

**Section III – Items for the Information of the Board**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Board of Directors  
Friday, November 22, 2024 Meeting

**FROM:** Laurie Nelson, Director, Policy Planning

**RE: FINALIZING TRCA STRATEGIES AND PLANS REQUIRED BY REGULATION UNDER THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT**

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**KEY ISSUE**

To inform the Board that Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) staff are finalizing the Strategies and Plans required of all conservation authorities by [Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services](#) (the Regulation) under the [Conservation Authorities Act](#) by December 31, 2024, as prescribed in the Regulation.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**WHEREAS** staff reported to the Board in September 2023 on the Mandatory Programs and Services Regulation requirement for TRCA Strategies and Plans to be completed by all conservation authorities by December 31, 2024;

**WHEREAS** staff committed to reporting back to the Board on TRCA's progress and completion of the required Strategies and Plans by December 31, 2024;

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT** the report on Finalizing TRCA Strategies and Plans Required by Regulation under the Conservation Authorities Act, be received;

**AND FURTHER THAT** TRCA's Clerk so advise the Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Ontario, and TRCA's municipal partners.

**BACKGROUND**

Ontario Regulation 686/21, the [Mandatory Programs and Services Regulation](#) (the Regulation), requires all conservation authorities to have complete by December 31, 2024:

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- Flood and Erosion Infrastructure Operational Plan;
- Flood and Erosion Infrastructure Asset Management Plan;
- Ice Management Plan;
- Land Inventory;
- Conservation Area Strategy; and
- Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy.

At Board of Directors Meeting held on September 22, 2023, Resolution #A152/23 was approved as follows:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the report, TRCA Strategies and Plans Required by the Mandatory Programs and Services Regulation under the Conservation Authorities Act, and any input on the proposed All Strategy Engagement Plan approach be received;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to the Board on the progress and completion of the Strategies and Plans as described in this report.

### **RATIONALE**

Many of TRCA's existing programs and plans fulfill or exceed the information requirements or components of the strategies and plans required by the province. Examples of already completed/existing components include:

- Several TRCA watershed plans;
- Flood Infrastructure Asset Management Plan;
- Erosion Control Infrastructure Asset Management Plan;
- Operations, Maintenance, and Surveillance manuals for all TRCA dams;
- Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region; and
- Greenspace Acquisition Project 2021-2030.

Since Fall 2023, staff have been working to ensure the strategic work of these programs and plans is consolidated and documented, leveraged, and updated where needed to match the requirements of the Regulation for each document.

The following is a summary of each of the required Strategies and Plans and confirms that they are compliant with the Regulation.

### **Ice Management Plan**

The Ice Management Plan (IMP) is required to document how ice may increase the risk of natural hazards, and the steps needed to mitigate these risks, including identifying equipment and resources to carry out these steps.

TRCA has an existing ice monitoring program since there are known areas within the jurisdiction that are at risk of flooding from ice jams. TRCA's IMP contains the above required components, including an action plan to mitigate the risk of ice jam flooding. Information in the IMP includes monitoring details, roles and responsibilities, notification tables, and site response.

The existing TRCA IMP was modified to meet the regulatory requirements for IMPs. Also, in accordance with the Regulation, TRCA's IMP may be updated from time to time as TRCA considers it advisable.

### **Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Operational Plans**

The regulatory requirements are that an authority shall provide programs and services that support the operation, maintenance, repair and decommissioning of water control and erosion control infrastructure the authority owns or manages.

#### **Flood Control Infrastructure Operational Plan**

Any water control infrastructure must be for the purpose of mitigating the risks to life and damage to property resulting from flooding or to assist in flow augmentation. In addition, the programs and services for water control infrastructure must include the development and implementation of an operational plan. TRCA's Flood Control Infrastructure Operational Plans are compliant in that they document the purpose, operation, maintenance, inspection, operating regimes, and other actions required to safely manage dams, flood control channels, and dikes. TRCA owns 12 dams, 9 flood control channels, and 8 dikes and flood walls.

TRCA is compliant with Canadian Dam Association and Ministry of Natural Resources requirements to have Operation, Maintenance, and Surveillance (OMS) manuals in place for dams. TRCA has developed OMS manuals for the flood control channels and dikes/flood walls. These OMS manuals meet the intent of the required Flood Control Infrastructure Operational Plan.

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### Erosion Control Infrastructure Operational Plan

The Regulation states that the programs and services for erosion control infrastructure must include the development and implementation of an operational plan. The operational plan, implemented through TRCA's Erosion Risk Management Program (ERMP), allows for the monitoring, maintenance, and remediation of erosion control assets constructed to protect essential infrastructure and safeguard the public from the risk of erosion hazards. Regular and post-storm inspections, based on erosion control asset condition, provide the data for monitoring records used to assess erosion control asset deficiencies.

The maintenance and remediation priorities of TRCA's erosion control assets are reviewed annually through the analysis of erosion hazard risk, protected asset consequence of failure, and the erosion control asset condition. Maintenance and remediation works are implemented where municipal funding allows.

TRCA's ERMP meets the intent of the required Erosion Control Infrastructure Operational Plan. TRCA owns 29 shoreline erosion control systems and 253 valley and river erosion control systems.

### **Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Asset Management Plans**

The regulation states that the programs and services for flood and erosion control infrastructure shall include the development and implementation of an asset management plan. Asset management plans identify lifecycle requirements, and associated costs required to balance service levels with customer expectations, and technical and environmental considerations each year. TRCA Asset Management Plans are guided by TRCA's Asset Management Policy.

Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Asset Management Plans have been prepared for inclusion in TRCA's first Asset Management Plan of its core assets and will be part of the overall Asset Management Program.

### **Conservation Area Strategy**

The Conservation Area Strategy guides what programs and services TRCA offers on lands that it owns and/or manages. It helps TRCA continue to be a leader in the protection and enhancement of our conservation areas and greenspaces.

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The Conservation Area Strategy includes the following components:

- A Land and Water Acknowledgement prepared in collaboration with Indigenous rightsholders;
- Objectives that provide high-level context and direction for actions related to lands owned or controlled by the TRCA. These are founded on the pillars and objectives of TRCA's Strategic Plan 2023-2034 where conservation areas are integral to program delivery;
- Identification of mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services on lands owned or controlled by TRCA, and the sources of funding required to support these programs and services. These reflect the programs and services reported to TRCA's Board of Directors and identified to our municipal partners during Memorandum of Understanding discussions, including:
  - Category 1 programs and services are set out in the legislation and by regulation;
  - Category 2 programs and services are agreed to by participating municipalities through the annual budget process.; and
  - Category 3 programs and services will continue to be funded outside the municipal levy (e.g. grants, service level agreements, self-generated revenue, etc.);
- Assessment of augmenting natural heritage and integration with other public lands and trails. The directions provided in TRCA's [Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy](#), [Updated Regional Target Natural Heritage System](#), [Integrated Restoration Prioritization](#) (IRP) process, and [Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region](#) support the objectives established in the Conservation Area Strategy;
- Land use categories, based on the types of activities that are engaged in on each parcel of land or other matters of significance such as provincial and municipal land use plan designations (e.g., Greenbelt Plan) related to the parcel. These categories are then used to classify lands in TRCA's Land Inventory; and
- Commitment to review and update the Conservation Area Strategy, including review by First Nations communities, Indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the public every 5-10 years, depending on need and resources.

The Conservation Area Strategy will be made available on the TRCA website.

### **Land Inventory**

The Land Inventory identifies every parcel of land that TRCA owns or controls, and provides information for each parcel as required in the Regulation, such as but not limited to:

- Location;
- Ownership type;
- Acquisition date; and
- Land use category, as identified in the Conservation Area Strategy.

TRCA has secured a total of 2,296 properties in fee simple, amounting to 16,396.83 hectares (40,517.45 acres) as of Q3 2024.

The land inventory will be updated periodically by TRCA staff.

### **Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy**

The Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy (the Watershed Strategy) will help TRCA and partner municipalities guide how future watershed plans are developed and updated. These watershed plans are TRCA's blueprint for sustainable development, ensuring that our rivers, wetlands and surrounding lands thrive for generations to come.

The Watershed Strategy that TRCA has prepared complies with the Regulation and includes the following components:

- A Land and Water Acknowledgement prepared in collaboration with Indigenous rightsholders;
- Guiding principles and objectives that provide high level context and direction for watershed plans;
- Recognition of the importance of Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) and the need to consider all natural components of a watershed, mandatory and supporting, together with social and economic factors, for watersheds to be healthy and resilient;
- Recognition that watershed plans will continue to be one of the primary means by which detailed recommendations will be made for management actions to comprehensively address watershed issues within TRCA's jurisdiction, which are then implemented through various programs and services;
- A summary of the many studies and monitoring programs upon which TRCA relies to guide decision-making;
- How TRCA programs and services are reviewed for compliance with

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the Regulation and the process for adapting programs and services where needed;

- Taking a risk-based approach, a schedule to advance the renewal of each of our watershed plans is included to ensure that they are both up to date with respect to science and policy and that they address the geographical areas where updated knowledge is needed most; and
- Commitment to review and update the Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy including review by First Nations communities, Indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the public every 5-10 years, depending on need and resources.

The Watershed Strategy will be made available on the TRCA website.

### **All Strategy Engagement Plan**

As required by Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services, the Conservation Area Strategy and the Watershed Strategy each required public consultation during the development of the strategies. TRCA staff coordinated consultation on these strategies in early 2024 through meetings with municipal partners, First Nation communities and Indigenous peoples, the Regional Watershed Alliance, and the TRCA Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) Working Group.

Public input on the guiding principles and/or objectives of the Conservation Area Strategy and the Watershed Strategy was received through online surveys. A social media campaign was launched as the surveys went live on May 1, 2024, with posts and video messages to drive engagement before the surveys closed on June 30, 2024.

Staff also sought input through consultation on other TRCA initiatives such as watershed plans, the Trail Strategy and land management plans through public and partner meetings for those initiatives.

Individual stakeholder meetings were held upon request. Below is a summary of feedback heard through consultations.

### **First Nations and Indigenous Communities**

- Supported the inclusion of a Land and Water Acknowledgement in the strategies;

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- Suggested identifying the need to recognize both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being;
- Supported the IWM approach; however, suggested recognizing the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples in caring for land and water;
- Suggested recognizing the importance of natural heritage systems to Indigenous values; and
- Suggested recognizing that good decision-making requires collaboration amongst all partners, stakeholders, and Indigenous peoples and access to data and information.

### Municipalities

- Comments from municipal staff were supportive of the guiding principles and/or objectives for both strategies; and
- Requests for clarity largely centered on definition of mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services and how municipal funding is assigned to these programs and services through the regular budgeting process.

### Regional Watershed Alliance

- Comments from the Regional Watershed Alliance were very supportive with no major changes suggested for the documents.

### BILD

- No comments were received.

### Public

- 48 surveys completed, and 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the objectives proposed for the Conservation Area Strategy;
- 39 surveys completed, and 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the guiding principles and objectives proposed for the Watershed Strategy; and
- Suggestions for improving the guiding principles and/or objectives were made through open-ended comments, and feedback was considered and incorporated, as appropriate.

### **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 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:**

1.1 Deliver provincially mandated services pertaining to flood and erosion hazards

**Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:**

1.2 Leadership in greenspace conservation

**Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:**

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

**Pillar 4 Service Excellence:**

4.4 Transparent decision making and accountable results

### **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

The development of these Plans and Strategies was funded by the regular budgets of TRCA divisions responsible for completing this work. Implementation of any recommendations will be conducted through TRCA's regular budget process and in accordance with the Conservation Authorities Act and its regulations.

### **DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE**

All required Strategies and Plans are now complete. The Conservation Area and Watershed Strategies will be posted on the TRCA website (<https://trca.ca/about/conservation-authorities-act-strategies/>), as required by Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services, and correspondence will be distributed to municipal partners, Conservation Ontario and the Minister of Natural Resources.

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**Date: September 18, 2024**