

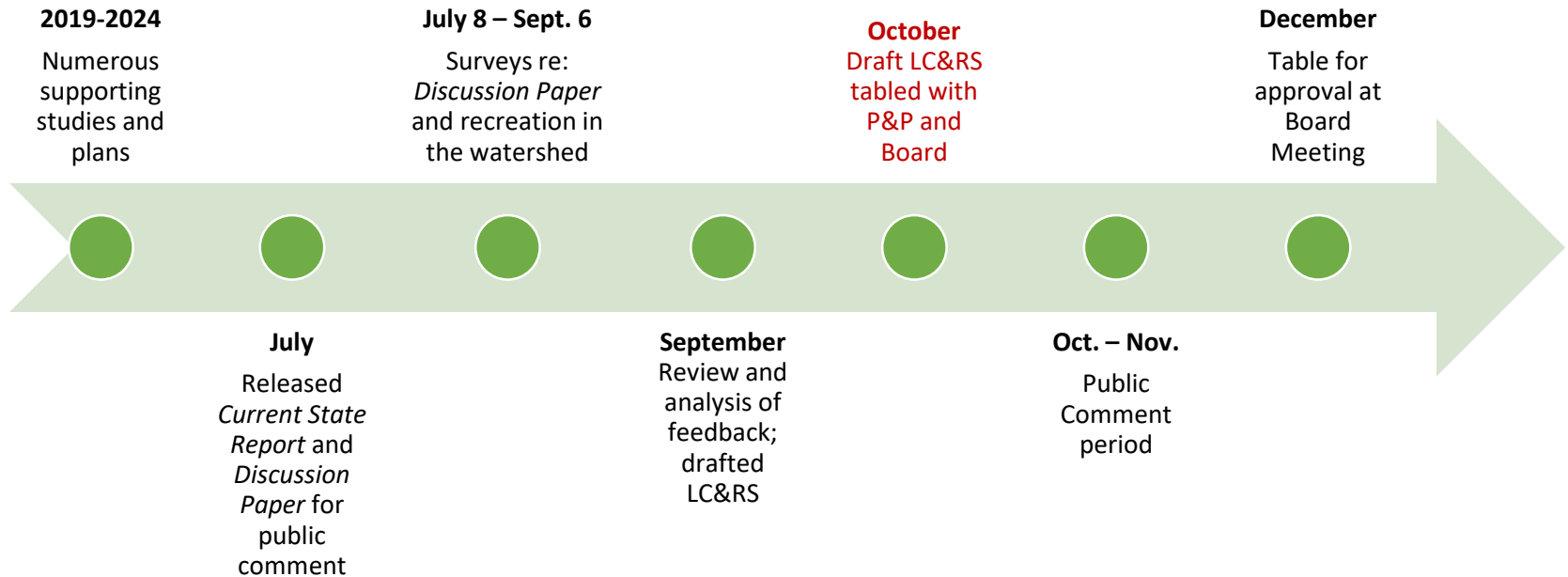


Land Conservation & Resource Strategy

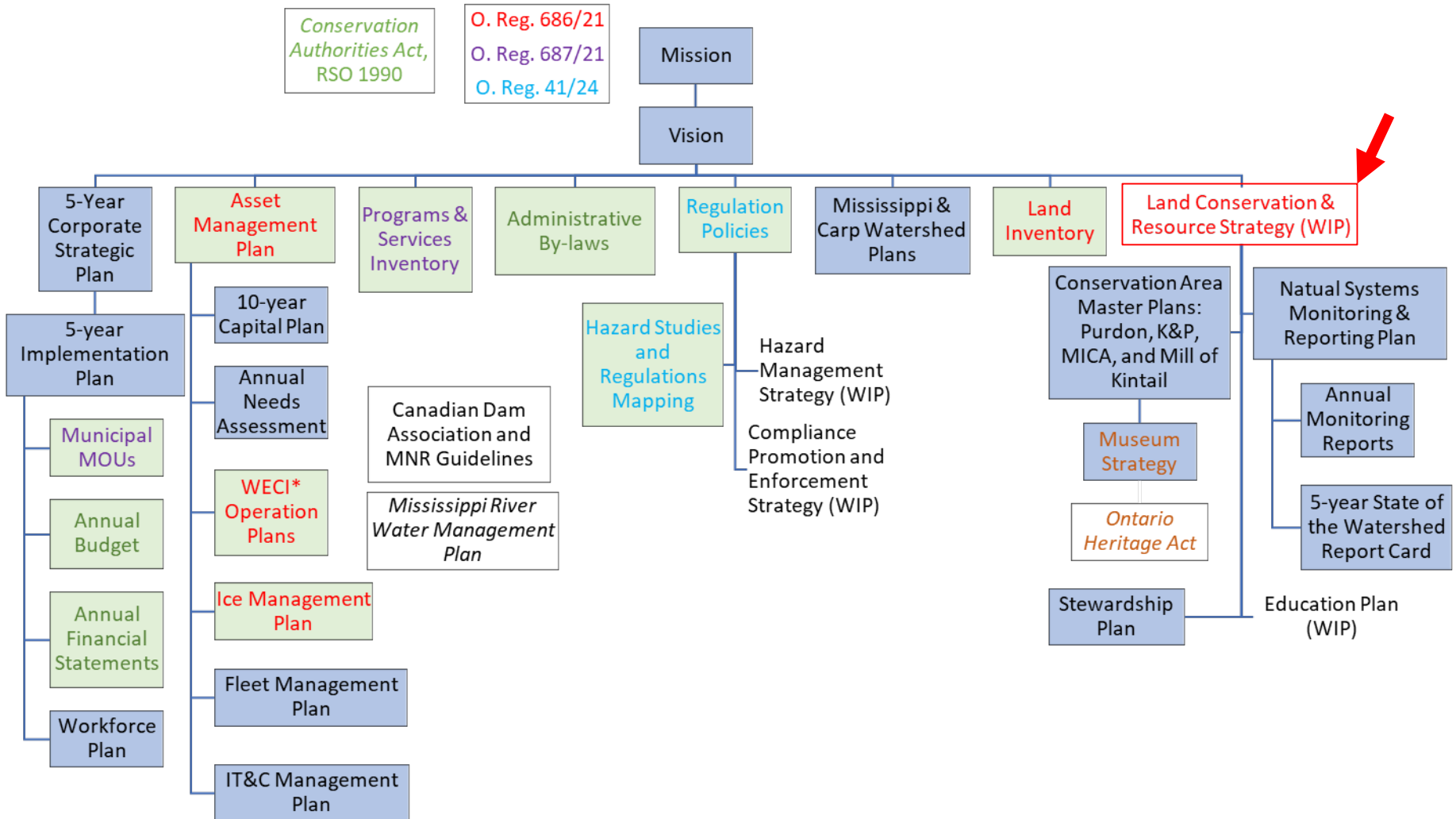
Policy & Planning Committee

October 7, 2024

Land Conservation & Resource Strategy Process



Corporate Planning & Policy Documents



Mandatory Elements

Conservation Area Strategy must have policies that address:

- the “**acquisition**” and disposition of CA lands
- the programs and services offered on those lands
- how CA lands “**augment any natural heritage** in its jurisdiction”, and
- how they “**integrate with other** provincially or municipally-owned lands”

Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy must contain:

- Guiding principles
- Objectives
- List of studies, monitoring and other information used
- Compliance review of existing programs and services
- Risk analysis and mitigation plan
- List of services with cost estimates

Per *O.Reg. 686/21* **acquisition** means:

“owned or controlled by the authority, including any interests in land registered on title” and may include license and lease agreements

Public Consultation

- Widespread promotion and notifications
- Virtual Information Session
- Presentation to municipalities
- Presentation to interested groups
- Two surveys:

Discussion Paper Survey

Focus: natural heritage land, facilities, uses, museum, portages, dams.

- 84 responses/ submissions
- Mainly from Mississippi Mills, Ottawa*, and North Frontenac

Recreation Facility Survey

Focus: walking and hiking trails, boat launches, tent camping.

- 198 responses
- Mainly from Mississippi Mills, Carleton Place and Beckwith
- 47% born between 1946-1964

Discussion Paper Feedback

1. Most respondents support a mix of passive and active recreation but respondents were split regarding acquiring new land for active recreation.
2. More respondents are interested in land acquired for passive use than for preservation purposes.
3. Some expressed concerns regarding the financial viability of acquiring and maintaining new sites, and emphasized the need to collaborate.
4. Some expressed the need to collaborate more with First Nations on land and heritage matters.
5. A majority believe museum management should be transferred to a heritage organization.
6. A majority think MVCA should have a role in managing portage routes.
7. While most support hydro development they do not think that MVCA should be acquiring dams for that purpose.
8. Most feel that MVCA should continue to manage dams that serve recreational purposes AND that an alternative cost recovery approach should be used for those assets.

Recreation Study/Survey Findings

1. Population growth in the watershed was ~228% over 35 years, or an average of 5% per year.
2. There has not been an equivalent growth in large conservation area-like parks, hiking/walking trails, and tent camping sites.
3. Intensity of use of MVCA conservation areas has increased from ~300 to ~900 persons/ha over the period 1982 to 2023.
4. The availability of camp sites in the watershed has gone from ~70 to ~190 persons/campsite over the same period.
5. 53% of respondents agreed and 35% disagree that more facilities are needed to support walking/hiking activities.
6. Respondents were split 50/50 on whether more facilities are needed to support boating and other watercraft activities.
7. 57% of respondents agreed and 28% disagreed that more facilities are needed in the watershed to support tent camping.
8. The most used walking trails are those that people use on a regular basis in their own neighbourhoods.
9. Amongst respondents, the top 3 sites for walking and hiking were: the Mill of Kintail Conservation Area, Ottawa Valley Rail Trail and the Riverwalk Trail in Carleton Place.

Features people value at their top sites

1. Drive from home less than 30 minutes
2. Easy parking access
3. Quiet/seclusion/privacy
4. Variety of trail routes and distances
5. Trails with challenging terrain
6. Presence of water features
7. Wildlife viewing opportunities
8. One or more vistas/look-outs
9. Dogs on leash permitted on the trails

Programs & Services

Cat. 1



Hazard Management

Flood Forecasting & Warning
Mapping & Regulations
Assets & Operations

Cat. 1



Land & Resource Conservation

General
Conservation Areas
Conservation Preserves
WECI Infrastructure
Administrative Land

Cat. 1 & 2



Source Water Protection & Monitoring

Cat. 1 & 3



Other Services

Education & Outreach
Stewardship
Visitor Services

Programs & Services



Hazard Management

Flood Forecasting &
Warning

Mapping & Regulations

Assets & Operations

Hazard Mgt: Flood Forecasting & Warning

Goal

1. Watershed users receive timely and accurate information and warnings regarding watershed conditions and how to protect themselves and their property.

Objectives

2. The gauge network is reliable and provides accurate real-time data regarding conditions at key locations across MVCA's jurisdiction.
3. Data meets industry quality standards, allows for short and long-term analysis, and is easy to access, use, and share.
4. Watershed models allow for reliable predictive analysis and optimal system operation.
5. Municipalities receive quality drought response coordination and emergency planning support.
6. Local communities understand how their watershed functions, systemic risks, how they can be mitigated, and how to prepare for and respond to natural hazards including drought.
7. Queries are responded to in accordance with MVCA's Customer Service policy.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (23) Annual updates should be provided to municipal partners every winter regarding the short and long-term forecast in preparation for the freshet and projected summer conditions.
- (25) An Education Plan will be developed and implemented to increase awareness and understanding of how watersheds function, water management, and natural hazards and how to mitigate them.

Hazard Mgt: Mapping & Regulations

Goals

1. Development does not occur in regulated areas unless properly assessed and permitted.
2. MVCA is considered to be a fair and responsive regulator.

Objectives

3. Regulatory maps are prepared in accordance with provincial requirements and updated in response to development pressures, changes in regulations, land use and the impacts of climate change.
4. Regulatory maps are updated annually and published on MVCA's website.
5. Historical data is readily available to support discussions with applicants and decision-making.
6. Site specific information and permits are used to adjust regulatory mapping where warranted.
7. The review of planning and permit applications consistently meet regulated timelines and industry standards.
8. Policy guidelines are kept current to address regulatory changes, and evolving watershed conditions and industry practices.
9. Queries are responded to in accordance with MVCA's Customer Service policy.
10. Complaints and reports of infractions are managed in a fair and transparent manner.
11. Compliance promotion and enforcement activities are timely, effective, and affordable.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (17) Continue to expand and update hazard mapping and the watershed model as resources allow.
- (21) Enhance public education and outreach
- (27) Planning and permit application fees should cost recover a minimum of 90% of development review and associated administrative costs.
- (28) Field surveys, modeling and mapping studies, should be recovered through user fees.
- (29) Compliance monitoring and enforcement are Category 1 costs that should be cost recovered where possible.

Hazard Mgt: Assets & Operations

Goals

1. Water management activities consistently mitigate the impacts of natural hazards.
2. MVCA is a trusted asset manager and operator of the Mississippi River system.

Objectives

3. Water management assets are operated and maintained in accordance with provincial and federal regulations, the Mississippi River Water Management Plan, and MVCA's Asset Management Plan and Operations, Maintenance & Surveillance (OMS) manuals.
4. The 10-year Capital Plan, municipal levies, and upper-tier government grants allow for timely development, renewal and replacement of water management assets, and the development and update of watershed models.
5. Asset renewal considers the impacts of development, climate change, environmental, social and financial impacts, and the historical rights and the current and future needs of First Nations and others.
6. MNR and OPG view MVCA as the operator of choice for their assets within the Mississippi River watershed.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (11) Continue to monitor asset conditions, prioritize needs, and undertake corrective works as resources allow.
- (13) Enhance public education and outreach.
- (14) Formalize communications and reporting with MNR, OPG, and private power generators.
- (17) The 10-year Capital Plan will be updated annually, and the Schedule of Municipal Capital Levy Increases updated at least once every four years.

Programs & Services



Land & Resource Conservation

General

Conservation Areas

Conservation Preserves

WECI Infrastructure

Administrative Land

Land & Res. Mgt: General

Goals

1. The natural resources of the Mississippi, Carp, and Ottawa river watersheds are managed sustainably for the enjoyment and welfare of current and future generations.
2. Land ownership and management are used as tools for reconciliation with First Nations.

Objectives

3. MVCA's *Land Inventory* is current and meets regulatory requirements.
4. MVCA's land holdings meet the evolving mandate and needs of the organization.
5. MVCA has free and clear title or legal agreements for all properties owned or used by the Authority for the delivery of programs and services.
6. Every property owned by or under agreement with MVCA has a board-approved plan.
7. The influence and participation of First Nations is evident at all MVCA properties.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (14) MVCA will work with First Nations to understand historical land uses and injustices, ecological and hydrological processes, and to identify opportunities for reconciliation through land conservation and management.
- (15) A plan will be prepared and implemented to address gaps in legal surveys and legal titles, including easements, and to register such in the Land Registry or Land Titles office.
- (20) MVCA will review property Master Plans at least once every ten years, and update them as needed.
- (21) MVCA shall not enter into Conservation Easement agreements except as a condition of a Board-approved stewardship program, with the easement not to exceed 10-years.
- (22) MVCA may enter into Partial Takings or Direct Conveyance where deemed by the Board of Directors to be in the interest of the Authority

Land & Res. Mgt: Conservation Areas

Goals

1. Conservation areas provide opportunities for walking, hiking, and solitude in a natural setting and contribute to the quality of life and sustainability of the watershed.
2. Conservation areas are accessible to all.

Objectives

3. MVCA conservation areas:
 - a) are large natural spaces with walking/hiking trails of varying length and difficulty that allow for at least 1-hour's passive recreation.
 - b) are attractive, affordable and safe.
 - c) provide parking, comfort stations, rest spots/shelters, and waste facilities.
 - d) provide at least one wheelchair accessible trail and comfort station.
 - e) provide excellent directional and interpretive signage that includes local cultural, Indigenous, and scientific information.
 - f) reserve at least 90% of the property as a natural area.
4. A conservation area-type park is available within a 30-minute drive of all watershed residents.
5. There is 15 ha of conservation area-type parkland for every 1,000 residents in the watershed.
6. Other conservation trails:
 - a) Walking/hiking trails on conservation lands within the watershed are maintained to a high standard.
 - b) MVCA optimizes use of know how and equipment by supporting municipal, county, and conservation organizations for the maintenance of walking/hiking trails in the watershed.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (18) The Mill of Kintail Museum is a community asset and cultural attraction. MVCA will operate the museum while seeking another organization to assume management of collections.
- (25) MVCA may support conservation organizations in its jurisdiction by assisting with trail maintenance on a cost recovery basis.
- (26) A demand analysis will be undertaken to identify existing and projected areas of the watershed requiring additional conservation areas.
- (27) Acquisition of lands from the province and local municipalities and counties will be prioritized over land donations for the establishment of new conservation areas.
- (28) New sites will be developed as grants become available to support installation of accessible washrooms, with a minimum grant level of 50% of projected costs.

- (29) MVCA Conservation Areas will be funded as follows:
 - a. Operations:**
 - i. Category 1: via the Municipal Operating Levy and user fees with a target revenue ratio of 90:10.
 - ii. Education & Outreach Program, which is a combination of Category 1 and 3 programming, via the Municipal Operating Levy and Other Sources with a target revenue ratio of 15:85 on an annualized basis. (See Section 4 for details.)
 - iii. Category 3: via the Municipal Operating Levy, user fees, and grants and donations with a target revenue ratio of 10:70:20 on an annualized basis.
 - c. Land acquisition:**
 - i. Via Lease, License of Occupancy, or other agreement with the Crown, municipal or county partner, or other conservation or public organization at a cost not be onerous (e.g. \$5/year) and be payable via Category 1 revenues.
 - ii. Via Fee Simple:
 - 1. Land costs shall be covered using cash donations, grants, the donation of land, or a combination of these. Where deemed to be in the interest of the Authority, the Board of Directors may allocate Category 1 funds towards land costs, which shall not exceed 25% of the appraised market value.
 - 2. Administrative costs such as legal fees and taxes will be paid via Category 1 revenues

- (32) Proposed acquisitions shall be considered as follows:
 - a) Staff identify the need for additional conservation lands and receive Board direction to identify acquisition opportunities and/or grants for that purpose.
 - b) Staff assess a proposed site(s) against the above mandatory criteria and desired attributes.
 - c) Where a site is deemed suitable by staff, a business case is submitted to the Board of Directors In-Camera that includes a concept plan that demonstrates how the site can meet Conservation Area Objectives and identifies notable attributes.
 - d) The Board of Directors either denies or approves the acquisition in-principle, or provides other direction to staff.
 - e) Prior to execution of an acquisition agreement, staff will secure the following:
 - i. Market valuation
 - ii. Title search
 - iii. Legal survey
 - iv. Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for hazardous materials, and
 - v. Grant and other funding agreements.
 - vi. Where the Board of Directors has approved in-principle the acquisition of a property, and staff have secured the above documents, the Executive Committee may approve the acquisition agreement where time constraints do not allow for approval by the full Board.

Land & Res. Mgt: Cons. Preserves

Goals

1. Eliminate risk of future losses in areas at high risk of natural hazards.
2. No net loss of ecological and hydrological services in the watershed.

Objectives

1. MVCA conservation preserves:
 - a) Sterilize undevelopable land to mitigate future flood and erosion damage and losses; or
 - b) Manage an area of natural heritage value on behalf of a third-party; or
 - c) Mitigate the impacts of land development elsewhere in the watershed; or
 - d) Protect or develop natural carbon sinks using GHG-reduction funding mechanisms.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (10) MVCA should work with local municipalities to identify and assess existing publicly owned land for the purpose of providing suitable hydrological and ecological offsetting opportunities.
- (11) MVCA should explore opportunities under the Canadian GHG Offset Credit System and other mechanisms to secure revenues to protect or enhance natural carbon sinks within the watershed.
- (12) The acquisition of Conservation Preserves will be funded as follows:
 - b) Stewardship: on a 100% cost-recovery basis via a Stewardship Agreement not to exceed 5-years duration; or a cost-recovery model approved by the Board of Directors.
 - c) Wetland Offsetting: on a 100% cost-recovery basis under an approved Offsetting Agreement that shall be no less than 5-years duration; or other cost-recovery model approved by the Board of Directors.
 - d) Carbon Offsetting: on a 100% cost-recovery basis under an agreement executed in accordance with federal regulations; or other cost recovery model approved by the Board of Directors.

Land & Res. Mgt: WECl sites

Objectives

1. Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECl) lands allow for:
 - a) The construction, maintenance, operation, and renewal of water and erosion control structures such as dams and weirs and include parking and materials storage.
 - b) The installation and maintenance of booms, fencing, signage and other safety measures.
 - c) Safe passage around a structure, which may include a portage route.
 - d) The installation and maintenance of monitoring and communication devices to support weather, soil, snow and ice, and riverine system monitoring and remote data access.
 - e) Unfettered legal access to all the above.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- d. Fee Simple:
 - i. Where the primary purpose of the structure is for flood or erosion control or natural resource protection:
 1. Land costs should be borne 50% by the Municipal Capital Levy or Reserve, and 50% by the Province.
 2. Administrative costs such as legal fees and taxes may be funded using revenues obtained via the Municipal Levy.
 - ii. Where the primary purpose of the structure is to maintain recreational water levels:
 1. Land acquisition costs should not be borne by MVCA.
 2. Administrative costs such as legal fees and taxes may be funded using revenues obtained via the Municipal Levy.

Programs & Services



Source Water Protection & Monitoring

Source Water Protection & Monitoring

Goals

1. MVCA demonstrates value for money in delivering system monitoring and resource management services to the province and municipalities.

Objectives

2. Samples are collected, handled, and shipped in accordance with required procedures.
3. Provincial monitoring activities are leveraged to support local municipal monitoring objectives.
4. Provincial resource management work is leveraged to support local municipal watershed management objectives.
5. The Board of Directors understands its separate and distinct role as a Source Protection Authority.
6. management activities consistently

Highlights: Actions and Policies

- (11) Continue to monitor asset

Programs & Services



Other Services

Education & Outreach (Cat. 1 and 3)

Stewardship

Visitor Services

Other: Education & Outreach

Goals

1. Watershed residents and users:
 - a) understand how the watershed functions and their role in it.
 - b) make informed decisions that mitigate risks and support resource sustainability.
2. MVCA is a partner of choice for education and community engagement.

Objectives

3. Locally relevant, useful, and accessible by all.
4. Targeted by audience and location.
5. Engaging, hands-on, and fun.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

6. MVCA will develop and deliver an Education & Outreach Plan.
7. The Education & Outreach Plan will be reviewed at least once every four years.
8. Services should be funded in accordance policy 2. B 29. a. ii.

Same approach for Stewardship and Visitor Services

Other: Stewardship

Goals

1. The protection of water quality, wetland cover, forest cover, and other environmental features by working with watershed landowners to make meaningful improvements to their properties and practices.

Objectives

2. Shoreline habitat enhancement
3. Stream and river restoration
4. Wetland protection and recovery
5. Enhanced forest management
6. Increased public knowledge of land management practices for watershed health
7. Community engagement in ecosystem monitoring and reporting
8. Invasive species identification and removal

Other: Visitor Services

Goals

1. Sustainable management of the property and buildings for current and future generations.
2. A top-10 destination in Lanark County.

Objectives

3. Increase all-season level of service, including education, cultural appreciation, and both guided and self-guided outdoor recreation opportunities, for local residents and visitors to the region.
4. Encourage the appreciation of local cultural history through programming and activities.
5. Broaden the sources and amounts of revenue from activities that complement the primary functions of the site to financially support core programs.
6. Strengthen relationships with the community at large.

Highlights: Actions and Policies

6. MVCA will develop and deliver an Education & Outreach Plan.
7. The Education & Outreach Plan will be reviewed at least once every four years.
8. Services should be funded in accordance policy 2. B 29. a. ii.