed	Educational materials have been distributed at several events, such as the 2022 and 2023 Lanark Harvest Festivals,

Objectives	Status	Successes/Challenges
<i>Me Instead</i> publication		the Stittsville Native Plant Workshop, and the Constance Bay Erosion Control Workshop.
Use EDDMapS mapping database and app and other tools to log sightings	Completed	EDDMapS has been both promoted and utilized to log sightings of invasive species. The mapping database has also been used to confirm the prevalence of invasive species throughout the watershed.
Promote Low Impact Development and participation in water storage program	Ongoing	LID's were recommended for larger scale development where applicable and in partnership with municipalities. Upper Poole Creek enhancements included water storage projects, such as the promotion of rain barrels and infiltration. Continued promotion of green infrastructure and maintaining natural areas were done through plan review.
Distribute educational material from Forest Health Network	Completed	These materials have been distributed at many outreach events, including the Ottawa Valley Farm Show and the Lanark Harvest Festival.

3.0 NEW PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM EXPANSIONS

The 3-year pilot program provided an opportunity to increase stewardship efforts within the watershed and to enhance and launch new programs that required year-round staffing. The following is a discussion of key program changes made during the pilot.

3.1 ALUS Lanark

ALUS Lanark, a joint initiative between RVCA and MVCA, launched in 2022 with a limited funding focus on restoring and enhancing wetlands. ALUS Lanark started with three such projects that restored and/or enhanced a total of 15 acres of wetlands. In 2023, ALUS Lanark was able to expand due to further outreach efforts and increased funding opportunities. There have been nine new projects in 2023, with seven in Mississippi Valley's watershed, for an additional 43 enrolled acres. These seven projects included three large-scale tree plantings, one delayed haying project, one riparian planting, one wetland enhancement, and one wetland restoration.

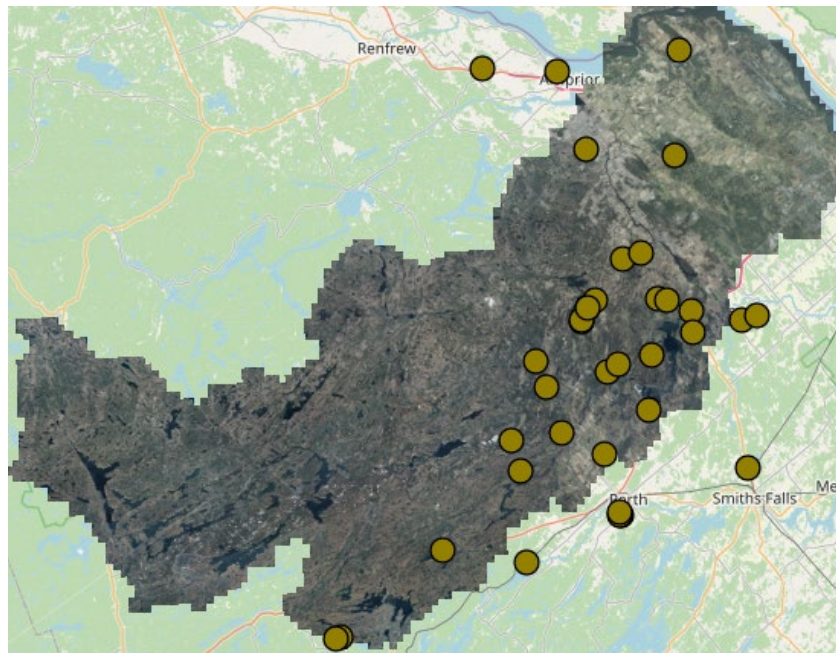
3.2 Planting and Giveaways

MVCA has administered a shoreline naturalization program in some capacity since 2011. Since 2021 implementation of the pilot and enhanced targeted outreach, over 1,500 shrubs and trees have been planted across 30 properties, nearly double the amount of plants in the previous three years.

Image 1. Locations of 2023 ALUS projects



Image 2. Butternut tree giveaway locations in 2023



Since 2017, MVCA has partnered with 2-3 lake associations per year to offer Lake Tree Days, providing lake association members with the opportunity to receive 15 trees/shrubs in exchange for a \$25 donation. A total of 2,379 trees and shrubs have been given away through this program since 2021.

In 2023, MVCA began a partnership with RVCA to giveaway butternut trees, a species that is endangered in Ontario due to the butternut canker disease. These seedlings are produced from canker-resistant trees, making them unlikely to succumb to the disease. Through this program, any landowner in Eastern Ontario (including those outside our watershed) can receive up to 10 free trees. In 2023, over 300 trees were given to just over 35 landowners from MVCA's giveaway alone.

3.3 Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program

MVCA, RVCA, and SNC have partnered to deliver the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program on behalf of the City of Ottawa since 2005. This program offers grants to rural landowners looking to implement projects that will enhance surface or ground water quality. There were 35 projects during the course of the pilot project, which included forest management plans, shoreline buffers and wind breaks, erosion control, septic and well decommissioning, nutrient management plans, and a wetland restoration. Despite an overall lower uptake in this program since 2020, MVCA's numbers have remained consistent.

3.4 City Stream Watch

Due to the 2020 pandemic, City Stream Watch was suspended due to health concerns. In 2023, the Stewardship group assumed responsibility for delivery of the City Stream Watch from Monitoring unit. In 2023, the program resumed with focus on Watts Creek and Carp Creek. Despite the smaller scale, City Stream Watch had a successful re-launch by engaging 9 volunteers to study 6.2 km of both of these streams.

3.5 Large Scale Planting

RVCA handles large-scale tree planting on behalf of MVCA, at a cost of \$5,500 per year. These plantings are funded by the Green Acres Program in the City of Ottawa, and by various funders⁶ through the rest of the watershed. These subsidized plantings require a landowner commitment of a minimum of 1,000 trees on at least 1 acre of land. Through these programs 129,878 trees were planted in the City of Ottawa and 107,085 were planted throughout the rest of the watershed since 2021.

⁶ Currently through the [Trees for Tomorrow Reforestation Program](#)

3.6 Habitat Enhancement

MVCA coordinated many habitat enhancement projects, dependant on grant availability and public need. Projects undertaken during the three-year pilot included:

- Creation of new nesting habitat for Northern Map Turtles at MICA;
- Enhanced fish habitat in Wolfe Grove Creek;
- Hand planted pollinator garden at the MVCA office;
- Seeded pollinator meadow at MoK; and
- Erosion control workshop for Constance Bay residents.

4.0 SHORT TERM DELIVERABLES

The Stewardship Plan identified quantifiable deliverables to help measure successes and gaps in the stewardship program. Table 4 contains stewardship performance indicators and results.

Table 4. Short-term Performance Indicators and Results.

Deliverable	Result	Notes
Number of projects undertaken	85	Includes ALUS, ORCWP, Shoreline Naturalization, giveaway days, and habitat enhancement projects.
Number of trees/shrubs planted	278,045	Includes plants given away / planted through ALUS, ORCWP, Shoreline Naturalization, and RVCA's tree planting program (delivered in MVCA's jurisdiction)
Total area of land planted (acres)	46	Includes acres planted through ALUS, ORCWP, and Shoreline Naturalization.
Total area of land restored to wetlands (acres)	1	One wetland has been restored through ALUS Lanark. An additional wetland project has been approved through ORCWP, with plans to implement in 2024. There are currently plans in place for two additional wetland projects through ALUS Lanark in 2024.
Total area of land restored to tallgrass prairie	0	Though no such project has taken place during the pilot program, there are plans in place for a ~5-acre tallgrass prairie through ALUS Lanark in 2024.
Length of shoreline restored (m)	1913	Includes metres planted along shorelines through ALUS, ORCWP, and Shoreline Naturalization.
Number of landowners contacted	329	Based on landowners involved in projects and landowners who decided not to pursue projects.
Number of landowners involved in projects	272	Includes ALUS, ORCWP, Shoreline Naturalization, plant giveaways, and habitat enhancement projects.
Number of attendees at events, workshops	700	Estimate based on 17 events and workshops attended.
Number of community volunteer hours	20	Volunteer hours based on CSW, litter clean up, and invasive removals.

5.0 CHALLENGES

5.1 Programming and Funding Gaps

Though not all programs are suitable for the entire watershed, there are areas that would benefit from expanding existing programming. Currently, ALUS is only offered in Lanark County but there is interest to expand into the lower watershed, particularly in rural Ottawa. An expanded Rural Clean Water Program could also benefit much of the middle watershed and parts of the upper watershed. There has been significant interest for this kind of program from both rural and agricultural land owners, particularly in municipalities that are split between MVCA and RVCA⁷.

These programs co-existing throughout the watershed would create an opportunity to take advantage of multiple funding sources. RCWP typically offers project types that ALUS does not, such as Forest Management Plans, Manure Storage, and Nutrient Management Plans, while ALUS has the benefit of providing annual payments for projects.

While expanding both ALUS and RCWP would have benefits, it would require an increase in both funding and staff to ensure they could be run effectively. While it is possible that ALUS Canada could cover funding for an expanded ALUS program throughout the watershed, it would require more staff time.

The Stream Watch program currently only operates in the City of Ottawa, which allows for monitoring of streams within the city limits. The data collected by CSW guides future stewardship activities, such as restoration projects and invasive removals. In 2015, MVCA applied for funding for Rural Stream Watch in Lanark County, which resulted in the habitat enhancement activities in Wolfe Grove Creek. This funding only covered one year of the program, therefore, it has been unable to continue. Securing funding to allow an expansion of the stream watch program throughout the watershed would be beneficial.

5.2 Covid-19 Pandemic

The stewardship pilot launching in 2021 while in the midst of a global pandemic provided difficulties and challenges. Though most programming took place outdoors, there was still hesitation from many interested landowners and volunteers to participate. Many programs had to be paused in 2020 and parts of 2021 due to mandates and regulations, including community-based programs like City Stream Watch. Programs such as ORCWP also saw an overall decrease in interest throughout the entire program boundary as of 2020.

⁷ RVCA currently offers a RCWP throughout their entire watershed.

5.3 Public Interest

While there has been an increase in interest in the majority of stewardship programs, particularly in the wake of the 2022 derecho and the 2023 ice storm, there continues to be gaps in public interest and engagement. There is a lack of public knowledge on existing programs which makes it difficult to engage landowners. MVCA has been successful in increasing uptake in programming by:

- Attending outreach events such as the Lanark Harvest Festival, the Ottawa Valley Farm Show, and the International Ploughing Match.
- Hosting and presenting at events such as the Constance Bay Shoreline Erosion Workshop, the ALUS Lanark Launch Tour, and the Lanark Farmers Breakfast.
- Working with Lake Associations to advertise existing programming.
- Connecting with councillors and their teams to include information about programming in their newsletters.
- Joining an Eastern Ontario Stewardship Collective to work with other local stewardship agencies on partnerships and promotion.
- Engaging residents through volunteer events and public workshops.
- Posting on social media outlets to reach a wider audience.

While these efforts have increased public engagement and awareness, there are opportunities to further engagement. The plans to extend these efforts are as follows:

- Continue to attend, host, and speak at outreach events.
- Continue and expand partnerships with councillors, lake associations, and other stewardship agencies.
- Develop educational materials for physical and online distribution.
- Expand social and print media outreach efforts.
- Increase volunteer opportunities through new and expanded programming, such as City Stream Watch, public planting events, litter clean-ups, and invasive plant removal days.
- Increase workshop opportunities on shoreline naturalization, seed collection, wildflower plantings, and live stake planting.

6.0 PARTNERSHIPS

MVCA shares environmental protection and resource management interests with many Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), local groups and associations. There are collaborative relationships with universities, many lake associations, and a variety of stewardship organizations. These collaborations become increasingly important as Provincial resources and services continue to diminish at the local level. A description of current partnerships is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Established partnerships with MVCA

Partner	Partnerships
Rideau Valley Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program ▪ City Stream Watch ▪ Private Lands Forestry ▪ ALUS Lanark ▪ Butternut Replacement Program
South Nation Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program ▪ City Stream Watch
Canadian Wildlife Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turtle Nesting Mound project at Morris Island Conservation Area ▪ Office Pollinator Garden and MoK Pollinator Meadow
Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wetland restoration projects for ALUS Lanark and ORCWP ▪ Eastern Stewardship Collective
Ontario Power Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MICA BioBlitz ▪ MICA turtle nest creation
Watersheds Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lake Links workshops ▪ Native Planting workshop ▪ Large scale plantings

In addition, MVCA staff work closely with city councillors and their teams, lake stewards, and other local stewardship organizations. MVCA has joined an Eastern Stewardship Collective alongside several other local organizations such as Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, DUC, and other Eastern Conservation Authorities.

Partnerships are a key part of MVCA's stewardship strategy as multiple partners may offer further financial opportunities, resources, and technical expertise. Outside of partnering on projects, these connections can offer additional benefits as they increase referrals for MVCA programming.

7.0 COSTS AND REVENUES

MVCA has one full-time Stewardship Coordinator, and hires a student during the summer season to deliver the stewardship program. In addition to this, MVCA incurs costs associated with plant material and tools, transportation to and from sites, and related promotional and educational outreach. Table 6 summarizes annual costs and revenues for the past three years.

MVCA stewardship projects and programs are typically covered by external funders and grant dollars. Two ongoing programs, ALUS Lanark and ORCWP, are almost entirely funded by external sources. MVCA provides funding for the Shoreline Naturalization program, however, landowners are required to pay for 50% of the cost of plants before tax. The program also

brings in revenue through Lake Tree Days, in which participants pay a \$25 donation in exchange for 15 shoreline trees or shrubs.

Table 6: Stewardship Costs & Revenues (2020-2023 YTD)

Costs	2021	2022	2023 (to Oct. 31)
Payroll	\$37,344	\$55,052	\$53,021
Expenses	\$28,043	\$44,902	\$38,677
County Forest	\$10,678	\$111,147	\$10,512
Total	\$75,867	\$108,682	\$99,670
Revenues			
Donations	\$3,593	\$5,745	\$805
Grants	\$8,683	\$116,209	\$62,730
Fees		\$290	\$6,672
County Forest	\$10,678	\$11,147	\$10,512
Total	\$22,954	\$133,392	\$80,721
Municipal Levy	\$52,913	(\$24,710)	\$28,949

Because grants and donations cannot be relied upon, the annual budget assumes that key expenses will be covered by the municipal levy. However, as shown in Table 6, MVCA has been successful in reducing the burden on the municipal levy through the securement of grants and donations. As of January 1, 2024, surpluses in the program (such as shown in 2022) will go into a Category 3 Operating Reserve for use in future years where fewer grants are available or obtained.

Table 7. Funding Support for Stewardship programs

Program	Funder	Coverage	Notes
ALUS Lanark	ALUS Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portion of stewardship salary. ▪ Part of stewardship student funding. ▪ Majority of ALUS project dollars. 	Various funding is sourced by ALUS Canada and distributed to ALUS Lanark.
	ECCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portion of stewardship salary. ▪ Portion of stewardship student funding. ▪ ALUS wetland project dollars. 	Required non-federal matching funds. Funding will end April 1st, 2024.
ORCWP	City of Ottawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stewardship staff dollars for time spent on applications (at a set rate).⁸ ▪ Entirety of grant dollars. 	Landowners are only given a grant for a percentage of their projects. Maximums differ for each project type.

⁸ 2023 rates are \$125 per application and \$350 per site visit.

Program	Funder	Coverage	Notes
Shoreline Naturalization	MVCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50% of the costs of plants covered by MVCA. ▪ Remaining 50% of plants paid by participating landowners.⁹ ▪ Planting equipment and labour are covered by MVCA 	Donations from Lake Tree Days are also used to offset costs from purchase of plants and equipment.

Outside of funding for consistent programming, MVCA often secures grants for habitat enhancements, public plantings, and workshops. Table 8 outlines projects that received grants or external funding during the three-year pilot program.

Table 8. Funding secured for habitat enhancement projects during the pilot program

Project	Funding Source	Details
Wolfe Grove Fish Habitat Enhancement	Canadian Wildlife Federation	A project that enhanced fish habitat in Wolfe Grove, a cold-water creek. This funding was used to create riffles and install half log structures.
MICA Turtle Nesting	Ontario Power Generation	A partnership with CWF and OPG to create a new, safer nesting habitat for Northern Map Turtles at MICA. While not an official grant, OPG agreed to cover all costs associated with this project.
Mill of Kintail Pollinator Meadow	Canadian Wildlife Federation	Two separate pollinator projects were funded by the CWF Right of Way grant. The office garden was completed with the use of forbs, while the MoK meadow was created by hand broadcasting seed.
MVCA Office Pollinator Garden		
Constance Bay Erosion Workshop	Ottawa Community Foundation	A workshop funded to help Constance Bay residents deal with the increasing erosion issues they are facing along their shorelines.

There is further potential in the coming years to tap into other grant sources, including sources where MVCA has been successful in acquiring funding in the past. Table 9 lists potential grant opportunities to support program sustainment.

⁹ Current set rate for majority of shoreline plantings. Any landowners required to plant as part of permitting conditions will typically cover 100% of shoreline plants.

Table 9. Potential grant programs for future stewardship projects.

Source	Name of Grant	Types of Potential Projects
RBC	RBC Tech for Nature	<p>Projects that address water and climate challenges with technology-based solutions in three key areas: data, innovation ecosystem, and behavior change.</p> <p>Previous projects include planting along Mississippi River in Carleton Place and running a Stream Watch program in Lanark County.</p>
Union Gas	Community Vitality	Projects based in environmental education, conservation and research, clean energy, energy efficiency, and/or habitat enhancement
Ontario Wildlife Foundation	OWF Grant	<p>Projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conserve or enhance natural habitat; ▪ Promote conservation education; ▪ Encourage the enjoyment of healthful outdoors; ▪ Promote and support scientific research of and general investigation of birds, fish animals and their habitats; ▪ Perpetuate stocks of birds, fish and animals; or ▪ Cooperate with other organizations in conservation
TD	TD Friends of the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects such as community gardens, conservation education, tree planting, and/or urban greening. ▪ Previous projects include planting along Mississippi River in Almonte and Pakenham
TD	TD Tree Days	Public tree planting projects only.
Wildlife Habitat Canada	Community Conservation Action	Projects that connect Canadians with nature, engage youth with conservation, or provide educational programming
Cabela's	Cabela's Outdoor Fund	Focus on connecting new audiences to the outdoors; conservation advocacy/access; and/or conserving wildlife and habitat
Ontario Trillium Foundation	Grow Grant	Expansion of already successful projects to reach new communities.
City of Ottawa	Community Environmental Projects Grant	Small-scale, community-based initiatives that support an environmentally sustainable Ottawa.

Source	Name of Grant	Types of Potential Projects
Ottawa Community Foundation	Community Grants Program	Projects that do one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benefit the Ottawa community, improve the quality of life for its residents, and help to foster a strong, positive and caring community; ▪ Use a community development approach to build on the assets and strengths of the community in order to respond to evolving issues and emerging priorities; ▪ Address the root causes of identified local issues and work on long-term solutions in an effort to achieve systemic change
MECP	SARA Stewardship	Projects that support Species at Risk through monitoring or habitat enhancements.
City of Ottawa	Upper Poole Creek Sub watershed Plan – Development Funds	Review of Upper Poole Creek Sub watershed Plan and implement stewardship initiatives based on outstanding objectives.

8.0 FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Some potential initiatives for MVCA to consider in the future that are implemented by other Conservation Authorities:

- Expansion of Rural Clean Water Program outside of the City of Ottawa
- Expansion of City Stream Watch into Lanark County
- Expansion of ALUS to cover all of the Mississippi watershed
- Development and delivery of Landowner Stewardship Workshops
- Delivery of guided, themed hikes in Conservation Areas
- Sale of kits of various themes, e.g. shoreline naturalization starter kits, DIY habitat kits, etc.
- Sale of nesting boxes for landowner installation
- Development of educational material/guides for download from MVCA website
- Development of Invasive Species Management Strategy for the MVCA watershed
- Organization and delivery of community science Bio-blitz projects (individual species reporting or events centred around a specific location)

9.0 CONCLUSION

MVCA worked with various partners and funders to effectively implement the stewardship plan throughout the three-year pilot. MVCA successfully launched new programs, such as ALUS Lanark, while continuing to promote and expand existing projects. Having a year-round

coordinator provided for program continuity, more consistent and effective communications with community groups and applicants interested in pursuing stewardship projects, and enhanced levels of service and program success.