



**Raisin Region**  
Conservation Authority

# Annual Report 2023



The Raisin River downstream of the Martintown Dam in South Glengarry.

**60 YEARS**  
**OF CONSERVATION**  
• SINCE 1963 •



## MESSAGE FROM THE 2023 CHAIR



2023 RRCA Chair Martin Lang.

It was a privilege to continue serving as Chair of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority's (RRCA) Board of Directors in 2023. This year the RRCA celebrated 60 years of community-led, watershed-based natural resource management. This milestone was an opportunity to reflect on the significant improvements to the health and resilience of our region's watersheds since the RRCA was established on October 10, 1963.

RRCA's many partnerships have been vital to its successes over the decades, and 2023 was no exception. The year saw 267 applications reviewed for safe and sustainable development, upgrades to RRCA water control structures, updated flood hazard mapping, a review of our local Drinking Water Source Protection Plan, agricultural stewardship opportunities for local farmers, forest management at Gray's Creek Conservation Area, 63,500 trees planted, and a ten-acre expansion at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area. This year, our local watershed also brought the community together in record numbers during RRCA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Raisin River Canoe Race.

With the strong and continued support of our member municipalities and our government, corporate, community, and Indigenous partnerships, our 2024 summer students, and a team of 19 expert staff, the RRCA is eager to keep working together for a better environment and healthy future.

I look forward to continuing to serve on the RRCA Board of Directors in 2024 under the leadership of our new Chair, South Stormont Mayor Bryan McGillis, and new Vice-Chair, North Glengarry Councillor Jacques Massie.



The RRCA's Board of Directors is comprised of eight representatives appointed by its five member municipalities. Pictured, from left:

**TOWNSHIP OF NORTH STORMONT**  
Adrian Bugelli

**CITY OF CORNWALL**  
Carilyne Hébert  
Claude McIntosh

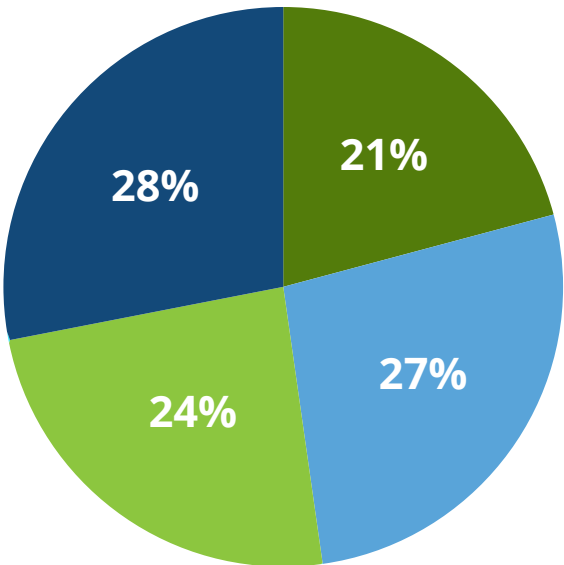
**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH STORMONT**  
Andrew Guindon  
Bryan McGillis (2023 Vice-Chair)

**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH GLENGARRY**  
Martin Lang (2023 Chair)  
Lachlan McDonald

**TOWNSHIP OF NORTH GLENGARRY**  
Jacques Massie

**RRCA GENERAL MANAGER**  
Richard Pilon

**FUNDING CONSERVATION:**  
RRCA 2023 Funding Sources



- Authority Generated:**  
\$1,054,302
- Government Grants:**  
\$1,040,807
- Municipal Levy:**  
\$903,535
- Partners:**  
\$791,913
- 2023 Total:**  
\$3,790,557



SCAN TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT THE  
RRCA'S PROGRAMS  
AND SERVICES



From left: RRCA General Manager Richard Pilon, Chair Martin Lang, Vice-Chair Bryan McGillis, and Board Member Lachlan McDonald.

## RRCA CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

The RRCA marked 60 years of conservation since its establishment in October 1963, when an order-in-council was passed after local municipalities requested the creation of a conservation authority to help address local land use conditions such as flooding, poor drainage, and the provision of water supplies from the St. Lawrence River.

The RRCA was first known as the Raisin River Conservation Authority, as its jurisdiction was originally based around the Raisin River’s watershed. Other watersheds were later added, including those of Hoople Creek and the Delisle, Beaudette, and Rigaud Rivers. The RRCA was then renamed the Raisin Region Conservation Authority. The RRCA is the easternmost conservation authority in the province, with a jurisdiction of 1,680 square kilometres.

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary was kicked off in February with a World Wetlands day celebration held at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area in partnership with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. The RRCA also hosted a watershed bus tour throughout significant sites in its jurisdiction, where the conservation authority’s Board of Directors and staff were joined by many of its government, corporate, and community partners. Tour sites included water control structures, drinking water source protection zones, floodplain mapping projects, tree planting sites, agricultural stewardship best management practices, wetlands, forests, Conservation Areas, and more. The RRCA also revealed new roadside property signage at its Conservation Areas.



60<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative tree planting at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area.



### SUPPORTING SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The RRCA once again reviewed a high number of development applications in 2023, offering essential advice to municipalities, businesses, farmers, developers, and property owners to ensure their projects are protected from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion, unstable slopes, and more.



### REVISIONS TO DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PLAN

Sources of drinking water for the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region's 25 drinking water systems continued to be protected from contamination and overuse through the area's Source Protection Plan. In 2023, the local Source Protection Committee worked to revise the Plan and its policies under the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to best protect local drinking water sources.



### RRCA EXPANDS COOPER MARSH CONSERVATION AREA BY 10.4 ACRES

Cooper Marsh Conservation Area benefitted from multiple enhancements in 2023 thanks to several partnerships, including a 10.4-acre expansion. The popular greenspace and wildlife haven also saw significant upgrades to its system of dykes and pumps responsible for maintaining ideal wetland conditions, the removal of invasive buckthorn, and the planting of native species.



### WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP: 63,500 TREES PLANTED

The RRCA broke a ten-year record in 2023 by adding 63,500 trees to the local landscape through its various forestry programs, leading to 1.3 million trees planted since 1994 to enhance the health and resilience of local watersheds. The RRCA also facilitated landowner stewardship through its Agri-Action program, which supports farmers looking to establish and maintain agricultural best management practices in their operations.



### 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY RAISIN RIVER CANOE RACE

RRCA's signature Raisin River Canoe Race celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on April 10, 2023, with a record 485 paddlers in 290 boats registered for the popular springtime event. Participants and spectators were treated to balmy temperatures that reached 24 degrees Celsius. Veteran paddlers from the first race in 1973 gathered at the start line in South Stormont to send off this year's participants. The fastest time down the Raisin River was the Pro Boat Tandem of Mike De Abreu and Ryan Stepka in a time of 2:21:04.

## RRCA BY NUMBERS

- Established in **1963** to address local flooding, drainage, and water supply concerns
- **1,680** km<sup>2</sup> watershed jurisdiction
- Owns and protects **1,985** acres of environmentally significant land
- **86,500** residents
- **5** member municipalities
- **8** municipally-appointed board members
- **3** Conservation Areas

## IN 2023

- **267** development applications processed
- **63,500** trees planted
- **161,500** Conservation Area visitors
- **6** flood statements issued
- **0** low water response statements issued
- **14** summer students hired



SCAN TO SEE ALL RRCA NEWS



Site visit in North Glengarry for a watercourse alteration permit.

Under the *Conservation Authorities Act* and the *Planning Act*, conservation authorities review development near or within shorelines, floodplains, and erosion-prone areas in their jurisdiction in order to protect people and property from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion and ice heaving. Through its planning reviews, the RRCA also screens for threats to sources of municipal drinking water under the *Clean Water Act*.

Timelines for permits issued under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* are established by the Province of Ontario: 30 days for minor applications, 90 days for major applications. Conservation authority client service standards aim for the following review times: 21 days for minor applications, 28 days for major applications, and 14 days for routine applications. In 2023, all *Conservation Authority Act* permits issued by the RRCA were within the provincial and conservation authority client service standard timelines.

The RRCA also serves as the lead reviewing agency in the Cornwall Sediment Strategy, a component of the St. Lawrence River Remedial Action Plan designed to prevent the disturbance of several zones of sediment along the Cornwall waterfront.

In 2023, the RRCA worked to update the regulatory mapping (flood hazard) for the Eastman Drain, a watercourse in South Stormont and the City of Cornwall. This project was funded in part by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.



RRCA regulations and planning reviews help protect against natural hazards such as flooding.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

**145** PLANNING ACT APPLICATION REVIEWS

**111** PERMITS ISSUED UNDER THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT

**11** PROPERTY INQUIRIES

**0** CORNWALL SEDIMENT STRATEGY REVIEW



SCAN TO SEE WHICH ACTIVITIES MAY REQUIRE A PERMIT FROM THE RRCA



Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee

From left: Lisa Van De Ligt (Project Manager), Don Munro, Blair Walker, Martin Lang, Chris McDonell, Raymond Beauregard (Chair), Stephen Wilson, Theresa Bergeron, Tom Van Dusen, Dominique Lefebvre, Robert Rathbun, Lawrence Levere, Jacqueline Pemberton, Glenn Mackey, and Elaine Kennedy. (Missing: Michel Kearney, Walter Oeggerli, François St-Amour, Idalia Milan, Mary Wooding.)

Under the *Clean Water Act*, the Raisin Region Conservation Authority protects local sources of municipal drinking water from contamination and overuse through the Drinking Water Source Protection program.

The RRCA and South Nation Conservation form the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region. A Source Protection Plan for the Region contains local policies to safeguard drinking water.

The Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee (SPC) consists of municipal, public, and sector representatives. The SPC meets to discuss technical assessments and source protection policy.

In 2023, under subsection 36 (1) of the *Clean Water Act*, the SPC worked towards a comprehensive review of the Source Protection Plan to revise its policies under the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to best protect local drinking water sources.

## RAISIN-SOUTH NATION SOURCE PROTECTION PLAN

Covers an area of **6,900 km<sup>2</sup>** with approximately **274,000** residents (2016 census)

**25** municipal drinking water systems

Approximately **50%** of residents depend on municipal drinking water sources

**100%** of significant threats to municipal drinking water sources removed or mitigated through risk management measures

**100%** of source protection policies have been implemented, are in progress, or have been evaluated and determined to require no further action



SCAN TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT DRINKING WATER  
SOURCE PROTECTION





# WATERSHED MANAGEMENT



Diagram of the Fly Creek Flood Control in the City of Cornwall.

The RRCA's jurisdiction encompasses 1,680 km<sup>2</sup> of eastern Ontario, which includes several watersheds and tributaries to the St. Lawrence River.

The RRCA's watershed management includes operating and maintaining eight water control structures, conducting water quality and quantity monitoring, and providing Flood Forecasting and Warning and Low Water Response programs, which assess watershed conditions to provide advance notices of flooding or drought potential to municipalities.

## MONITORING NETWORKS

10

STREAM GAUGE MONITORING SITES

9

PROVINCIAL SURFACE WATER QUALITY MONITORING SITES

9

PROVINCIAL GROUNDWATER MONITORING WELLS

2

SNOW SURVEY MONITORING SITES

## FLOOD AND DROUGHT MESSAGES

- 2 Water Safety Statements
- 2 Flood Outlook Statements
- 1 Flood Watch
- 1 Flood Warning
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 1
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 2
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 3

## WATER CONTROL STRUCTURE PROJECTS

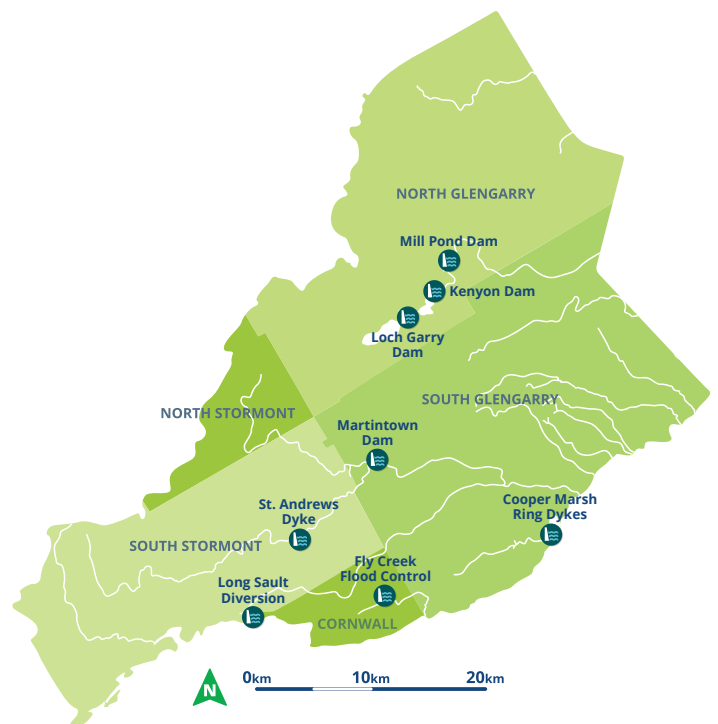
FLY CREEK FLOOD CONTROL	KENYON DAM
Updates to pumping station	Upgrade to satellite data telemetry system



RRCA staff demonstrates a surface water quality sampling in North Glengarry.



SCAN TO SEE THE RRCA'S CURRENT FLOOD STATUS INDICATOR





Erosion control project in South Glengarry.

To support healthy and resilient watersheds, the RRCA fosters landowner stewardship in its jurisdiction by offering tree planting services and incentives, leading various projects within the St. Lawrence River Area of Concern, hosting the ALUS Ontario East (Alternative Land Use Services) Coordinator, and facilitating the implementation of agricultural best management practices.

The RRCA also acquires land to enhance forest cover, conserve ecological habitat, secure green infrastructure for natural hazard resilience, and provide recreational opportunities to the public. Landowners looking to leave a natural legacy may consider donating their land to the conservation authority for perpetual preservation and management. The RRCA currently owns and manages 1,985 acres of environmentally significant land.

RRCA's 2023 Backyard Conservation Project assisted 50 local landowners with implementing naturalization projects on their properties' grounds and shorelines. This project has received funding support from the Government of Ontario.\*



Community tree planting event in South Stormont.

**1.3M TREES  
PLANTED SINCE 1994**

**63,500 TREES  
PLANTED IN 2023**



**STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS**

**338**

NEW ACRES DEDICATED TO ALUS PROJECTS

**50**

BACKYARD CONSERVATION PROJECTS

**48**

ACRES RENEWED FOR ALUS PROJECTS

**48**

ALUS AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

**27**

LANDOWNERS PARTICIPATING IN ALUS PROJECTS

**16**

ADVISORY SERVICE GRANTS TO LOCAL FARMERS & LANDOWNERS

SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RRCA'S FORESTRY SERVICES



\*Views expressed are those of the RRCA and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.



South Glengarry farmer Currie McIntosh leads a tour of his constructed wetland during an RRCA tour hosted with ALUS Ontario East.

In 2023, RRCA engaged the local community in conservation through various outreach and recreation opportunities, including workshops and presentations, a long-term virtual bioblitz, a family fishing day, a canoe race, free tree giveaways, weekly guided summer hikes at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area, an ongoing geocaching tour, two watershed bus tours, and more.

OUTREACH

3,000+

OUTREACH & EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS

10

COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDED

9

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATIONS HOSTED

6

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING EVENTS

5

TREE GIVEAWAYS

5

VIRTUAL STEWARDSHIP PROJECT TOURS

2

WATERSHED TOURS



Mayor Jamie MacDonald helps distribute free trees to North Glengarry residents.



Mayor Justin Towndale joins Eamer's Corners Public School students and RRCA staff planting trees at the Gambhir Memorial Urban Forest in Cornwall.



SCAN TO ACCESS THE RRCA EVENTS CALENDAR



161,500 TOTAL VISITORS IN 2023



Students from Cornwall's St. Matthew Catholic Secondary School join Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and RRCA staff to plant trees at Cooper Marsh in South Glengarry.

The RRCA's three Conservation Areas enable residents and visitors to step into nature through various amenities such as park and picnic areas, wildlife viewing blinds and platforms, a marina, campground, interpretive centre, and a combined 25 kilometres of nature trails. RRCA's Conservation Areas saw significant upgrades in 2023 thanks to several partnerships, including a 10.4-acre expansion at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area, which received financial support from the Canada Nature Fund, a Government of Canada's Department of Environment and Climate Change program in partnership with Conservation Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and several international contributors.

**CHARLOTTENBURGH PARK**

- **27,500** visitors
- **5<sup>th</sup>** continuous year receiving favourite campground award
- **127** iNaturalist observations logged
- **90** species observed
- **30** lots upgraded with water lines
- Hosted 2023 South Glengarry Haunted Drive hosted by Optimist Club of Lancaster

**GRAY'S CREEK**

- **89,500** visitors
- **317** iNaturalist observations logged
- **221** species observed
- **31** interpretive signs and tags added
- Launch of self-guided arboretum tour
- Hazardous tree management completed along trails west of roadway

**COOPER MARSH**

- **44,500** visitors
- **305** iNaturalist observations logged
- **172** species observed
- **300** native trees, shrubs & wildflowers planted
- **11** acres cleared of invasive buckthorn
- **10.4** acres added
- **9** kilometres of ring dyke repairs completed
- World Wetlands Day celebration hosted with Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Launch of lending library
- Launch of weekend guided walks



Beach at Charlottenburgh Park in South Glengarry.



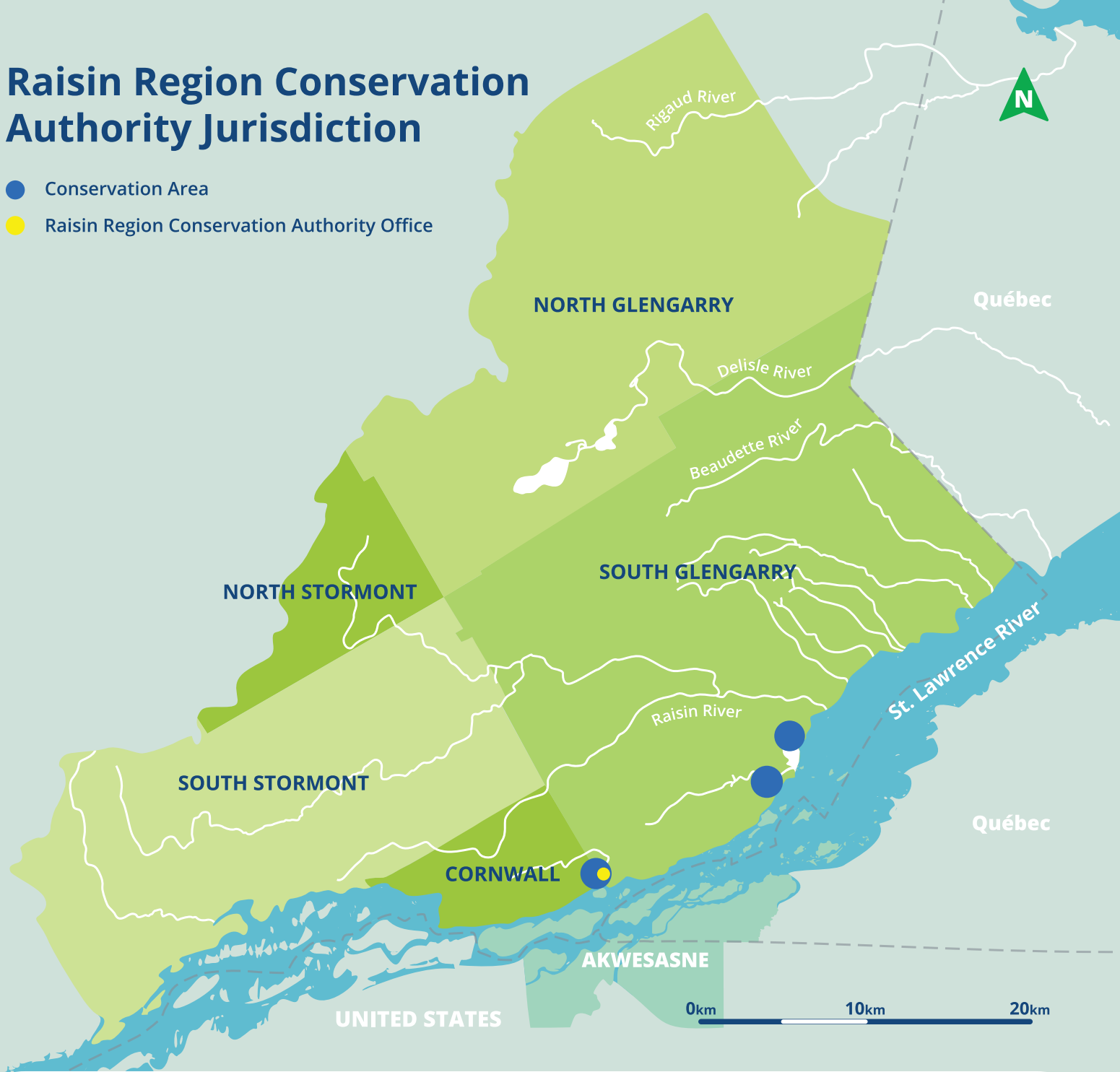
Hazardous tree management at Gray's Creek Conservation Area in South Glengarry and Cornwall.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RRCA'S 3 CONSERVATION AREA

# Raisin Region Conservation Authority Jurisdiction

- Conservation Area
- Raisin Region Conservation Authority Office



**Raisin Region  
Conservation Authority**

Guiding our community in the protection, enhancement and restoration of our natural environment through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs for a sustainable future.

 @raisinregion



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18045 County Road 2, Cornwall, ON K6H 5T2  
(613) 938-3611  
info@rrca.on.ca  
rrca.on.ca

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