



LAKEHEAD REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
2022 ANNUAL REPORT





View of the Sleeping Giant from Fisherman's West Climate Change Awareness Park

LAKEHEAD REGION

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

VISION

A healthy, safe and sustainable Lakehead Watershed for future generations.

MISSION

To lead the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed.



11 BOARD MEMBERS

- Donna Blunt, Chair *Municipality of Shuniah*
- Grant Arnold, Vice-Chair *Township of Conmee*
- Joel Brown *Township of Dorion*
- Rudy Buitenhuis *Township of Gillies*
- Erwin Butikofer *Municipality of Neebing*
- Jim Vezina *Township of O'Connor*
- Allan Vis *Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge*
- Andrew Foulds *City of Thunder Bay*
- Trevor Giertuga *City of Thunder Bay*
- Andrea Goold *City of Thunder Bay*
- Umed Panu *City of Thunder Bay*

16 STAFF MEMBERS

- Tammy Cook *Chief Administrative Officer*
- Gail Willis *Watershed Manager*
- Mark Ambrose *Finance Manager*
- Ryne Gilliam *Lands Manager*
- Ryan Mackett *Communications Manager*
- Melanie O'Riley *Administrative Clerk/Receptionist*
- Gayle Little *Finance Administrative Assistant*
- Roman Augustyn *Information Systems Coordinator*
- Scott Drebit *GIS/Water Resources Technologist*
- Michelle Sixsmith *Development Regulations Officer*
- Ryan Harris *Field Operations Lead Hand*
- Amanda Donolovitch *Labourer (Seasonal)*
- Rachael Zacharias Bezanson *Education Coordinator (Contract)*
- Jessie McFadden *Watershed Stewardship Technician (Contract - Jan. to May)*
- Nadine Elmehriki *Watershed Stewardship Technician (Contract - May to Dec.)*
- Michelle Willows *Environmental Planner (Intern)*

Various seasonal, contract and intern positions are also filled, as needed, on an annual basis.

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) is a community-based environmental agency, whose purpose is to provide for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in the Lakehead Watershed. Conservation Authorities undertake a broad range of programs, including: watershed management, erosion control, flood forecasting and warning, recreation and land management, water level monitoring, plan input and review, environmental education, community outreach and stewardship. The LRCA's Area of Jurisdiction includes over 2,700 square kilometres, and is comprised of our eight Member Municipalities.

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority respectfully acknowledges that the lands on which we live and work are the traditional lands of the Anishinabek Nation and the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850.

As partners in the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed along with First Nations communities, the Métis Nation of Ontario, and other Indigenous peoples, the LRCA is committed to the common vision of a healthy, safe and sustainable Lakehead Watershed.

Cover Photo: A Juvenile Bald Eagle in Oliver Paipoonge.



Sandhill Cranes taking flight in Neebing.

Message from Donna Blunt, LRCA Chair

2022 was another year of change for the LRCA, but also a return to some level of normalcy as we were finally able to gather and meet in person after years of virtual meetings and working from home. I would like to thank the staff of the Authority, the Lakehead Conservation Foundation (LCF) and all of the volunteers and community partners that helped to make 2022 another successful year.

I would also like to thank the outgoing Board Members for their service on the Authority Board, and I would like to welcome the new members. I anticipate more great accomplishments during 2023 and beyond.

I am also very happy to have received a special extension from the Province of Ontario to allow me to act as Chair for a final year. I look forward to my responsibility to guide the new Board in our common mission to lead the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed.

Message from Tammy Cook, LRCA CAO

The past year was the final year of the Authority's first ever Strategic Plan, and the final year of the four-year term of the Board of Directors. Staff would like to thank the Chair and Board for their on-going commitment to the Authority and guidance over the past four years. The Board of Directors was instrumental in the fulfillment of many of the initiatives in the Strategic Plan and also approved the Strategic Plan for the next five years. The staff look forward to continuing to work with the new and returning Members as well as our Chair, Donna Blunt.

Conservation Authorities in 2022 continued to pivot and adhere to many legislative changes throughout the year. In 2022, the LRCA met all the mandated requirements set out in new legislation, including: the completion of an Inventory of Programs; restructuring of the Budget; updated Governance section on the website; quarterly reporting to the Ministry; and the updating of the Fee Policy. Staff have also initiated work on the mandated Conservation Area Strategy, Land Inventory and Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy, all due to the Province by December 31, 2024.

The LRCA is committed to continue to work with our municipal partners in order to achieve our vision of a healthy, safe and sustainable Lakehead Watershed for future generations.



CONSERVE & SUSTAIN

Enhance the management and sustainability of natural habitats and ecosystems through an integrated approach.

INITIATIVES:

- Support, strengthen and encourage environmental stewardship and sustainability.
- Manage future growth through a systematic evaluation of assets and landholdings.
- Collaborate with member municipalities and community partners to foster an integrated watershed management approach.
- Optimize decision-making by sharing data and knowledge.



Photos (left to right): planting volunteers at Fisherman's West; invasive species management at the Floodway; establishing a "No Mow Zone" at Fisherman's West; students building bird houses and hiking the Floodway; volunteers at the Floodway

The LRCA's Superior Stewards Shoreline Protection Program had continued success in 2022. The goal of the program is to promote watershed stewardship in the community and engage residents in the protection and restoration of shorelines and riparian ecosystems. The Superior Stewards program offers online resources, available on the LRCA website under the Stewardship dropdown.

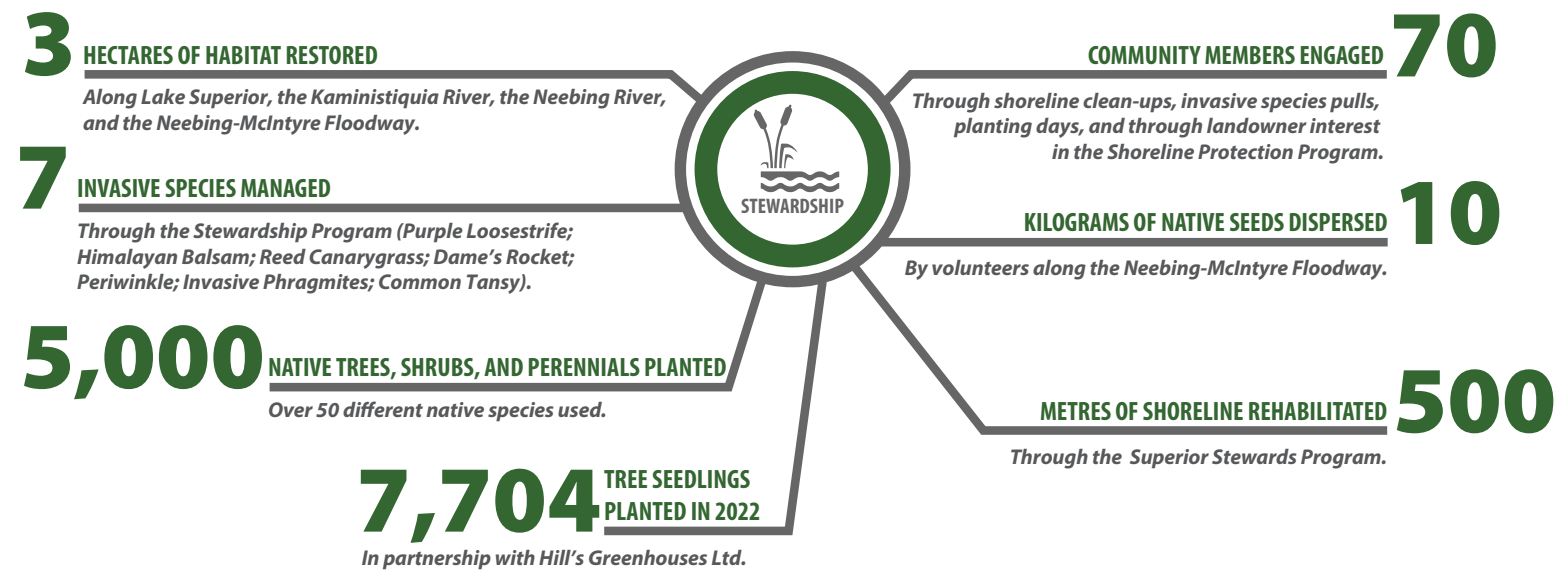
No municipal levy is used to fund the stewardship program. Between 2020-2025, over \$726,000.00 in external funding has been leveraged to support environmental stewardship in the Lakehead Watershed.

Staff had a busy year with shoreline protection and habitat creation efforts at Mission Island Marsh, the completion of Invasive Phragmites mapping, the creation of a cyanobacteria monitoring program, the completion of natural heritage assessments of all LRCA-owned lands, and a rural wetland delineation project. Additionally, select staff underwent wetland training.

Work continued at Fisherman's West Climate Change Awareness Park, with funding from the City of Thunder Bay, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, and Environment and Climate Change Canada. The LRCA will continue to restore wildlife habitat, rehabilitate the Lake Superior shoreline, recreate coastal wetlands, and provide passive recreation opportunities at the site. The goal is to return the area to a more naturalized condition by planting trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to our region. The naturalization of this area will provide valuable breeding grounds, shelter, and forage for migratory waterfowl, birds, and pollinators, while also creating a space where the public can explore and enjoy the beautiful natural landscape.

Work also continued on the Mountdale Boat Launch riparian habitat rehabilitation project on the Kaministiquia River. Wildlife habitat restoration along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway corridor also occurred. In partnership with grade 7 students from Pope John Paul II School and other community partners, riparian habitat at four identified locations along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway was restored, specifically the mouth of the Floodway at Lake Superior, LRCA-owned property at Fort William Road, and near the Diversion Structure on Ford Street.

During the summer of 2022, LRCA staff completed a watershed assessment of the Mosquito Creek Watershed, which is located within the City of Thunder Bay, Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge, Municipality of Neebing and the Fort William First Nation. The main objective of the watershed assessment was to summarize the physical, biological and socio-economic attributes, collect surface water quality data, inventory the forest ecosystem, fauna, soils, streambed substrate and stream bank cover, document active erosion sites, and document the physical condition of existing water crossings. The full study can be found on the LRCA website.



8 Member Municipalities

+2,700 km² Area of Jurisdiction

+151,000 Trees planted through the Private Landowners Tree Seedling Assistance Program



Fall colours at Fisherman's West Climate Change Awareness Park



PROTECT & SUPPORT

Safeguard people, property and communities through robust watershed management.

INITIATIVES:

- Increase awareness of the impacts of floods and hazards and the importance of mitigation.
- Demonstrate effective land use planning and emergency flood management through a collaborative approach.
- Maintain and enhance flood control infrastructure to minimize the impacts of flooding, erosion, and sedimentation.
- Evaluate the priorities for the protection and management of wetlands and natural heritage features.
- Integrate the impacts of climate change into future actions.
- Align watershed decision-making with stakeholders outside of the jurisdiction.



Photos (left to right): Diversion Structure lip dredging; sediment build-up at Diversion Structure; high Kaministiquia River water levels at Fort William Historical Park; view of the Kaministiquia River from the Stanley Bridge; CPR sediment trap dredging in the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway

During 2022, the LRCA issued 12 local flood messages/message updates including: two Water Safety Watershed Condition Statements, two Flood Outlook Watershed Condition Statements, three Flood Watch Statements and five Flood Warning Statements.

In May of 2022, the only significant flooding event of the year occurred between May 11-16, during which a Flood Warning Flood Message was in effect. Roads were overtopped within the Whitefish River watershed, and the Village of Hymers experienced flooding. The Kaministiquia River, Current River, and McIntyre River were also extremely high during the event. Flood Warning messages for the Thunder Bay District outside the area of jurisdiction of the LRCA were also issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for residents in the Kaministiquia River, Whitefish River, Dog Lake, Shebandowan, Kashabowie, and Lac des Mille Lacs watersheds.

After five years in a row of no diversion at all, the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway diverted for a record-breaking 16 consecutive days during the spring of 2022, due to record breaking snow depth and water content in April and May. In order to ensure operational integrity, the CPR sediment trap was dredged, with 4,404 cubic metres of sediment removed. Additionally, sediment removal occurred at the lip of the Floodway near the Diversion Structure, removing an additional 6,500 cubic metres of sediment which was deposited due to the above-mentioned prolonged diversion. The Floodway maintenance agreement between the City of Thunder Bay and LRCA was also renewed until 2027, at which time the agreement will be reviewed and renewed.

Development Regulations staff were once again extremely busy during the 2022 building season, issuing 64 permits, conducting 427 property and permit consultations and creating 856 property maps.

A new online mapping tool was developed and launched in 2022 that allows landowners to gain an understanding of their property by identifying the approximate regulated area. If your property is within a regulated area, permits are required from the LRCA for any proposed development in the regulated area, in addition to a building permit and other approvals from your municipality and other agencies. The online mapping tool can be found on the LRCA website at the "Map Your Property" tab under the Regulations drop-down on the homepage. Additionally, an inquiry form was added to the website to allow the public to request information directly from the LRCA.

9 Streamflow Gauges

11 Precipitation Gauges

3 Snow Survey Sites

Riverine flood protection provided by Neebing-McIntyre Floodway to the lower Neebing River and Intercity areas

2 WATER SAFETY STATEMENT

High flows, unsafe banks, melting ice or other factors could be dangerous for recreational users such as anglers, hikers, canoeists, children, pets, etc. Flooding is not expected

FLOOD OUTLOOK STATEMENTS **2**

Early notice of the potential for flooding based on weather forecasts calling for heavy rain, snow melt, high wind or other conditions

3 FLOOD WATCH

Indicates that there is the potential for flooding within specific watercourses and municipalities

LAKE SUPERIOR SHORELINE CONDITIONS STATEMENTS **0**

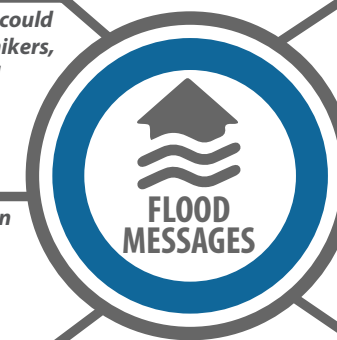
The LRCA may issue a Shoreline Conditions Statement for the shores of Lake Superior when at high levels

5 FLOOD WARNINGS

Indicates that flooding is imminent or occurring within specific watercourses and municipalities

FLOODWAY DIVERSION (DAYS) **17**

The Neebing-McIntyre Floodway affords riverine flood protection to the lower Neebing River and Intercity areas



64 PERMITS ISSUED

Under Ontario Regulation 180/06: Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses

COMMENTS MADE ON PLANNING ACT APPLICATIONS **155**

Per delegated commenter role regarding Section 3.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement

856 PROPERTY MAPS ISSUED

Maps are provided to illustrate regulated features on properties



GENERAL INQUIRIES **427**

Property and permit consultations



CONNECT & EXPLORE

Maximize intergenerational educational, engagement, and recreational opportunities through strong collaborations.

INITIATIVES:

- Emphasize a sense of place through positive and equitable interactive experiences.
- Develop a communications strategy to engage diverse stakeholders.
- Strengthen a shared interest in conservation through collaboration with existing and new partners.
- Manage recreational areas for current and future generations.



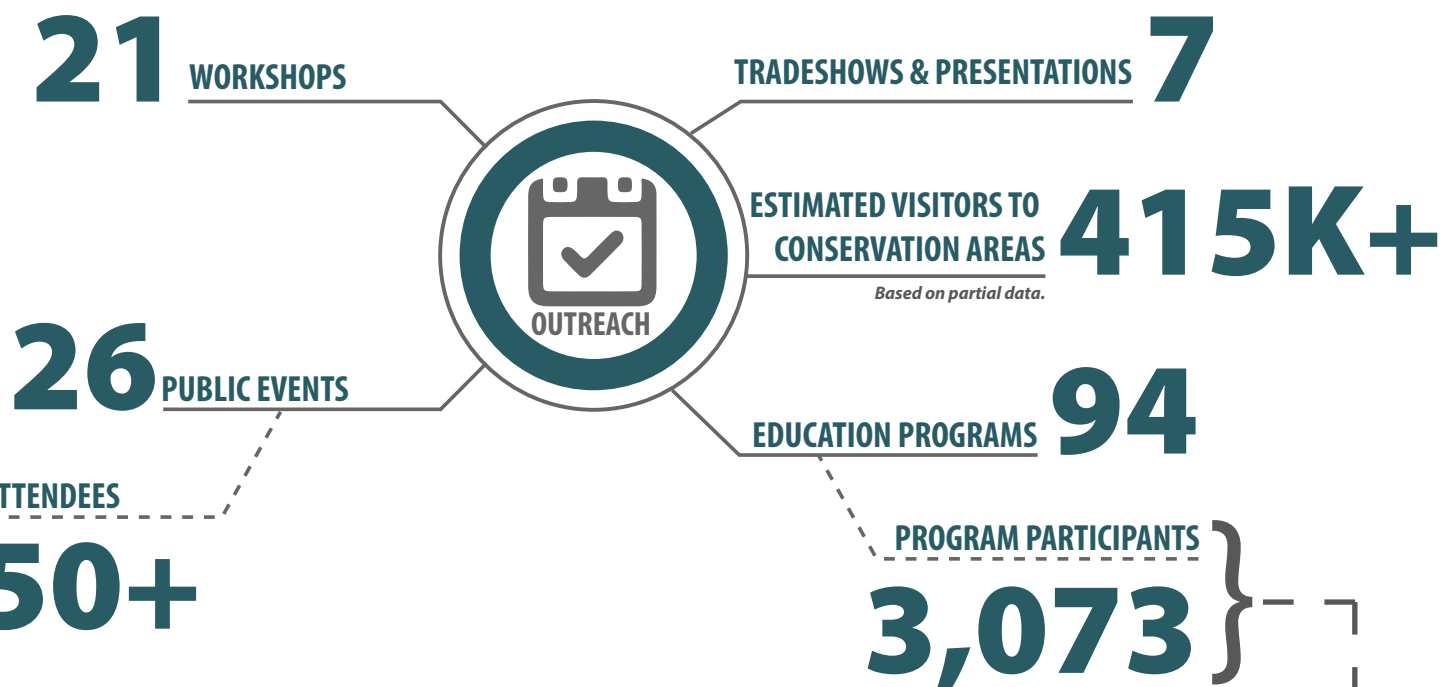
Photos (left to right): students participating in the City and Nature Challenge; maintenance work at Mission Island Marsh; paddlers at Hazelwood Lake Family Fun Day; new sign and bird box at Cedar Falls; learning about fish and aquatics; new outhouse at Little Trout Bay; Dr. Dave Norris explaining an atlas!

Field staff had a busy and eventful year, carrying out various projects in addition to regular Conservation Area and Floodway maintenance, including the expansion of the floating dock at Silver Harbour, refurbishments to the outhouse at Mission Island Marsh, the installation of a new accessible outhouse at Little Trout Bay, creation of an emergency vehicle turnaround at Cedar Falls, and the installation of a new picnic table at the end of the Dam Trail at Hazelwood Lake.

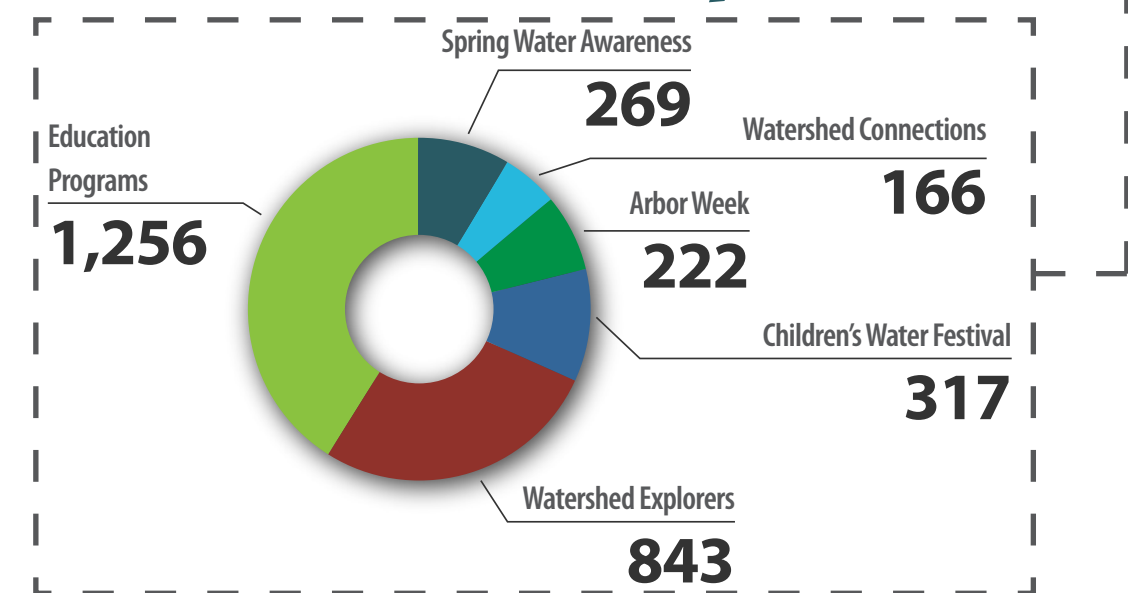
During 2022, Mills Block Forest and Wishart Forest were both reclassified as official Conservation Areas, bringing the total number of Conservation Areas owned, operated and maintained by the LRCA to ten. Mills Block and Wishart both provide excellent recreational and educational opportunities.

The popular Dorion Birding Festival returned to a modified, in-person event in 2022 for the first time since 2019. There were 104 different species observed at the Festival, including three new species to the Festival: Marsh Wren, Connecticut Warbler and Eastern Meadowlark.

Staff conducted many education programs, guided hikes and workshops during 2022, and have plans for more in 2023.



+2,500 hectares of land, including Conservation Areas, Forest Management Properties, floodplain lands, nature reserves and undeveloped holdings



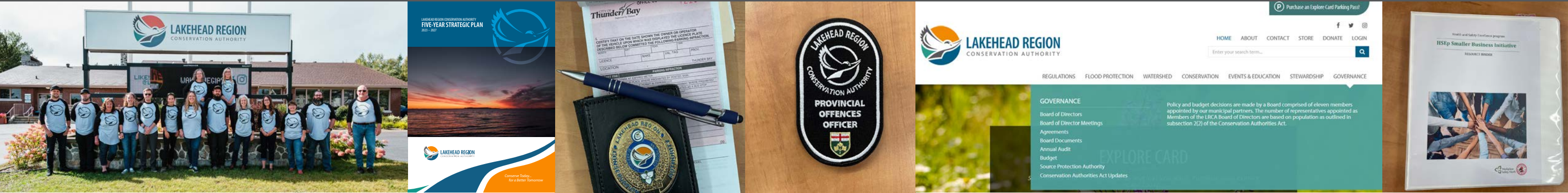


GOVERN & ENHANCE

Distinguish the organization as a leader in environmentally-sustainable practices and responsible stewardship.

INITIATIVES:

- Optimize organizational performance through policy and measurable actions to improve accountability and transparency.
- Build a resilient financial model based on capacity, capabilities and public expectations.
- Create a dynamic culture of learning, safety, and positivity.
- Increase awareness of Indigenous knowledge and practices for integration into organizational decision-making.



Photos (left to right): LRCA 2022 team photo; LRCA Five-Year Strategic Plan 2023-2027; Provincial Offences Officer's badge, parking ticket book and patch; screenshot of the new "Governance" section on the website; WSIB Health and Safety Excellence Program binder

Many changes were made to the LRCA's Administrative By-Law, budget, website and other procedures as part of recent regulatory changes enacted by the Province. There are several reporting requirements that staff begun in 2022 that will carry over into 2023 and 2024 as part of these changes.

2022 marked the fifth and final year of the LRCA's first Five-Year Strategic Plan. Over the course of the last five years, staff carried out many initiatives directly as a result of the strategic plan. Staff also developed the LRCA Five Year Strategic Plan 2023-2027 internally, which was approved by the LRCA Board in November 2022. This new strategic plan will guide the operational and organizational decisions of the LRCA over the next five years.

The LRCA has designated several staff members as Provincial Offences Officers, who are authorized to carry out enforcement of Section 28 and Section 29 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* which includes enforcement of Development Regulations as well as enforcement of Conservation Areas Regulations, including enforcement of the requirement to pay for parking at Mission Island Marsh and Cascades Conservation Areas under the City of Thunder Bay Parking By-Law. Parking fees fund the operation and maintenance of Conservation Areas, which receive no provincial funding.

The LRCA's budgeted 2022 revenue and expenditures totaled approximately \$3,396,159.00.

REVENUE

Provincial Transfer Payment & Grants

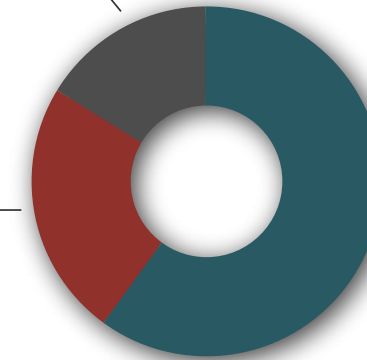
16%

Self Generation & Other

24%

Municipal Levy

60%



EXPENDITURES

Stewardship

12%

Water Management

46%

Land Management

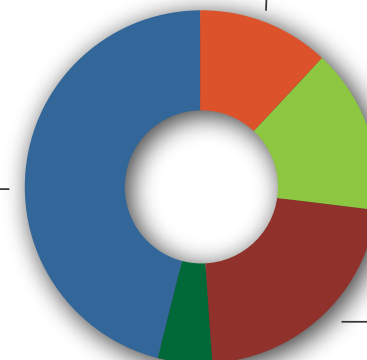
5%

Conservation Areas

15%

Administration

22%



43 STAFF TRAINING SESSIONS (INCLUDING VIRTUAL)

Commitment of ongoing learning and development of staff.



ADMINISTRATION

5 NEW HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES CREATED

Continued commitment to the Health and Safety of Staff.

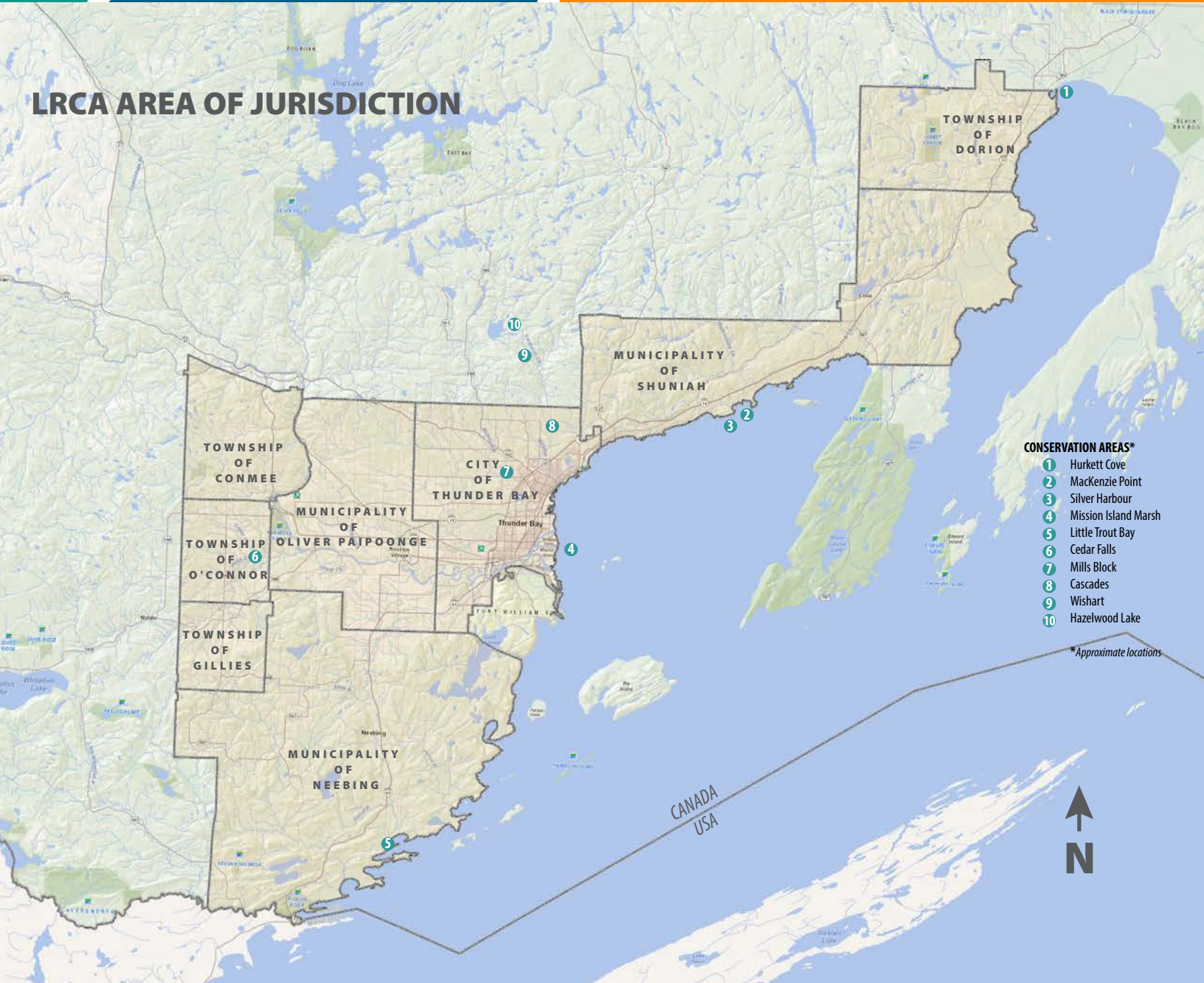
13 POLICIES CREATED & AMENDED

Continued effort to improve accountability and transparency.



Falconry demo at Hazelwood Lake Family Fun Day

LRCA AREA OF JURISDICTION



"CONSERVE TODAY... FOR A BETTER TOMORROW"



LRCA ESTABLISHED 1954

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