



Essex Region  
Conservation  
Authority



# Annual Report 2010



## **Our Vision for 2020**

To achieve a sustainable environment with healthy watersheds highlighted by clean creeks, rivers, and Great Lakes, thriving natural areas, productive agricultural lands, and vibrant places.



## **Our Mission**

To provide locally based leadership in creating a sustainable environment for the residents of the Essex region.



## A Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the 2010 Annual Report of the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA). ERCA is a community-based organization dedicated to the protecting, restoring, and managing of the natural resources in our region. Through 37 years of conservation, ERCA has worked in partnership with the provincial and federal governments, our nine member municipalities, and the community to increase natural areas coverage, improve water quality across the region, protect people and property from flood and erosion, and provide education and recreation opportunities.

It is exciting to look back over the past year's achievements. This year's highlights touch on some of our largest successes for the year – restoring more than 300 acres at Cedar Creek, the delisting of Wheatley Harbour, and the completion of our updated Strategic Plan.



It is through the generous funding of our partners, including Environment Canada, Ministry of the Environment, and our member municipalities, that we can continue to strive towards ERCA's vision for 2020 **of achieving a sustainable environment with healthy watersheds highlighted by clean creeks, rivers, and Great Lakes, thriving natural areas, productive agricultural lands, and vibrant places.**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors for its commitment towards a sustainable future for our region. We are grateful for the ongoing support from our senior levels of government and also thank our many partners and extraordinary base of volunteers. Finally, all of the initiatives identified in the following pages would not have been possible without a dedicated staff of professionals working diligently to improve the environment that we all share.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Anthony Leardi". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anthony Leardi

## A Message from the General Manager

As I reflect on my first full year as General Manager, I am proud of all that we accomplished in 2010 as we worked towards our goal of a sustainable future for our region.

ERCA has a responsibility to help our region and its communities ensure the places we live in provide clean water and landscapes, are protected from flooding and erosion, and support healthy living through recreation and conservation. With this responsibility, we have to consider how changes in our urban and rural landscapes impact our communities and our region. We need to understand the impacts of climate change and landscape changes on the places we live in. The more we know about our region, the greater our attachment will be to it, the better we will be able to care for it, and ultimately, the greater our experiences will be of the Essex region as a place.

This year we completed our 2011-2016 Strategic Plan and 2011 Action Plan. These plans will shape our priorities, processes, and actions for the next five years. The goals and outcomes defined in the plan were based on what our residents, stakeholders, and partners told us are important for our region.

As we implement the plan over the next five years, we will be able to monitor our success through the observation of positive changes in our region. We will find ourselves making better use of our conservation areas and trails, we will see the quality of the water in our rivers and lakes continue to improve, we will see more natural areas restored and protected, and we will increasingly become involved in continuing to make our region a healthier, more sustainable and resilient place in which to live.

I would like to thank the ERCA staff, Board of Directors, our partners, and everyone involved in advancing the important conservation work we do. Your dedication and commitment to this organization has made my first year as General Manager memorable and very rewarding. I look forward to working with you in the coming years, toward the common goal of bringing a healthy and sustainable environment to the entire Essex region.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Wyma'.

Richard Wyma





## 2010 Highlights

The following highlights illustrate the breadth and scope of the projects completed to strive towards the Essex Region Conservation Authority's vision of achieving a sustainable, balanced environment with healthy watersheds, highlighted by clean creeks, rivers, and great lakes, thriving natural areas, productive agricultural lands, and vibrant places. ERCA works in partnership with its member municipalities, federal and provincial ministries, and other organizations to provide effective services and programs.



## Cedar Creek Woodlot & Wetlands

This 359 acres of environmentally sensitive agricultural and natural land, located adjacent to the Cedar Creek Conservation Area, provides habitat for several species at risk, contains remnant Carolinian woodland, and a Great Lakes coastal wetland. It is thanks to the successful partnerships of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the federal and provincial governments, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and Jamieson Laboratories, that ERCA is able to protect and enhance this area with some of the richest forests and wetlands of our region for generations to come.





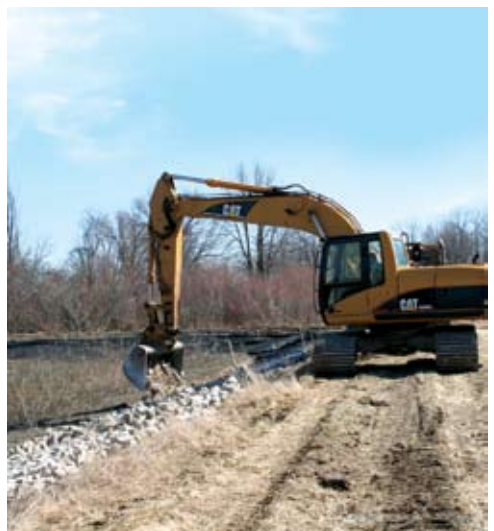
some 23,500 trees. ERCA will populate the Jamieson Forest with native trees naturally adapted to our region's soil and climate. The diverse forest will contain more than 25 species – maple, oak, hickory, cedar, walnut, sycamore, sumac, tulip tree, and basswood among them – to ensure biodiversity.

Jamieson Laboratories unveiled a 10-year commitment to ERCA to reforest a 121-acre portion of Cedar Creek property. The property, located along the shore of Lake Erie, will be naturalized with more than 72,000 seedlings to offset Jamieson's wood-fibre consumption over the next 10 years. This year, an initial 35 acres was planted with



## Hillman Marsh Improvements

Hillman Marsh Conservation Area is a provincially significant wetland, attracting people from all over the world with its recreational amenities. As a major waterfowl migration stopover, it is one of the region's finest bird viewing areas. ERCA and Ducks Unlimited Canada partnered to complete a significant improvement to the dykes at Hillman Marsh and the shorebird cell. This dyking system has been repaired and rebuilt to handle large storm events and high lake levels.





## Essex-Amherstburg Greenway Expansion



construction was made possible thanks to funding from the Province of Ontario, the National Trail Coalition, and the Town of Essex. Administration is currently seeking a primary naming sponsor for this trail as part of the next phase of trail construction.

In 2003, the Essex Region Conservation Foundation received 26 kilometers of abandoned railway from the urban centre of Essex to the Town of Amherstburg. In 2006, 2008, and 2010, ERCA was able to convert sections of this railway into a multi-use recreational trail. To date, a total of 4 kilometers have been built. This trail



## Holiday Beach Entrance Redevelopment

Holiday Beach Conservation Area has a long history in our area as it was first established by Parks Ontario in the 1950s. Much of the infrastructure of the time still remains in the park and is in need of replacement. In partnership with the Federal Economic Development Agency, a new, attractive entrance has been built for the park. The new gate system allows for additional parking at the front entrance and an automated gate with easier access for park visitors.





Significant work was undertaken over the past decade to delist Wheatley Harbour as a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC); a designation it has held since 1985. This is only the third time in all of Canada where an AOC has been delisted. The revitalized harbour is now home to an abundant and diverse community of fish and wildlife,

with improved water quality. ERCA worked together with the federal and provincial governments, local industry, and other partners to improve the harbour's environment. This included doubling forest cover from 6.5% to over 13% of the Muddy Creek watershed and implementing over 100 water quality improvement projects in partnership with private landowners.



## RBC Blue Water Project

Through the Essex Region Conservation Foundation, the RBC Blue Water Project awarded a \$100,000 Leadership Grant to ERCA in support of environmental improvements in our region. This Leadership Grant will be used to complete state-of-the-art computer modeling on watershed conditions for the Big Creek watershed and implement Beneficial Management Practices on privately owned lands to improve water quality throughout the Essex region. These on-the-ground restoration projects with landowners have a positive impact on water quality, while creating a healthier, more sustainable environment for the future.





in 1978, more than 500,000 visitors have learned lessons in conservation for the future by exploring the past. A dynamic volunteer group contributes to a variety of areas at the Homestead including tending the heritage garden and orchard, blacksmithing, and woodworking.

John R. Park Homestead Conservation Area won the Russell K. Cooper Award from the Ontario Historical Society for a living history museum showing excellence in programming, ingenious problem solving, or site development. The Homestead is Ontario's only living historical farm museum west of London. Since it opened



## **ERCA General Manager**

In 2010, ERCA welcomed a new General Manager, Richard Wyma. Over the span of his 20-year career, Richard has focused on parks and conservation, land-use and environmental planning, and sustainable development throughout Canada. For the past dozen years, he has served as the Manager of Parks and Conservation Areas for the Government of Nunavut. He has participated on a number of parks and conservation committees including the Canadian Heritage Rivers and the Canadian Council of Ecological Areas.

*“The more we know about our region, the greater our attachment will be to it, the better we will be able to care for it, and ultimately, the greater our experiences will be of the Essex region as a place.”* Richard Wyma.





## Connect. Engage. Collaborate. Discover.



and planning sessions to guide towards a vision for 2020. The Strategic Plan will be used to shape priorities, processes, and plans as well as budgets and resource allocations.

ERCA unveiled its Strategic Plan for 2011-2016 with a vision of a sustainable environment with healthy watersheds highlighted by clean creeks, rivers, Great Lakes, thriving natural areas, productive agricultural lands, and vibrant places. The plan's four goals and outcomes were based on an on-line survey, stakeholder roundtable,

# Protect & Improve Water Quality

Our region's 190km shoreline is located in the middle of the most important freshwater system in the world; the Great Lakes. This system provides important habitat for migratory birds, fish, and species at risk like the Lake Sturgeon. It also plays a vital role in the well-being of communities that depend on this system for drinking water, transportation, recreation, and manufacturing. However, heavy use has taken its toll on our region's watershed health, evidenced by inland stream and near shore degradation from contaminants that flow downstream from community to community.

Through the Water Quality Monitoring and Clean Water ~ Green Spaces programs, ERCA and its partners are working to restore the health of our water by reversing habitat loss, restoring shoreline erosion structures, reducing nutrient and sediment loss and restoring wetlands. A special sampling program was undertaken at Holiday Beach and Sandpoint Beach to better understand bacteria levels at these locations and to determine the sources of these pollutants.



8 Groundwater Quality Monitoring wells throughout our region, including Pelee Island



58 Surface Water Quality Monitoring stations, including wet weather monitoring



500 Metres of fish habitat and shoreline enhancements at Riverdance Park, LaSalle



66 Water quality enhancement projects in partnership with private landowners. Projects included septic system upgrades, well capping, buffer strips, and soil erosion control structures



## Source Water Protection

The Source Protection Committee completed the Proposed Assessment Report, which was submitted to the province, following extensive public consultation. The Assessment Report identifies Intake Protection Zones near municipal drinking water intakes and vulnerable groundwater aquifers. These science-based studies also identified land-use activities which may be potential threats to drinking water sources and evaluated issues with the quality of untreated source water. The Committee also began to prepare for the development of the Source Protection Plan which will be completed by 2012 and will identify actions to address the threats and issues identified in the Assessment Report. Early Actions projects were also carried out with provincial funding assistance, in conjunction with landowners, to help protect water sources in Intake Protection Zones.

# Protect Natural Areas & Enhance Biodiversity

Our region is special in many ways. It is fully within the Carolinian zone, which supports a higher diversity of plant and animal species than any other region in Canada, including the highest concentration of globally rare species in Ontario and one third of Canada's rare plant and animal species. Yet, 350 years of intensive settlement has diminished the region's natural area cover and habitat to 7.5%, among the lowest in Ontario and a long way from our goal of 12% by 2020.

It is essential that we dramatically accelerate restoration efforts by working with landowners, municipalities, industry, and corporate partners to increase the pace of habitat restoration. ERCA has an opportunity to face this challenge head on and in 2010 worked with over 100 landowners to plant trees on hundreds of acres to increase our region's natural areas cover. By working with landowners on Managed Forest Plans and with municipalities on Official Plan Reviews and natural heritage inventories, ERCA better protects natural areas by creating plans to ensure the preservation and reforestation of our landscape for future generations.



165,000

Trees planted or distributed  
(an increase of 10,000 over 2009)



1,500

Pounds of tree seed collected for  
propagation into seedlings



200

Acres restored to forest in  
partnership with private landowners



10

Established or updated Managed Forest Plans for private and publically owned lands throughout the region

50

Acres acquired of existing natural area

300

Acres protected through Conservation Easements

### Southshore Tornado Aftermath

Following the storm that brought tornados through the Leamington and surrounding area, ERCA staff worked with the affected municipalities on damage review along the shoreline, expedited permits for the repair and reconstruction of homes, and undertook tree assessments for the municipal Parks department, confirming which trees needed to be removed or trimmed. ERCA continues to work with property owners on measures for bank stabilization and with the Municipality of Leamington and Essex Region Conservation Foundation to replant trees in affected areas with locally raised funds.

# Protect People & Property from Flood & Erosion

The ability of our region to adapt to changing climate conditions, unpredictable weather, and associated flood threats directly impacts the safety, security, and economic well-being of our residents. Combined with the emergence of projects such as the Detroit River International Crossing and large-scale infrastructure projects, it is clear we must step up our efforts to understand our lands and waters to help our communities prevent major losses and build a more resilient natural infrastructure to withstand the changing landscape.

Protecting homes and people from the dangers of flooding and erosion is a key priority upon which all Conservation Authorities are based and continues to be of critical importance. ERCA is working with municipalities, stakeholders, and landowners to help people and places adjust to changes in climate. It is with projects such as the Grand Marais Drain, Reaume Park/Coventry Gardens Shore-wall Study, Windsor Riverfront Outfall Study and Repairs, and the Colchester to Southeast Shoal Beach Nourishment Study where ERCA is continuing to investigate, repair, and build the necessary structures to protect our communities from flood and erosion.



Landowners were assisted in obtaining permits



Additional homes protected



Planning Act applicants were provided planning advice and guidance with member municipalities



Municipalities were provided assistance in preparation of their Official Plans.



### Continuous Improvements to Grand Marais Drain

Construction to improve the channel capacity of the Grand Marais drain was completed. This project, with a cost of \$1.67 million, included ERCA, through its partners: the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program, the City of Windsor, Environment Canada, Ministry of the Environment, the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, and local industry representatives.

The project improved the channel to the creek to protect it from becoming recontaminated and to ensure the creek is capable of safely conveying a 100-year storm event, reducing flooding risks for many residential, industrial, and commercial areas.

*“We are pleased with the collaborative effort that continues to go into this project,”* said Anthony Leardi, Chair, ERCA Board of Directors. *“Through successful partnerships, we have unique opportunities to protect our residents and their property, as well as create a lasting natural legacy for future generations.”*

# Expand Conservation Education

The great challenge of our time is to reconnect ourselves with the world around us. Education and outreach are key factors in creating a future of sustainability. ERCA believes the students of today are the environmental stewards of tomorrow. Outdoor education offers hands-on learning experiences that foster a greater interest and understanding of wildlife and natural resources and teach the importance of protecting and conserving these resources.

ERCA's education programs provide hope for a greener future by showing our community and future generations how to live sustainably. Working with funding partners such as CIBC; RBC Blue Water Campaign; Jonny O' Foods; and Talisman Energy, ERCA can continue to deliver innovative, curriculum-linked outdoor education programs and experiences that promote lifelong learning.

Additionally, ERCA continues to host community events at conservation areas and across our region. These events promote environmental education and action. Sunoco Earth Day, Festival of Hawks, Locavore Lunch, and the Harvest Festival continue to be popular events in our community.

ERCA's Friends of Watersheds program engages over 1,500 residents each year in stream cleanup and tree planting events to encourage an improved environmental ethic in our community.



Friends of Watersheds tree planting and stream cleanup events



Students experienced natural and cultural heritage education



40

Environmental and heritage themed community events such as the Maple First Taste of Spring, Sunoco Earth Day, and Shore and Song Bird celebration.

18

Schoolyard tree plantings were completed across the region involving 1,800 students

2,480

Volunteers contributed to the protection and restoration of natural and cultural resources

### Hand Pump at the Homestead


John R. Park Homestead now has a historically correct water source. A working, hand-powered water pump similar in appearance to those found in every Ontario farmyard 100 years ago. Visitors are now challenged to pump pails of water to carry to the house, demonstrating the importance of protecting groundwater and practicing water conservation. As the Homestead is located right on the shore of Lake Erie, the source of local municipal drinking water today for many in the region, parallels can be drawn between historical and modern source protection.

# Provide Nature Based Recreation Opportunities

The health of people and the health of our environment are inherently linked. Being active in a Conservation Area or along a trail is a fun, safe, and a healthy way to experience the outdoors in our region. Active living in natural areas has proven mental, physical, and spiritual health benefits. In our region there is much to explore, from woodland trails and marsh boardwalks, to lakeside beaches and meandering waterways.


ERCA works with its partners, the federal and provincial governments, Ducks Unlimited, and local municipalities, to secure funds to maintain and enhance its conservation areas. Well-managed conservation areas and trails not only provide an opportunity for tourism and recreation, they also protect forests, wetlands, and wildlife and improve the overall health of our watersheds.

 4,000 Acres of environmentally sensitive land protected through Conservation Areas

 20 Publicly accessible Conservation Areas

 100 KM of trails at ERCA's Conservation Areas

 52 KM of Chrysler Canada Greenway graded

 4,000 Meters of new development Essex - Amherstburg trail



## Connecting Our Region

Trails link healthy people and healthy environments, increase tourism and local economic development opportunities, and are a key part of a sustainable community that recognizes the linkages between environmental health, human health, and economic health. The Chrysler Canada Greenway, acquired through the Essex Region Conservation Foundation in 1995, and the Essex to Amherstburg Trail, donated in 2005, has inspired regional municipalities to develop their own trails and connections in support of a regional trail network. New opportunities to better link our region through acquisition and development of new trails are anticipated. Enhancing these opportunities will help secure a healthier community and environment.

With funding from the provincial government and Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, ERCA will create a detailed regional trail guide in partnership with its member municipalities in 2011.



# ESSEX REGION CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Since 1977, the Essex Region Conservation Foundation has been raising the funds required to reforest and green our region, protecting those significant natural areas that remain, planting new forests in strategic locations, restoring wetlands, protecting cultural heritage, and increasing green connections through developing and linking trails.

The Foundation generates funds to do the essential work of ERCA, allowing for additional planting of trees at our Heritage Forest sites, undertaking development of the Big Creek Watershed plan, and supporting our Conservation Education program.

There are many ways to assist the Foundation in reaching its goals of a sustainable future for the Essex region.

The **Gift that Honours** is one way to make a difference for our future. Visit [www.ourgreenlegacy.org](http://www.ourgreenlegacy.org) and choose a level of giving, the occasion, include a personal message, and choose a locally designed artwork keepsake to be given to the recipient along with the GPS co-ordinates of the location of the tree, bird house, park bench, or trail sign.

Be a **Champion of the Environment** with a gift of more than \$1,000 to protect and restore the region's natural environment. You will receive a beautiful certificate and a special gift available only to members.

A **Deed to the Greenway** can be purchased for a donation of just \$49 for trail maintenance and development.

**Donations of Land or Conservation Easements** ensures a legacy of a cleaner and healthier environment that is protected for generations to come.

A **Planned Gift** can be tailored to your personal and financial circumstances.



## **Enviro-Expo 2010**

The ERCF held the Enviro-Expo, a large-scale green lifestyle show offering consumers opportunities to view new and innovative products and ideas for a greener way of living. Eco-friendly exhibitors educated and inspired visitors on the environment, including local and organic food, energy conservation, home renovation, transportation, gardening, and health and wellness.

President Bill Clinton was the keynote speaker for the Expo, held at Caesar's Windsor, and welcomed nearly 4,000 visitors. President Clinton's message focused on his 'how' movement, and helping to transform ideas into actions.

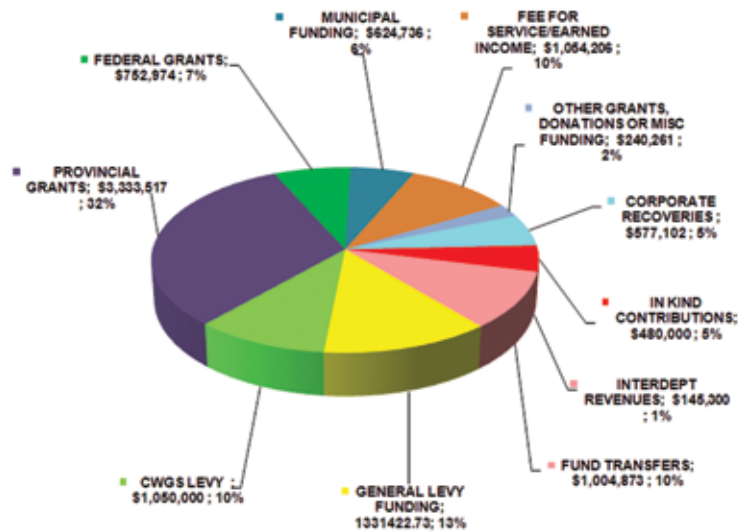
For more information on the Foundation and donation options visit [www.ourgreenlegacy.org](http://www.ourgreenlegacy.org)

## 2010 Financial Review

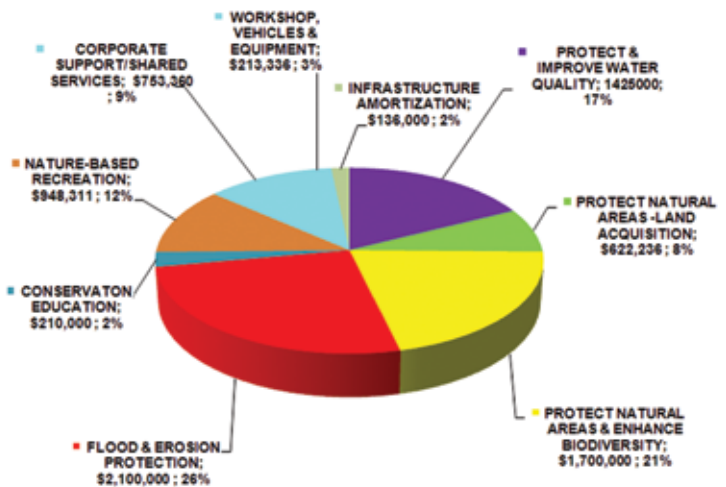
In accordance with the Public Sector Accounting Board PS 3150, ERCA has incorporated tangible capital assets into the Financial Statements. Identifying assets and their limited useful lives increases our understanding of using capital assets in the delivery of services. This information gives municipal councils and the public a better understanding of the true financial position. While PS 3150 does not require local governments to practice asset management and/or long-term financial planning, with the additional information that tangible capital asset accounting provides, it is a first-step in getting there. In 2010, ERCA made further strides towards the development of an integrated asset management/financial plan and released its Draft Capital Replacement and Maintenance Plan.



2010 FORECASTED ACTUAL REVENUES (\$ 8.5 million)

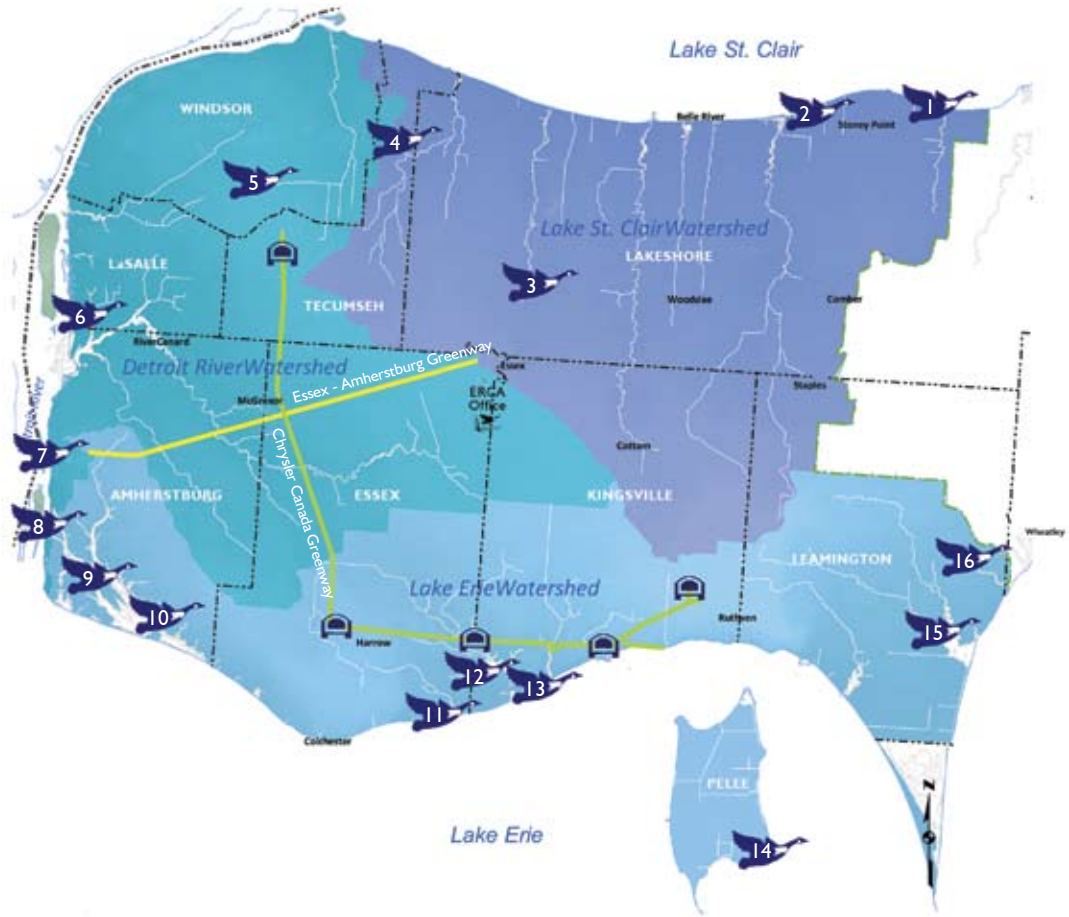


2010 FORECASTED ACTUAL EXPENSES (\$ 8.1 million)



Note: The 2010 unaudited financial review is based on information available as of January 14, 2011 and as such the numbers are subject to change. These numbers also represent the numbers which will appear in the Statement of Operations, however due to the accounting for tangible capital assets (PSAB 3150) and non-cash items such as amortization, the Statements of Net Debt and Cash Flow are also integral to analyzing financial condition. After factoring in non-cash items and increases in non-financial assets such as capital asset additions, the net debt is expected to increase slightly. The Audited Financial Statements will be available in June 2010 and include all Statements and Schedules as required by GAAP for public sector entities.

Make healthy and active lifestyles a priority for your family. Visit any of the region's conservation areas to hike, bike and enjoy nature and each other.



- |                    |                   |                            |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Tremblay Beach  | 6. Petite Cote    | 11. John R. Park Homestead |
| 2. Ruscom Shores   | 7. Crystal Bay    | 12. Cedar Creek            |
| 3. Maidstone       | 8. White Sands    | 13. Cedar Beach            |
| 4. McAuliffe Woods | 9. Big Creek      | 14. Stone Road Alvar       |
| 5. Devonwood       | 10. Holiday Beach | 15. Hillman Marsh          |
|                    |                   | 16. Kopegaron Woods        |





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360 Fairview Ave. West, Suite 311, Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6 Phone: 519-776-5209 Fax: 519-776-8688

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