



**LAKEHEAD REGION**  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT







## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

		Vice-Chair		Chair							
<b>Brian Kurikka</b>	<b>Albert Aiello</b>	<b>Jim Vezina</b>	<b>Sheelagh Hendrick</b>	<b>Donna Blunt</b>	<b>Rudy Buitenhuis</b>	<b>Dan Calvert</b>	<b>Robert Beatty</b>	<b>Grant Arnold</b>	<b>Greg Johnsen</b>	<b>Trevor Giertuga</b>	
Municipality of Neebing	City of Thunder Bay	Township of O'Connor	City of Thunder Bay	Municipality of Shuniah	Township of Gillies	Municipality of Oliver Paipooonge	Township of Dorion	Township of Conmee (not pictured)	City of Thunder Bay (not pictured)	City of Thunder Bay (not pictured)	

## STAFF

<b>Tammy Cook</b>	Chief Administrative Officer
<b>Melissa Hughson</b>	Watershed Manager
<b>Mark Ambrose</b>	Finance Manager
<b>Ryne Gilliam</b>	Lands Manager
<b>Ryan Mackett</b>	Communications Manager
<b>Melanie O'Riley</b>	Administrative Clerk/Receptionist
<b>Gayle Little</b>	Financial Administrative Assistant
<b>Roman Augustyn</b>	Information Systems Coordinator
<b>Scott Drebit</b>	GIS/Water Resources Technologist
<b>Michelle Sixsmith</b>	Development Regulations Officer
<b>Ryan Harris</b>	Field Operations Lead Hand
<b>Michelle Willows</b>	Environmental Planner
<b>Jessie McFadden</b>	Watershed Biologist
<b>Rachael Zacharias Bezanson</b>	Education Coordinator (Contract)
<b>Ashley Brimmell</b>	Watershed Stewardship Technician Intern
<b>Amanda Donolovitch</b>	Labourer (Seasonal)

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

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.

## MISSION

To lead the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed.

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) is a community-based environmental agency, responsible for the 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 flood forecasting and warning; development regulations; plan review; water monitoring; floodplain management; erosion mitigation; Source Water Protection; conservation lands; stewardship; and environmental education.

The Authority is responsible for the administration of Ontario Regulation 41/24 which regulates development in areas where the control of flooding, erosion, unstable soil or bedrock may be affected by development.

## VISION

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



Chair Donna Blunt, Mayor Ken Boshcoff and CAO Tammy Cook at the ceremonial LRCA flag raising at Thunder Bay City Hall in recognition of the LRCA 70th Anniversary.

### Message from Donna Blunt, LRCA Chair

It was another successful year for the Authority in 2024. I'd like to extend my gratitude to my fellow Board members for their continued support and confidence in me to act as Chair for another year. I'd like to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for allowing me to run for Chair once again. We have a fantastic Board that works extremely well together and is efficient in our decision making, thanks in large part to the professional and knowledgeable Administration and hard-working staff of the Authority, who do an excellent job every year to make the LRCA such a well-run organization with great teamwork. I very much enjoyed working with the Board and staff during 2024, and I was exceptionally proud to be able to celebrate the LRCA's 70th Anniversary as Chair. I look forward to continuing to work with this great group of people into the future.

### Message from Tammy Cook, LRCA CAO

In 2025 the LRCA reached the milestone of 70 years of conservation. Our history began in 1954, originally as the Neebing Valley Conservation Authority with an expansion in 1963 to include all our current municipal partners and being renamed the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority. The Authority has achieved many accomplishments over that time, which would not have been possible without the dedication of all the past and present staff and Board Members who have shaped the legacy and success of our organization. Through the decades the Authority has learnt how to embrace and manage change and adapt as needed to continue to work towards our Mission to lead the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed. As we look forward to the next 70 years it is exciting to envision how the continued efforts of the LRCA will have a positive impact on sustaining the Lakehead Watershed for future generations.





## CONSERVE & SUSTAIN

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



Ashley Brimmell and Jessie McFadden with the Inspiration Award.



LU international students volunteering at Boulevard Lake.



OPG volunteers helping with a shoreline planting by the Floodway.



The Hope & Memory Garden, located along the Floodway.



In 2024, the LRCA's Seeds for Conservation program officially launched. The program sustainably harvests seed native to Northwestern Ontario from the LRCA's ten Conservation Areas for use in ongoing stewardship initiatives. Seeds and plants raised from seed collected have been provided to City of Thunder Bay, Ontario Native Women's Association, Fort William First Nation, EcoSuperior, Lakehead University, and Confederation College. Approximately 4,500 plants were grown, and the initiative was awarded the Inspiration Award at the Conservation Areas Workshop in October, as voted on by peers from the 36 other Conservation Authorities in the Province.

A 3-hectare engineered wetland was installed along the shoreline of Boulevard Lake in 2024, with funding from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Wetland Conservation Partner Program and the City of Thunder Bay. This stormwater management project will address water quality concerns in Boulevard Lake by redirecting the flow of three storm drains into a wetland, providing filtration of runoff prior to entering the lake. The wetland habitat will also provide terrestrial and aquatic habitat for fish, birds, amphibians, and pollinators. Over 5,000 native plants installed will offer natural filtration and ecosystem services. The planting was made possible thanks to volunteers from Confederation College, Lakehead University, La Verendrye, and Enbridge Gas.

The Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Habitat Corridor project continued in 2024 restoring the riparian habitat along the banks of the Floodway within the Thunder Bay Area of Concern. The long-term goal of the project is to create a functioning riparian buffer along the entire Floodway Corridor, while creating ecologically diverse wildlife habitat and a vibrant greenspace for pollinators, birds, and wildflowers to thrive.

Work continued at Hurkett Cove Conservation Area related to invasive cattail remediation. Invasive Narrowleaf Cattail was mapped in Hurkett Cove late summer 2023. In 2024, Wild Rice was mapped to compare to the spread of Cattail. Aquatic and benthic surveys, along with a Autonomous Recording Unit installation for bird and amphibian observations was also completed in 2024.

The LRCA has engaged key stakeholders to form the Thunder Bay Regional Phragmites Collaboration, to inform the current status of invasive phragmites in the region, develop an integrated long-term plan for its management, and collaborate on its removal. This has resulted in the management of 23 stands of phragmites (approximately one hectare) during 2024.

The LRCA's popular Tree Seedling Program was a huge success in 2024, facilitating the planting of 13,350 tree seedlings in the Lakehead Watershed. In 2024, Hill's Greenhouses donated all seedlings sold through the program as a fundraiser for the LRCA's education program.



## STEWARDSHIP



5

HECTARES OF HABITAT RESTORED

Along Lake Superior, Neebing River, Neebing-McIntyre Floodway, McVicar Creek, and Current River.



280

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED

Through 14 volunteer events, including shoreline clean-ups, invasive species pulls, planting days, and landowner interest in Shoreline Protection Program.



8

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGED

Purple Loosestrife; Himalayan Balsam; Tatarian Honeysuckle; Reed Canary Grass; Invasive Phragmites; Common Tansy; Invasive Cattails; Forget-Me-Nots.



22

KILOGRAMS OF NATIVE SEEDS DISPERSED

By volunteers along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway and Current River.



800

METRES OF SHORELINE REHABILITATED

Through stewardship program projects and initiatives.



2

HABITAT STRUCTURES INSTALLED

Structures include owl nesting boxes.



4,500

NATIVE PLANTS GROWN

By LRCA staff for installation at various stewardship projects throughout the region; 35 native seed species collected from Conservation Areas.



12,000

NATIVE PLANTINGS

Over 55 different native species of trees, shrubs and perennials planted.



## REPORT SUSPECTED BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOMS

Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms have become a growing problem within the Thunder Bay District affecting many inland freshwater lakes. Cyanobacteria is a microscopic plant-like organism that can produce Harmful Algal Blooms (HABS) in warm nutrient-rich streams, rivers, or lakes. Assume all suspicious algal bloom are potentially toxic and report observations to the Spills Action Center.

### REPORT SUSPECTED BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOMS TO THE SPILLS ACTION CENTRE:

Visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-pollution-and-spills>  
Toll Free: 1-800-268-6060

SCAN ME!



Cyano bacteria bloom caused from agricultural runoff.



Cyano bacteria bloom as a result of nutrient loading.





## PROTECT & SUPPORT

Safeguard people, property and communities through robust watershed management.



Water level identification colours painted on the Diversion Structure.



Staff inspecting newly installed water level loggers on the Floodway.



Spring ice conditions on the Neebing River on April 2, 2024.



Staff conducting soil sampling as part of a wetland evaluation.

As part of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Program the LRCA issued one flood message on May 21, 2024 (Flood Watch) related to a rainfall event; however, no significant flooding occurred. The Neebing-McIntyre Floodway did not divert during 2024.

The LRCA's bi-monthly snow survey program continued in 2024 at three historic snow survey locations (Hazelwood Lake, Vibert Road, and McVicar Creek). This program has been conducted as part of the Flood Forecasting and Warning program since 1974. Snow depth and water content were well below average during the winter of 2023/2024. This resulted in the Level I Low Water Condition that was declared in August 2023 being upgraded to a Level II Low Water Condition at the beginning of 2024, as received precipitation was below 60% of average. The Low Water condition was undeclared after spring freshet. After well below average precipitation over the summer months, a Level I Low Water condition was again declared in October, which remained in effect for the rest of 2024.

During 2024, an automated water level monitoring system was installed to collect water level readings at various points along the Diversion and Floodway channels that digitally log water level data and automatically send the data to the LRCA office. The system provides accurate measurements of water levels that will be used to calibrate floodplain modelling in the future.

In the Fall of 2024, the upstream side of the Diversion Structure was painted in a design to mimic the colours of the Flood Forecasting and Warning System (Green: Normal; Yellow: Water Safety/Flood Outlook Statement; Orange: Flood Watch; Red: Flood Warning). The coloured stripes correspond with known elevations; therefore, providing a visual reference during flood events and in photo documentation of the corresponding return period.

In 2024, 92 permits were issued under O. Reg. 180/06 and O. Reg. 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits and 361 consultations were undertaken with landowners related to planning and permits. This is the greatest number of permits issued by the LRCA in a single year. Additionally, staff provided 967 property maps related to property inquiries. The development regulations administered by the LRCA, along with the plan review program, is intended to work with landowners to direct development away from natural hazards through a proactive approach which reduces the need to financially or physically rescue people from the impacts of flooding or erosion. The mapping tool on LRCA's website is available to determine if property contains any regulated area.



## FLOOD MESSAGES

0

### WATER SAFETY STATEMENTS

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.

0

### FLOOD OUTLOOK STATEMENTS

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

1

### FLOOD WATCH

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

0

### FLOOD WARNINGS

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

2

### LEVEL I LOW WATER CONDITION

Declared on May 10, 2024, and was undeclared on June 5, 2024; Declared on October 10, 2024 and remained in effect for remainder of 2024.

1

### LEVEL II LOW WATER CONDITION

Declared on January 3, 2024; downgraded to Level I on May 10, 2024.



## PLANNING & PERMITS



92

### PERMITS ISSUED

Under Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits.



145

### PLANNING ACT COMMENTS

As per delegated commenter role regarding Section 5.2 (Natural Hazards) of the Provincial Planning Statement.



967

### PROPERTY MAPS ISSUED

Maps are provided to illustrate regulated features on properties and during pre-consultation.



361

### GENERAL INQUIRIES

Property, planning and permit consultations.



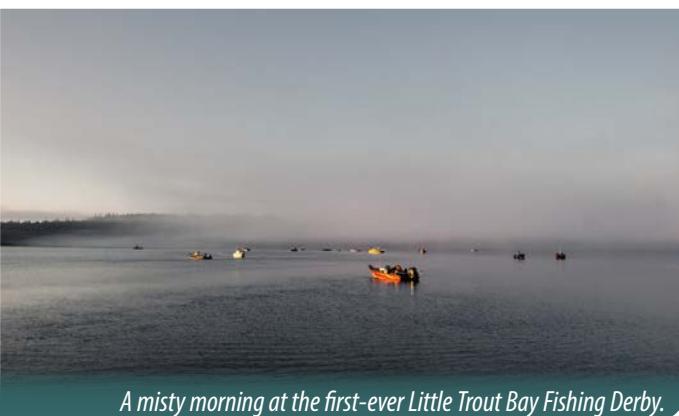


## CONNECT & EXPLORE

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



Luc Despres of Despres Metal Artwork with his creation at Cascades.



A misty morning at the first-ever Little Trout Bay Fishing Derby.



A school group enjoying an education program at Hazelwood Lake.



Birders participating at the 2025 Dorion Birding Festival.

Field staff were kept extremely busy throughout the year with the regular maintenance and upkeep of LRCA's ten Conservation Areas, in addition to some special projects. A new, accessible concrete outhouse was installed at Cascades Conservation Area in 2024, along the repaved trail adjacent to the picnic shelter. A floating dock with an accessible floating kayak launch was installed at Little Trout Bay Conservation Area. The new dock provides another option for paddlers, in addition to the well used floating docks installed at Hurkett Cove and Hazelwood Lake. Based on received user feedback, a port-a-potty was installed near the kayak launch at Hazelwood Lake. A new simple boardwalk to a wetland was created as an offshoot of the Orange Trail at Hazelwood Lake, and a pet waste bag dispenser was added along the trail at Cascades.

The LRCA was extremely excited to have been able to once again secure the services of local artist Luc Despres of Despres Metal Artwork to create a sculptural entrance sign at Cascades Conservation Area. Continuing in a similar style previously utilized by Despres for his work at Mission Island Marsh Conservation Area, the new Cascades sign serves the dual purposes of both a prominent entrance way sign as well as a work of public art. It has to be seen in person for the full effect. The sculpture was installed in November of 2024.

Luc Despres also donated several concrete mermaid sculptures, which will be sunk at the Silver Harbour Dive Park during 2025 to act as both a scuba diving feature and fish habitat.

Staff had an extremely busy event season in 2024, including a well attended 70th Anniversary Celebration in July at LRCA's Administrative Office and the first-ever Little Trout Bay Fishing Derby in August, in partnership with the Municipality of Neebing. The Second Annual Dorset Pier Outdoor Health and Wellness Day was held at Cascades in September, and the Dorion Birding Festival occurred at the end of May. With the generous support of the TD Friends of the Environment Fund, staff were able to host a series of Watershed Explorer Programs, including outdoor guided hikes with expert guest speakers on a wide range of topics including birds and birding, plants and wildflowers, fish and aquatics, and more. The LRCA also hosted its first-ever trivia night, in collaboration with Dawson Trail Craft Brewery. Be sure to follow the LRCA on Facebook and Instagram and sign up for our e-newsletter to stay up to date on all future events, workshops, fundraisers, and information sessions.

The LRCA's outdoor environmental education program experienced continued growth in 2024, reaching over 3,300 participants through our staff-led education and nature interpretive programs for schools, organized clubs and groups, and the general public. Educators are encouraged to book educational outdoor field trips to Conservation Areas through the LRCA website, or to reach out to staff at [education@lakeheadca.com](mailto:education@lakeheadca.com).



## OUTREACH & EVENTS

 **3,310**

### PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Estimated number of participants in our outdoor education and nature interpretive programs.

### EDUCATION PROGRAMS

 **1,858**

### SPRING WATER AWARENESS

 **462**

### WATERSHED CONNECTIONS

 **214**

### ARBOR WEEK

 **297**

### CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL

 **297**

### WATERSHED EXPLORERS

 **182**

 **91**

### EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Includes Environmental Education programming such as school field trips to Conservation Areas and in-class presentations.

 **22**

### PUBLIC EVENTS

Includes events such as the Dorion Birding Festival, Fall Waterfowl Viewing Day, Neebing Fish Derby, etc.

 **33**


### TRADESHOWS & PRESENTATIONS

Includes LRCA appearances at other community events, as well as presentations to the community.

 **15**

### WORKSHOPS

Includes Nature Interpretive Programs such as guided hikes and nature-based programming.

 **1,000+**

### EVENT ATTENDEES

Estimated number of guests attending our public events.

 **22**

### GUEST SPEAKERS

Expert guest speakers assist with the delivery and development of specialized education and outreach programs.

 **517K+**

ESTIMATED VISITORS TO CONSERVATION AREAS (based on partial data)



## COMMUNITY

 **12**

### CORPORATE SPONSORS

- Copperfin Credit Union
- Dawson Trail Craft Brewery
- Despres Metal Artwork
- Enbridge
- Griffon Association
- Hill's Greenhouses
- Invasive Species Centre
- Lakehead Conservation Foundation
- Ontario Power Generation
- Parks Canada
- Richardson Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Fund

 **40**

### PRIVATE DONORS

Generous contributions from members of the public towards education, Conservation Areas projects, land donations, and more.

 **75**

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Adelaide Butterfly Garden	Haveman Brothers Forestry	Canada	TB District Health Unit
Age BIG	Hill's Greenhouses	Neebing Emergency Services	TB District Stewardship Council
Blue Sky Strategic Group	Hope & Memory Garden	Neebing Fire & Rescue Assn.	TC Energy
Blue-Green Labs	Invasive Species Centre	North Shore Steelhead Assn.	Thunder Bay 55+ Centre
Boy Scouts	Kay Lee Photography	North/South Consultants	Thunder Bay Field Naturalists
City of Thunder Bay	KBM Resources Group	N. Ontario Heritage Fund	Thunder Bay Rotary Club
Confederation College	Lake Superior NMCA	Ontario Nature	Thunder Country Diving
Conservation Ontario	Lakehead University	Ontario Parks	Township of Conmee
Copperfin Credit Union	LU Faculty of Education	Ontario Power Generation	Township of Dorion
D&R Sporting Goods	Magnus Theatre	Parks Canada	Township of Gillies
Dark Forest Photographic	Métis Nation of Ontario	Red Rock Indian Band	Township of O'Connor
Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans	Ministry of Natural Resources	Regional Food Dist. Assn.	United Way
Dorset Pier Mental Health	Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks	TB Remedial Action Plan	Upriver Running
EarthCare	Ministry of Transportation	Resolute Forest Products	Urban Greenscapes
EcoSuperior	Municipality of Neebing	Richardson International	Waterfront Trail Rotary
Enbridge	Municipality of Oliver	Roots to Harvest	Community Action Team
Environment and Climate Change Canada	Paipoonge	Royal Bank of Canada	Wildlife Conservation Society
Fort William First Nation	Municipality of Shuniah	Science North	Woodland Heritage NW
Harris Ecological Consulting	Nature Conservancy of	Superior Seed Producers	
		Catholic District School Board	

 **302**

### VOLUNTEERS

Hardworking volunteers help in various capacities, including at plantings, clean-ups, special events, and the Foundation.





## GOVERN & ENHANCE

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



Tammy Cook and Donna Blunt receive a donation from Erin Knight.



LRCA staff participating in the Spring Up to Clean Up program.



Ceremonial cake cutting at the LRCA's 70th Annual General Meeting.



CAO Tammy Cook speaking at the 70th Anniversary Celebration.

The LRCA celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2024, commemorating 70 years of conservation excellence. The LRCA, originally formed as the Neebing Valley Conservation Authority, was founded in 1954.

The Lakehead Conservation Foundation (LCF) presented the LRCA with a substantial contribution in the amount of \$30,000 in 2024, thanks to the successful fundraising efforts of the annual Conservation Dinner & Auction and annual Wine Tasting & Dinner at Whitewater. \$20,000.00 has been designated for the LRCA's environmental education and nature interpretive program, which relies on charitable donations, special grants, corporate sponsorships, and self-generated user fees in order to operate. The additional \$10,000 contribution has been earmarked for an exciting new project anticipated to begin in 2026.

One of the biggest changes to the LRCA was that as of April 1, 2024, a new Minister's regulation came into effect (Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits), replacing O. Reg. 180/06: Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses. This coincided with the proclamation of associated sections within the *Conservation Authorities Act*. As a result, various policies were enacted by the LRCA and the Regulatory Mapping used in the administration of the regulations was updated. The LRCA's role in the administering of development regulations within its area of jurisdiction has not been meaningfully impacted.

In accordance with new regulatory compliance requirements under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, the LRCA developed a Conservation Lands Strategy, Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy and a Land Acquisition and Disposition Policy. Several other policies were created, updated, and/or amended during 2024, including interim guidelines, transitional procedures, administrative review, complete application and compliance reporting policies related to O. Reg. 41/24; updating of the Tangible Capital Assets Policy, Corporate Services Policy and the Source Protection Committee Procedural Manual.

The LRCA established a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) with two certified members in 2024. The JHSC has been working towards further enhancing the LRCA's Health and Safety Program.

In an effort to ensure compliancy with the rules and regulations of the LRCA's ten Conservation Areas, staff increased enforcement during 2024 resulting in demonstrable results. Parking payment/Explore Card compliancy has increased from 2023, and fewer instances of other regulation infractions occurred. Five LRCA staff members are designated as Provincial Offences Officers, with three designated for Section 29 (Conservation Areas) regulations enforcement and two designated for Section 28 (development regulations) enforcement. Provincial Offences Officers allow staff to more efficiently and effectively encourage compliancy with regulations under the purview of the Authority.



## ADMINISTRATION



2

### NEW STRATEGIES CREATED

Conservation Lands Strategy and Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy.



7

### POLICIES CREATED & AMENDED

Various operational and administrative policies to ensure efficient and transparent governance of the Authority.



23

### STAFF TRAINING SESSIONS

Professional development and continuous knowledge opportunities for staff.



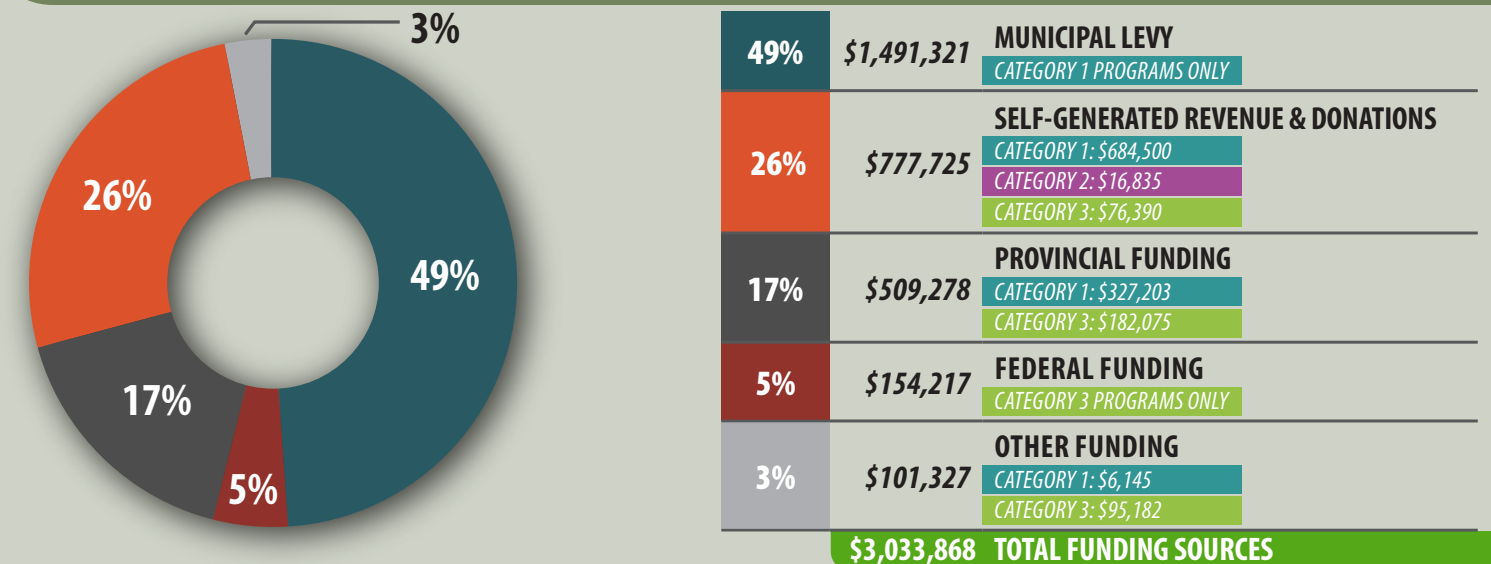
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### PROVINCIAL OFFENCES OFFICERS

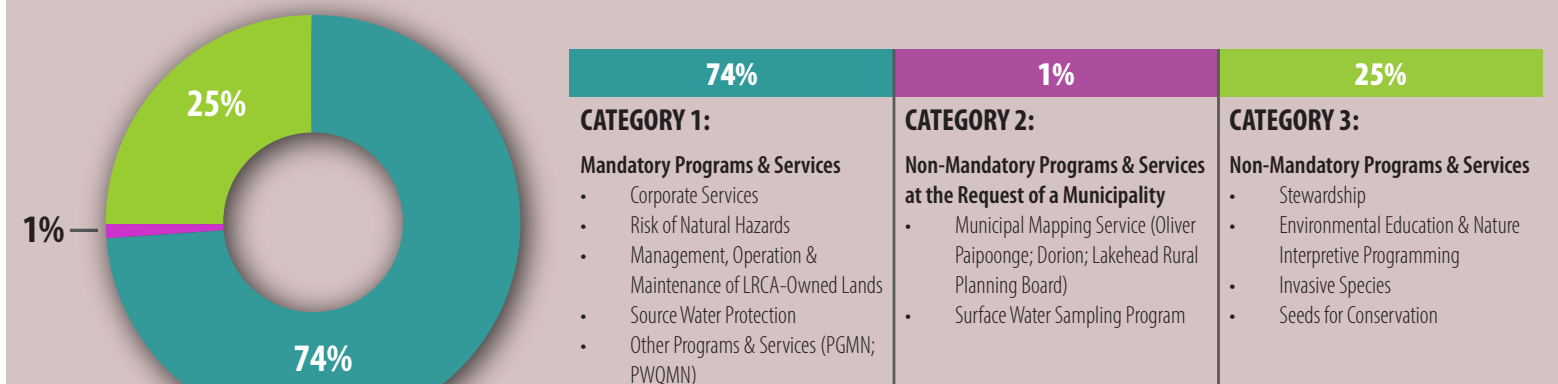
Staff designated as Provincial Offences Officers under the *Conservation Authorities Act* to enforce Development and Conservation Areas Regulations.



## FUNDING SOURCES

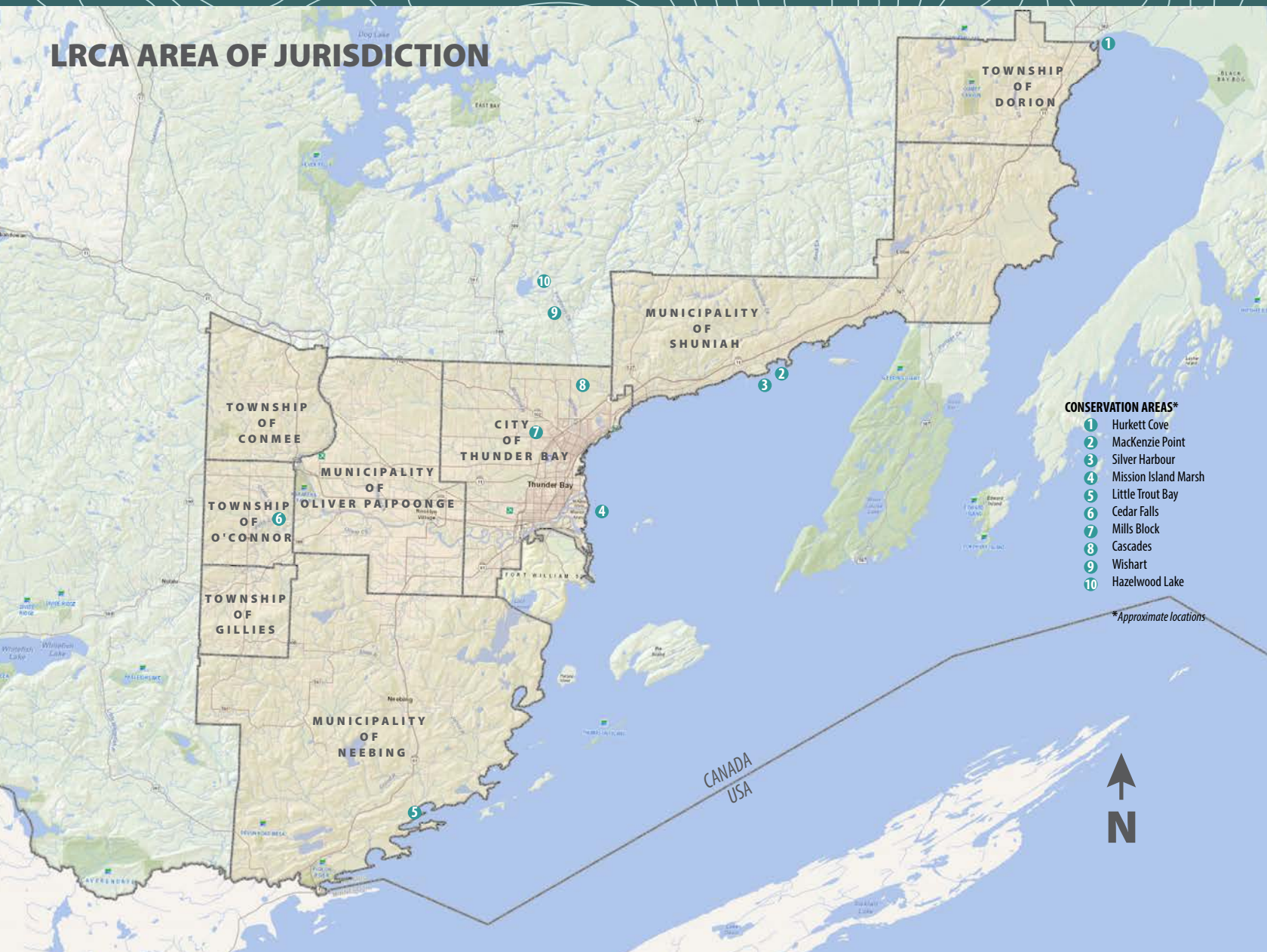


## FUNDING SOURCE ALLOCATIONS BY PROGRAM AREA





# LRCA AREA OF JURISDICTION



- CONSERVATION AREAS\***
- 1 Hurkett Cove
  - 2 Mackenzie Point
  - 3 Silver Harbour
  - 4 Mission Island Marsh
  - 5 Little Trout Bay
  - 6 Cedar Falls
  - 7 Mills Block
  - 8 Cascades
  - 9 Wishart
  - 10 Hazelwood Lake

\*Approximate locations

**"CONSERVE TODAY... FOR A BETTER TOMORROW"**

## LAKEHEAD REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

130 Conservation Road  
PO Box 10427  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T8

Phone: (807) 344-5857

Fax: (807) 345-9156

E-mail: [info@lakeheadca.com](mailto:info@lakeheadca.com)

[www.lakeheadca.com](http://www.lakeheadca.com)



**LAKEHEAD REGION**  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Member of



**Conservation ONTARIO**  
Natural Champions

f @lakeheadregion

