

ENVIRONMENT



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Renfrew County Stewardship Council

NOW

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Everyone's downstream!

We often think of water in unconnected categories: The cool lake where we like to swim, the murky wetland where birds congregate, or the kitchen tap that fills our drinking glass.

"Everything's interconnected," says Erling Armson of Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Source water protection recognizes the relationships that exist throughout a watershed, from the headwaters of a river, through the standing water in a wetland, to a municipal or household well.

"It's one of the big initiatives that's coming out," says Armson. "We should be able to look at an entire watershed, and develop plans that will maintain and improve the quality and quantity of water within it."

Source water protection involves minimizing the chances of contaminants entering the water resource anywhere along its route. The goal is to manage

identified risks to water quality and quantity through a combination of direct controls, incentives, and voluntary measures to ensure long-term protection of current and future drinking water sources.

By beginning at the headwater, problems can be minimized throughout the watershed.

Protecting our water supply is a critical endeavour. In Renfrew County, for example, 46 per cent of the population depends on groundwater sources for its drinking water. Community and household wells pump 14,000 million litres of water in the county each year.

Both the quality and the quantity of water coming from those wells are the product of how well we care for the entire watershed network of both surface water and groundwater.

Paul Moreau of the Pembroke District Office of the Ministry of Natural

Resources points to wetlands as an integral part of the water chain.

He calls them "groundwater recharge areas", noting that others have compared them to aquarium filters or nature's kidneys.

"They play a variety of roles," says Moreau, giving the examples of cattails and other wetland vegetation that absorbs metals, and the ultraviolet treatment of the sun on bacteria in shallow, standing water.

Moreau explains that Renfrew County's water supply is exceptionally vulnerable to contamination because of the shallow soil levels and high permeability of the fractured bedrock.

"It's a resource that needs to be treated with care," he says.

"What we do on the landscape dictates how good or bad that water is," agrees Armson. "Hopefully we can make it a little bit better as it flows from neighbour to neighbour downstream."



At left, a completed livestock access restriction project and watering system. At right, a "before" photo: stream/ditch to be fenced, with a natural buffer to be planted to mitigate surface run-off.



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Source water protection - bringing the concept home

A drive along any of Renfrew County's country roads will provide plenty of examples of source water protection in action.

The farmer building a fence to keep cattle away from the creek; the Scout group installing duck nesting boxes in a nearby wetland; the riverside shrubs planted to halt erosion. All of them are what Ducks Unlimited Canada's Erling Armson calls "beneficial management practices".

"People have been doing good things for centuries," he says. "It's really a matter of thinking about the consequences and acting with care."

Beneficial management practices can cover a wide range of activity. While the environmental effects of farming have been getting a lot of recent attention, Armson points out that everyone has a role to play in source water protection.

"Whatever you do on your property, the water rolls across it and onto someone else's property," he says.

Erosion control, wetland protection and nutrient management may be the "big three" water protection activities, but others also come to mind. Improperly sealed abandoned wells, for example, can act like an open sore, allowing contamination of the groundwater flowing below. Property owners should also be careful about snow removal, keeping salt-laden snow piles away from water sources, for example.

Paul and Fritz Klaesi of the Cobden area have launched a unique project that could have multiple positive

environmental effects. By using manure as a biofuel on their farm, they are reducing their dependence on other non-renewable fuel sources and, at the same time, removing a potential source of water contamination. Bacteria such as *e-coli*, and other contaminants such as ammonia gas, are removed as the manure composts, leaving a "cleaner" product which is still rich in nutrients to be used on the land.

Gerald Rollins of Quarry Hill Farms is another Renfrew County landowner serious about environmental protection. His recent upgrades include a ditch project supported by the Renfrew County Wetland, Wildlife and Woodland (W3) Project. It involved fencing livestock out of the ditch and establishing a grassed and treed buffer strip. W3 funds covered 60% of the costs.

Rollins has also been approved to do some property improvements under the Ontario Wetland Habitat fund, which will provide 50% funding for fencing materials, an alternate watering system and building a concrete barrier and ramp to prevent run-off.

Mark Stabb, program manager of the Ontario Wetland Habitat Fund, says that type of practical approach is typical of the program. Since 1998, the fund has supported 21 projects in Renfrew County, including bird nest boxes, alternate livestock watering systems, waterway crossings, fencing and four wild rice plantings.

"We don't just send people an application form and ask them to fill it

out," says Stabb. "We work together to come up with something that will really have an impact and suit both our needs."

"Every landowner has a different interest and a different ability," he adds. "Getting them engaged is a really effective way to get things done. They and their families really get involved and make a commitment."

Anyone interested in learning more is invited to contact Olissia Stechishen by e-mail at ostechishen@wetlandfund.com or by phone at (613) 722-2090, ext. 404.

Further resources

The following resources can provide more information on beneficial management practices related to source water protection:

- www.wetlandfund.com - The official website of the Wetland Habitat Fund.
- Renfrew County Wetland Tabloid - A publication listing practical information and funding sources, available at the local Ministry of Natural Resources office.
- www.pollutionprobe.org - Follow the links to their Source Water Protection Primer.



Above right, tree and shrubs planted in a buffer strip as well as enhanced open water areas for waterfowl. Above left, fencing and a water crossing that restricts livestock access to the creek and wetland.

THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
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The Bonnechere River Watershed Project gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture. The Foundation receives annually \$100 million in government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative. The Foundation provides grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts, culture, sports, recreation, environment and social service sectors.

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Cross-county check-up

Here's a brief summary of some of the activities underway within the Renfrew County Stewardship Council membership. If your organization would like to be included in this calendar, or you would like additional copies of this newsletter, please contact Mitch Baldwin at (613) 732-5523, or e-mail mitch.baldwin@mnr.gov.on.ca.

Algonquin College Forestry Program

- Students from the Pembroke campus were actively involved in the annual Renfrew County Outdoor Woodlot Conference in October. In addition to their Timbersports demonstrations, they assisted with security, organization, set-up and clean-up for the event.

Arnprior Fish and Game Club

- Wild turkey enhancement activities continue. The club produced four tractor flushing bars as a pilot project this summer. Modifications to the design are now underway.
- Club members planted wildlife shrubs and seed for food plants in the Calabogie area this year. Primarily aimed at supporting the wild turkey population, the plantings will benefit other wildlife as well. Landowners interested in participating in this project next year are invited to contact Mitch Baldwin for more information. The project is a partnership of the local fish and game clubs and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Renfrew County Stewardship Council, the Lower Valley Gobbler chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Pembroke District of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Bonnechere River Watershed Project

- Annual general meeting will be held Tuesday, February 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eganville Legion. Speakers will talk about the new regime to control levels and flows on the Bonnechere River.

- Organizers are looking for landowners within the watershed to participate in its native tree planting program, which covers 50% of the planting costs. Minimum orders are typically for 1,000 trees. Anyone interested can contact Wayne Remus at 649-2240.

Ducks Unlimited Upper Ottawa Valley

- The annual dinner and auction will be held at the Petawawa Civic Centre on Saturday, February 26. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$45 each or \$75 per couple. Phone Mark Reinert at 687-0558 for more information.

Macnamara Field Naturalists Club

- A banquet was held to celebrate the club's 20th anniversary. The founding members of the club and its namesake, Charles Macnamara, were honoured.
- Copies of a special issue of the club newsletter, The Ladyslipper, which commemorates Charles Macnamara, are available at the Arnprior and Renfrew libraries.
- Planning has begun for improvements and an extension of the interpretive nature trail, the Macnamara Trail, in the Nopiming Game Preserve in Arnprior.

Ottawa Valley Forest

- The planning team for OVF invites all interested parties to attend its second public information session on its 20-year forest management plan for harvesting on Crown land. The first sessions were held in November in Pembroke. The second session is tentatively scheduled for late February. Details to be announced. This is an opportunity for the public to view and comment on proposed harvesting areas, access road locations and values information for the draft 2006-2026 forest management plan for the OVF.

Renfrew County Cattlemen's Association

- The annual meeting will be held in the Opeongo High School auditorium on January 20, 2005 beginning at 7:30 p.m. Guest speaker will be the chair of the Beef Information Centre of Canada.

Renfrew County Chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Owners' Association


- A workshop on the basics of sugarbush operation will be hosted in cooperation with the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association on Saturday, January 22, 2005 at Opeongo High School beginning at 9:00 a.m. For more information contact Frank Ahern at 754-2822 or 754-2112.

Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture

- The tenth anniversary of the Agricultural Wall of Fame will be celebrated at the Renfrew Armouries on Friday, March 4, 2005. Organizers are planning to honour all inductees with a "Memory Lane" celebration that will include dinner and a dance. For more information contact Donna Campbell at 432-5568.
- The new executive of the Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture is: Past-President Andy Kluge, President and Regional Director Mike Donahue, First Vice-President Kevin Dick, Second Vice-President Rodney McNulty, Executive Directors Dawson Crozier and Andrew Bromley, and Secretary-Treasurer Donna Campbell.

Ontario Power Generation

- OPG reminds residents and visitors to stay clear of hydroelectric stations, dams and surrounding waterways. Stay clear and stay safe.



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Fourth graders learn with DU

Thanks to the “can-do” attitude of the Bonnechere River Watershed Project, Renfrew County is one of the first areas in Ontario to host Ducks Unlimited Canada’s “Adopt-A-Class” program.

The grade four program uses in-class and field trip experiences to teach young people about the values of wetlands.

“We’re trying to inspire and we’re trying to move to action,” says Merebeth Switzer, national education coordinator for Ducks Unlimited Canada. “We want to be sure it’s the highest quality of education.”

Switzer says the Bonnechere River Watershed Program provides the perfect local link to make Adopt-A-Class work.

“We can only do this when we are lucky enough to have a local group with the right skills and initiative,” she comments. “Holly Gardner has been a great help in bringing our program into the local schools and in involving them in a hands-on wetland learning experience in their own community.”

Adopt-A-Class has operated in Renfrew County for the past two years. Five schools have been involved:

Killaloe Public School, St. Andrew’s School in Killaloe, St. Mary’s School in Wilno, St. Thomas School in Renfrew, and St. Michael’s School in Douglas.

“We do all kinds of activities with them,” says Gardner, listing hands-on activities such as scavenger hunts for specific plants, finding insects and identifying different species of trees.

“It fits well within the curriculum and provides the kids with a really good introduction to wetlands and wetland ecosystems and habitats,” she concludes.

Jane Mullen, the grade 3/4 teacher at St. Andrew’s School in Killaloe, agrees.

“It was very informative,” she says. “They loved the book, and the fact that it was theirs to keep, and I had extra resources that I could use.”

The Adopt-A-Class program is already well-established in Atlantic

Canada. Ducks Unlimited Canada is

taking a cautious approach introducing it in Ontario, where they could potentially reach more than one million children.

“We have the challenge of a huge population,” explains Switzer, noting that current efforts are focused in the major population centres of the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa and London.

“We’re focusing on doing a few things and doing them well,” says Switzer.

“We’re pleased that our partnership with the Bonnechere River Watershed Program makes it possible to include the Renfrew County area.”

The program depends on the support of local sponsors. This year, Ontario Power Generation was a key supporter of the local program. Sponsorship of a class costs \$300 for the course materials and \$100 to fund the field trip. Anyone interested in helping is invited to contact Holly Gardner at Bonnechere River Watershed Project, 735-2445.

“We have no shortage of classes that want to participate,” she comments.



St. Michael’s School in Douglas was one of the Renfrew County participants in Ducks Unlimited’s Adopt-A-Class program this year. The grade four students are seen here enjoying one of the in-class sessions.

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