



Toronto and Region **Conservation** Authority

Regional Watershed Alliance Agenda

September 18, 2024
6:30 P.M.

The meeting will be conducted via a video conference
Members of the public may view the livestream at the following link:

<https://video.isilive.ca/trca/live.html>

Pages

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS TERRITORY**
3. **DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF**
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING #2/24, HELD ON MAY 22, 2024**

[Minutes Link](#)

5. PRESENTATIONS

5.1 PHYTOREMEDIATION OF SALT AFFECTED SOILS IN THE TORONTO REGION

Presented by Lyndsay Cartwright, PhD, Senior Research Analyst, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Lauren Nawroth, MES Candidate, Queen's University, and Barb Zeeb, PhD Professor and Canada Research Chair in Biotechnology and the Environment Royal Military College.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

7. ITEMS FOR ALLIANCE ACTION

7.1 REGIONAL WATERSHED ALLIANCE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025

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Approval of the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) meeting schedule for 2025.

8. ITEMS FOR ALLIANCE INFORMATION

8.1 YOUTH GREENSPACE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

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To provide the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) with information on the Youth Greenspace Employment Program and identify potential collaboration opportunities.

8.2 INFORMATIONAL UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE NATURAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

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Update on the work of the Natural Science and Education Committee (NSEC), a multi-stakeholder advisory committee of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Board of Directors.

9. NEW BUSINESS AND GOOD NEWS STORIES

NEXT MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WATERSHED ALLIANCE #4/24, TO BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 20, 2024 AT 6:30 P.M. VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

10. ADJOURNMENT

Item for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, September 18, 2024 Meeting

FROM: John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer

RE: REGIONAL WATERSHED ALLIANCE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025

KEY ISSUE

Approval of the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) meeting schedule for 2025.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the 2025 meeting schedule be approved, subject to change, as outlined below:

- #1/25, Wednesday, February 26, 2025;**
- #2/25, Wednesday, May 21, 2025;**
- #3/25, Wednesday, September 24, 2025; and**
- #4/25, Wednesday, November 19, 2025.**

BACKGROUND

As some members of the RWA participate in various boards and committees, staff have proposed the above noted meeting dates. All meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. and the majority of the meetings will be held virtually. Committee meetings may also take place as a hybrid option with in-person attendance at 5 Shoreham Drive, North York.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillar and Outcome set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

- 4.4 Transparent decision making and accountable results

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Date: July 18, 2024

Items for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, September 18, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: YOUTH GREENSPACE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

KEY ISSUE

To provide the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) with information on the Youth Greenspace Employment Program and identify potential collaboration opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the report on the Youth Greenspace Employment Program, be received for information;

AND further that relevant collaboration opportunities and updates regarding this program be brought to RWA for consideration.

BACKGROUND

The Youth Greenspace Employment Program is a collaborative project focused on creating enhanced environmental sector learning opportunities while improving the quality of greenspace in York Region for human and wildlife communities.

The 2023 Youth Greenspace Employment Program is a collaborative pilot project between TRCA and York Region’s Homelessness Community Programs (HCP) division, part of the Social Services Branch in the Community and Health Services Department. As the Service System Manager for Housing and Homelessness, the Social Services Branch at York Region administers and delivers homelessness prevention and housing stability supports, and provides funding to community agencies who deliver services, such as emergency and transitional housing, on their behalf. These collective efforts are aimed at helping people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and keep housing and to achieve housing and life stability.

In 2023, through funding provided by York Region for the Youth Greenspace Employment Program, TRCA hired six youth experiencing

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homelessness for a six-week period to provide the opportunity to gain workplace experience in the environmental sector, develop transferable skills, and receive on-the-job training. York Region HCP coordinated partnerships with 360°Kids and Salvation Army to identify potential participants currently residing in youth shelters or enrolled in youth outreach programs. Participants were selected through a targeted recruitment process, interviewed, and onboarded by TRCA.

Led by staff from TRCA's Education and Training Division and York Region, youth participating in the program were provided with transportation to properties throughout York Region to work alongside TRCA staff from the Restoration and Infrastructure and Conservation Parks and Lands Divisions to learn on-the-job skills in greenspace management.

A key component of the program, in addition to standard on-boarding training provided by TRCA, was a weekly workshop to build job search and employment-seeking skills. The weekly workshops were provided primarily by 360°Kids, with a supplementary workshop delivered by TRCA related to green jobs and green industries. Workshop topics included resume building, interview skills, confidence in networking and an environmental sector information session. Each workshop provided opportunity for program participants to reflect on how they will apply the skills they were learning to a future job opportunity and ask questions of TRCA and agency partner staff. Future iterations of the employment and training program will incorporate expanded opportunities to connect directly with employers, and hear directly from employers, on what skills they are seeking from entry-level employees.

RATIONALE

The 2023 Youth Greenspace Employment Program built on previous TRCA experience in working with York Region, 360°Kids, Blue Door and other social service agencies in addressing pressing housing needs by leveraging TRCA skills and assets, including the provision of one of TRCA's rental houses in Markham for 360°Kids in 2016 and the provision of Lake St. George Field Centre in Richmond Hill as an isolation site within York Region's shelter system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this program TRCA gained additional understanding and awareness related to working with vulnerable populations, youth housing challenges and barriers

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that people experiencing homelessness face in seeking and retaining paid employment.

Through the on-the-job training and employment experience, the Youth Greenspace Employment Program had a significant impact for the youth involved, as well as on TRCA and the partner organizations involved. Young people experiencing homelessness face a myriad of barriers to safety, security and employment, and on-the-job training is part of a broader intervention strategy to support individuals early on in their experience of homelessness and provide them with skills needed to secure stable employment. As an employment intervention related to housing and homelessness, this program is intended to address systemic barriers unhoused youth face as it relates to accessing stable, long-term employment.

While the program focused on connecting youth with jobs and on-the-job experience, participants benefited from receiving new job skills, social and career connections, and targeted workplace-specific experience. Participating youth were exposed to different outdoor work environments such as parks, golf courses, and environmental restoration sites in order to gain an understanding of how skills transfer to different teams and work environments. The participants have maintained contact with staff at TRCA, as references and sharing job opportunities.

The program itself focused on developing transferable skills in greenspace management that can be used in a variety of entry-level outdoor jobs or transferred to similar entry-level jobs such as construction labourer, custodial work, or warehouse labourer. The following are a list of various skills acquired:

- Workplace skills: Time management, problem solving, communication, attention to detail and teamwork;
- Outdoor safety skills: hazard assessment, safety awareness, proper Personal Protective Equipment;
- Small tools competencies – some power tools, saws, hammers, loppers, trimmers, shovels, clippers, string trimmers;
- Proper tree and shrub planting;
- Trail maintenance;
- Invasive species identification and removal, and
- Basics of turf management/golf course operations.

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Through the program participants received the following skill development, training and employment opportunities:

- 23 hours of on-the-job training
- 936 hours field experience
- 27 hours of employment and life skills workshops

TRCA outdoor greenspaces benefited from the program through the completion of priority tasks late in the season including the planting of 1,665 native trees and shrubs. 360°Kids and Salvation Army saw a benefit to the participants through the Youth Greenspace Employment program through the establishment and participation in a program that was specifically tailored towards outdoor work, which some of their clients had expressed an interest in. Additionally, they were able to provide this opportunity to youth that specifically sought work in landscaping or other outdoor jobs.

Overall, the 2023 pilot season for the Youth Greenspace Employment Program was a successful first step in supporting York Region and TRCA's social service partners in efforts to address youth homelessness. Planning for 2024 is currently underway with plans for a second cohort of youth to develop strong customer service and food service skills through job placements within TRCA's education centre food service facilities. A key learning of 2023 was that in order to further make a meaningful difference in the lives of participating youth and improved employment outcomes, it is crucial that TRCA and program partners ensure job opportunities are available to participants immediately following the conclusion of the program. With that in mind, the program will be restructured in 2024 to align with peak hiring seasons and provide additional emphasis and focus on early engagement of potential employers to more effectively close the employment gap following program conclusion.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillar and Outcome set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 2 Knowledge Economy:

2.2 Collaboration to advance a green transition

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA will continue to collaborate and partner with York Region and agency partners to develop and execute the 2024 employment training program. TRCA, through Partners in Project Green and other avenues, is seeking additional employer partners to support post-program employment and placements. TRCA staff will be engaging with PPG EMC members and the broader PPG membership to explore opportunities to leverage the current and future employment programs such as the Youth Greenspace Employment Program to advance and support employment outcomes for participants in this program.

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Date: December 13, 2023

Item for the Information of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, September 18, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: INFORMATIONAL UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE NATURAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

KEY ISSUE

Update on the work of the Natural Science and Education Committee (NSEC), a multi-stakeholder advisory committee of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Board of Directors.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) receive the informational report providing and update on the work of NSEC.

BACKGROUND

TRCA's Role in Outdoor Education

TRCA has worked with local schools and school boards to provide outdoor education programs and services since 1953. Currently, TRCA is one of Ontario's largest providers of out-of-classroom experiential learning with over 155,000 students engaging in TRCA learning programs annually through a network of education centres, conservation areas and local greenspaces, in addition to in-school programs. TRCA educational offerings are curriculum-linked and enable student learning related to a wide range of subjects that meet curricular objectives while advancing TRCA strategic goals and supporting TRCA's core mandate.

Enabling TRCA's work with area school boards work, Section 197 of the Education Act (RSO 1990) provides for school boards to enter into agreements with conservation authorities for the purposes of providing out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation, or other out-of-classroom programs, including the use of lands, buildings, and personnel for the purposes of providing natural science, conservation, or other out-of-classroom programs.

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The following is a full listing of out-of-classroom learning centres operated by Greater Toronto Area (GTA) School Boards and TRCA. TRCA owns and operates eight (8) out-of-classroom learning centres and an additional eight (8) of the twenty-two (22) school board owned or operated out-of-classroom learning centres are either on or adjacent to greenspace or natural lands owned by TRCA, with two additional centres on or adjacent to lands owned by Credit Valley Conservation (CVC).

Outdoor Education Centre	Operated By	Location	Programme	Opened
School Board Operated Centre				
<i>Duffins Creek Environmental Education Centre</i>	<i>DDSB</i>	<i>Claremont</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1989</i>
Nonquon Environmental Education Centre	DDSB	Greenbank	Day	1977
Durham Forest Environmental Education Centre	DDSB	Goodwood	Day	1978
Old Britannia School House	PDSB	Mississauga	Day (Seasonal)	1982
Brittania Farm Field Centre	PDSB	Mississauga	Day (Seasonal)	1988
GW Finlayson Field Centre	PDSB	Orangeville	Day	1975
<i>Jack Smythe Field Centre</i>	<i>PDSB</i>	<i>Terra Cotta</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1969</i>
<i>Silver Creek Outdoor Education Centre</i>	<i>DPCDSB</i>	<i>Belfountain</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1981</i>
<i>Forest Valley Outdoor Education Centre</i>	<i>TDSB</i>	<i>Toronto</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1967</i>
<i>Hillside Outdoor Education School</i>	<i>TDSB</i>	<i>Toronto</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1975</i>
Toronto Urban Studies Centre	TDSB	Toronto	Day	1978
<i>Warren Park Outdoor Education Centre</i>	<i>TDSB</i>	<i>Toronto</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>1972</i>
<i>Etobicoke Outdoor Education Centre</i>	<i>TDSB</i>	<i>Caledon</i>	<i>Overnight</i>	<i>1982</i>
Island Natural Science Centre	TDSB	Toronto	Overnight	1960
Mono Cliffs Outdoor Education Centre	TDSB	Orangeville	Overnight	1986
Scarborough Outdoor Education School	TDSB	Kearny	Overnight	1978

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Outdoor Education Centre	Operated By	Location	Programme	Opened
School Board Operated Centre				
Sheldon Centre for Outdoor Education	TDSB	Alliston	Overnight	1982
<i>Swan Lake Outdoor Education Centre</i>	YRDSB	<i>Richmond Hill</i>	<i>Day</i>	2016
<i>Milne Outdoor Education Centre</i>	YRDSB	<i>Markham</i>	<i>Day</i>	1990
Sibbald Point Outdoor Education Centre	YRDSB	Sutton	Day	2004
<i>Burrington Outdoor Education Centre</i>	YRDSB	<i>Kleinburg</i>	<i>Day</i>	1968
Vivian Outdoor Education Centre	YRDSB	Ballantrae	Day	1972
TRCA Operated Centre				
Kortright Centre for Conservation	TRCA	Vaughan	Day	1979
Tommy Thompson Park Education Programs	TRCA	Toronto	Day	2004
Bruce's Mill Nature Centre	TRCA	Stouffville	Day	2023
Claremont Nature Centre	TRCA	Claremont	Overnight	1970
Albion Hills Field Centre/Conservation Area	TRCA	Caledon	Overnight/Day	1963
Lake St. George Field Centre	TRCA	Richmond Hill	Overnight	1979
Black Creek Pioneer Village	TRCA	Toronto	Day	1960
Claireville Outdoor Education Centre	TRCA	Brampton	Day	2021

Italics identifies school board operated centres located either on or adjacent to TRCA or other conservation authority land.

As noted above, it is through Section 197 of the Education Act that the current system of natural science schools, outdoor education centres, environmental education centres and conservation field centres that facilitate student out-of-classroom learning has developed, and from which future agreements for the continued and expanded delivery of out-of-classroom learning experiences will emanate. This legislation provides the framework for shared ownership and shared delivery models that leverage the value of public assets, including buildings, personnel, and greenspace.

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TRCA and local school boards have a strong history of utilizing Section 197 of the Education Act to facilitate shared use of facilities and greenspace for out-of-classroom learning experiences related to natural science, conservation, and the environment specifically, as well as community use of assets and resources, such as schools, facilities, and services, through multi-partite agreements. This shared history forms the foundation for a renewed approach to collaboration that optimizes use of public assets, including education centres, personnel, and local greenspace, in a way that is centred on the student experience.

Examples of TRCA/School Board agreements that enable out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation and the environment include:

- Lake St. George Field Centre: Historically operated by TRCA under a multi-partite agreement with TDSB, TCDSB and YRDSB. Currently open to all school boards, with agreements with TCDSB, YRDSB and YCDSB. TRCA provides instruction and learning services. (Humber River Watershed, York Region);
- Burlington Outdoor Education Centre: Owned and operated by YRDSB, with an agreement for use of 68 acres of adjacent Nashville Conservation Reserve greenspace owned by TRCA. (Humber River Watershed, York Region);
- Etobicoke Outdoor Education Centre: Overnight centre owned and operated by TDSB, within TRCA's Albion Hills Conservation Area, adjacent to TRCA's Albion Hills Field Centre, under a land lease with TRCA. Under the agreement, TRCA also provides food service for visiting TDSB students. (Humber River Watershed, Peel Region);
- Swan Lake Outdoor Education Centre: Operated by YRDSB within TRCA's Dave Barrow Centre at Swan Lake. Purpose built by TRCA on behalf of YRDSB in 2012, the Swan Lake Outdoor Education Centre on the eastern edge of the Oak Ridges Moraine Corridor Park (Humber River Watershed, York Region); and
- Duffins Creek Outdoor Education Centre: Day Centre operated by DDSB within TRCA's Claremont Forest and Wildlife Area. Building owned by DDSB with property maintenance provided by TRCA. (Duffins Creek Watershed, Durham Region).

Outdoor Education Task Force

At Meeting #6/18 on July 20, 2018, TRCA's Board of Directors approved the establishment of an Outdoor Education Task Force (OETF) comprised of Trustees from area school boards and representatives from TRCA's Board of

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Directors. OETF was convened with an eighteen (18) month term and mandate to study, develop, and recommend strategic future directions related to out-of-classroom learning as it pertains to natural science, conservation and the environment in the GTA, specifically including Peel, York and Durham Regions and the City of Toronto.

TRCA's Board of Directors convened OETF as a multi-stakeholder approach to identifying opportunities that will sustain the current system of publicly built and operated school board and conservation authority out-of-classroom learning centres and programs into the future.

OETF was comprised of the following School Board Trustees and TRCA Board members:

- Durham Catholic District School Board: Trustee Morgan Ste. Marie
- York Region District School Board: Trustee Cynthia Cordova
- York Catholic District School Board: Trustee Jennifer Wigston
- Peel District School Board: Trustee Will Davies
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board: Trustee Frank Di Cosola
- Toronto District School Board: Trustee Anu Sriskandarajah
- Toronto Catholic District School Board: Trustee Garry Tanuan
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir: Chair Melinda Chartrand
- TRCA (City of Brampton): Regional Councillor Rowena Santos
- TRCA (City of Toronto): Mr. Basu Mukherjee

On January 25, 2021, OETF completed its work and submitted a Vision Statement and Strategic Recommendations for review and endorsement by TRCA's Board of Directors (Attachment #1: Final Report: Vision Statement and Strategic Recommendations of Outdoor Education Task Force, and Attachment #2: Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Outdoor Education Task Force Vision Statement). OETF Vision Statement and Strategic Recommendations form the basis for strengthened collaboration amongst and between TRCA and area school boards as well as other learning organizations within the broader public sector.

A key goal of OETF was to build on Section 197 of the Education Act, which provides for partnerships between school boards and conservation authorities related to natural science and conservation education activities, and establish mechanisms to better leverage the public learning assets and natural resources of both school boards and conservation authorities while maximizing

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the use of finite financial public and private funding in delivering important nature-based out-of-classroom learning experiences for students of GTA watersheds and school boards.

TRCA's Board of Directors, at its meeting held on February 26, 2021, adopted Resolution #A17/21 endorsing the vision statement and the following five recommendations in order to strengthen and revitalize the out-of-classroom system:

Recommendation #1: Establish Shared Governance Model – Natural Science and Education Committee as a Subcommittee of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Board of Directors

Recommendation #2: Establish Consistent Access and Curricular Standards Across TRCA and School Boards

Recommendation #3: Establish a Unified Performance Measurement System

Recommendation #4: Advance Shared-Ownership and Access Models That Enhance and Sustain an Overall Out-Of-Classroom Learning System

Recommendation #5: Develop a Long-Term Equitable Access Financial Plan

Natural Science and Education Committee

Central to OETF recommendations was the establishment of NSEC as a standing committee of TRCA's Board of Directors to provide a shared governance framework that advances the recommendations of OETF. TRCA has historically brought key stakeholders together as necessary for important discussions related to the segment of the formal education system that relates to natural science, conservation and the environment, most recently through OETF. The convening of NSEC was seen as an essential component of TRCA's work as a leader in this field by members of OETF. To this end, at TRCA's Board of Directors Meeting held on May 28, 2021, RES.#A107/21 was approved, in part, as follows:

...THAT the Natural Science and Education Committee be established;

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...THAT a formal request for representation on the Natural Science and Education Committee be made to member organizations.

At TRCA Board of Director's Annual Meeting held on January 13, 2023 appointments to NSEC were confirmed, with the following School Board and TRCA Board Members currently serving as Committee Members:

School Board Trustees:

Thomas Thomas, Dufferin-Peel District School Board
Stan Cameron, Peel District School Board
Pamela McCarthy, York District School Board
Garry Tanuan, Toronto Catholic District School Board
Angela Grella, York Catholic District School Board
Anu Sriskandarajah, Toronto District School Board
Deborah Oldfield, Durham District School Board
Monique Forester, Durham Catholic District School Board

TRCA Board Members:

Mayor David West, Richmond Hill
Councillor Jamaal Myers, City of Toronto
Ms. Connie Tang, City of Toronto

Since being convened, NSEC has focused specifically on implementation of the recommendations of OETF.

At Meeting #3/22 held on June 6, 2022, in response to Recommendation #2 of OETF, NSEC endorsed a series of minimum standards for student access to out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation and the environment. These standards focused on Grades 2, 4, 7 and 9 due to the strong curricular links.

Elementary Science and Technology Curriculum			
Grade	Type	Understanding Life Systems	Understanding Earth and Space Systems
Grade 2	Day	Growth and Changes in Animals	Air and Water in the Environment
Grade 4	Day	Habitats and Communities	
Grade 7	Overnight	Interactions in the Environment	

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Secondary Science Curriculum			
Grade	Type	Biology	Earth and Space Science
Grade 9	Day	Sustainable Ecosystems	

As with other curricular areas, to be effective, natural science, conservation and environmental learning must be sequential, integrated and provide for repeated exposure. Based on this principle, the minimum standards for access to out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation and the environment were developed to provide a consistent approach to ensuring equitable access to students from all eight area school boards. The minimum standards achieve the following key objectives:

1. Aligns out-of-classroom learning experiences related to natural science, conservation and the environment with specific curricular expectations;
2. Cross-supports curriculum and learning in Grades 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10, creating opportunities for leveraged learning both in the classroom and in the schoolyard or community; and
3. Creates a consistent and clear system that ensures equitable access for all students in the GTA while supporting improved system planning and resourcing GTA-wide.

In order to sustain and ensure the future provision of out-of-classroom learning for students related to natural science, conservation and the environment, as well as support the implementation of minimum standards of access for students, OETF recognized the importance of stable, long-term funding. This was emphasized in the Final Report of the Task Force, specifically in Recommendation #5: Develop a Long-Term Equitable Access Financial Plan.

A key activity of the workplan for NSEC has been to develop a costing of the implementation of the Minimum Standards for Student Access, as endorsed at Meeting #3/22 held on June 6, 2022. The following is a budget framework for each grade covered under the Minimum Standards:

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	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 9	Totals
Number of Students	55,020	58,330	59,040	62,160	234,550
Estimated Cost per Student w/ Busing	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 325.00	\$ 65.00	\$490
Cost per Grade	\$ 2,751,000	\$ 2,916,500	\$ 19,188,000	\$ 4,040,400	\$ 28,895,900

The Ministry of Education currently provides outdoor education funding for school boards through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) program. The GSN funding is calculated based on enrolment and other data provided by school boards. The Outdoor Education allocation is contained within the Experiential Learning Envelope, along with the Specialist High Skills Major allocation and the Experiential Learning allocation. For the 2023/2024 school year, the Experiential Learning (EL) Envelope provides \$85.8 million in funding for school boards, of which \$17.7 million is specifically identified for Outdoor Education, calculated and allocated at \$5,000 per school board + (\$8.51 x ADE¹). Under this formula the eight GTA school boards that TRCA works with receive approximately \$7 million in direct Ministry of Education funding for outdoor education, resulting in a \$21 million funding gap in executing the minimum standards as endorsed by the Natural Science and Education Committee.

Given that the total cost of delivering on the endorsed minimum standards, NSEC has begun development of an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of the importance of out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation and the environment, as well as the financial requirements of delivering on this for students of the GTA. This advocacy agenda also proposes to roll the minimum standards up to a Province-wide program that benefits all students in Ontario, which would result in 580,000 students a year receiving dedicated, supported learning experiences related to Ontario's rich

¹ Average Daily Enrolment (ADE) is the calculation of the number of students enrolled in a school based on two count dates within the academic year – October 31st and March 31st. The ADE total is calculated by averaging enrolment at the school during these two time periods and is meant to capture the second semester decline in enrolment as a result of students who graduated at the end of the first semester and have left the system.

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natural resources and the complex ecosystems that they are comprised of the unique science-focused approach to managing them.

RATIONALE

Building on the outcomes and recommendations of OETF, NSEC provides a multi-stakeholder governance framework to advance shared objectives pertaining to out-of-classroom learning related to natural-science, conservation and the environment in the GTA. There is currently no formalized collaborative mechanism to foster, develop and strengthen partnerships between school boards and conservation authorities to support and enhance student learning in out-of-doors. By bringing together key stakeholders, including TRCA, area school boards, the Ministry of Education and other key stakeholders, TRCA and school board partners are better able to leverage the value of the publicly built and operated system that supports out-of-classroom learning related to natural science, conservation and the environment more effectively, while also ensuring the current and future learning needs are met.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.2 A culture of diversity, equity and inclusion contributing to community well-being

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.3 Informed citizens are conservation champions

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.4 Inspired communities take environmental action

FINANCIAL DETAILS

There are no direct financial implications or costs associated with this report to the Regional Watershed Alliance.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA staff will continue to update the Regional Watershed Alliance as appropriate on ongoing advocacy work and opportunities for RWA to support

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awareness building of the work of NSEC, TRCA and participating school boards, including the financial needs for meeting the minimum standards of student access.

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Date: July 25, 2024