



Raisin Region
Conservation Authority

Annual Report 2024





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 (2024 Chair)

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH GLENGARRY
Jacques Massie
(2024 Vice-Chair)

TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH GLENGARRY
Lachlan McDonald
Martin Lang

RRCA GENERAL MANAGER SECRETARY-TREASURER
Alison McDonald

MESSAGE FROM THE 2024 CHAIR



2024 RRCA Chair Bryan McGillis.

It was my privilege to again serve our community as Chair of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority's (RRCA) Board of Directors in 2024. During my nearly two decades on the Board, I have personally seen how our local conservation authority has had a transformative effect on the health and resilience of our watersheds.

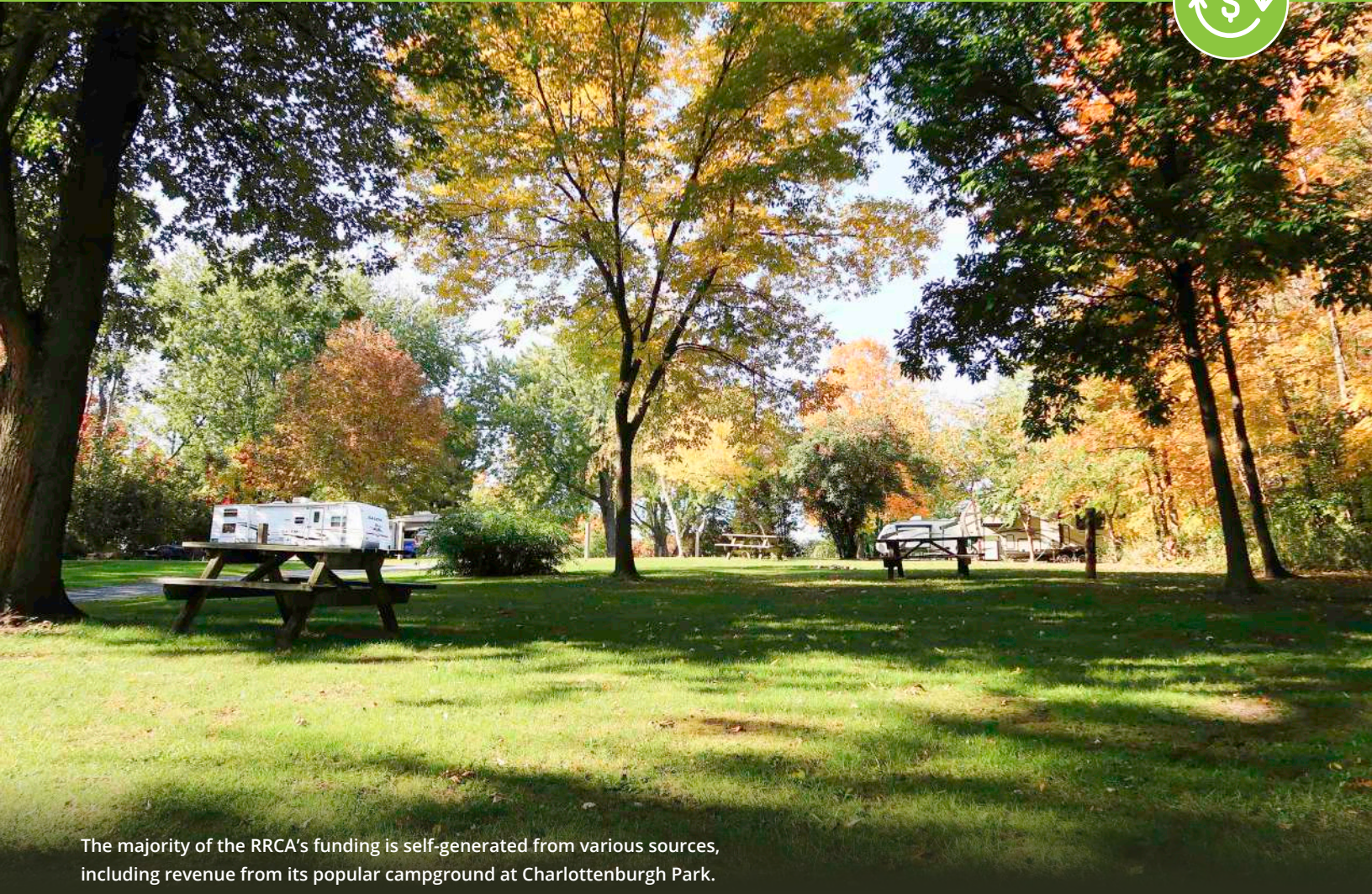
I'm pleased to say that, last year, with the support of our municipalities and partners, our conservation authority worked to provide a firm future for our local environment and communities. Some highlights include overseeing the completion of multi-year projects to enhance habitat at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area; using advanced technology to update floodplain mapping for a watercourse in South Stormont and Cornwall; appointing a skilled and dynamic new General Manager; and creating resource management and conservation area strategies that will help inform a Strategic Action Plan update slated for 2025.

Our achievements in protecting people and property from natural hazards, conserving environmentally significant land, fostering landowner stewardship, protecting sources of municipal drinking water, and providing recreation opportunities would have been impossible without the support and dedication of our member municipalities, partners, and staff. We especially thank our former General Manager, Richard Pilon, who retired in 2024 after a remarkable 37-year career at our local conservation authorities.

As one of the approximately 86,500 residents in the RRCA's 1,680 km² jurisdiction, I am proud of our conservation authority's work. Our community-led, watershed-based approach to conservation and natural resource management gives me great hope for a better environment and healthy future for all of us.

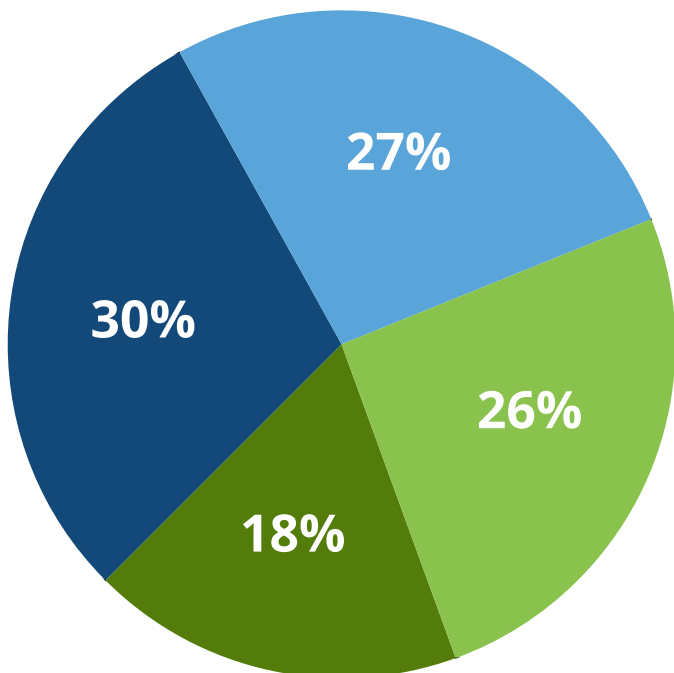


SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RRCA'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



The majority of the RRCA's funding is self-generated from various sources, including revenue from its popular campground at Charlottenburgh Park.

FUNDING CONSERVATION: RRCA 2024 Funding Sources



Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Authority Generated: \$1,075,904
Municipal Levy: \$966,312
Government Grants: \$923,567
Partners: \$645,731
2024 Total: \$3,611,514



RRCA staff conducting a site inspection at the Eastman Drain in South Stormont.

UPDATED REGULATORY MAPPING (FLOOD HAZARD) FOR EASTMAN DRAIN

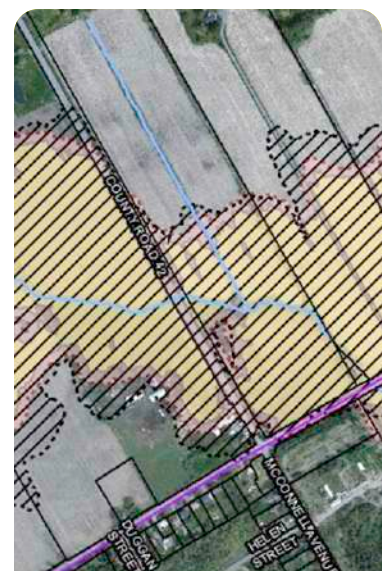
In 2024, the RRCA completed the update of flood hazard regulatory mapping for the Eastman Drain watercourse in the Township of South Stormont and City of Cornwall.

The flood hazard mapping study area spanned from north of Headline Road to southeast of the intersection of McConnell Avenue and South Branch Road. The new maps identify the floodplain for a one-percent annual exceedance probability, also known as a 100-year flood event.

Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, the RRCA reviews development applications near water and wetlands to protect people and property from natural hazards such as flooding and erosion. Flood hazard maps are essential components of these reviews. The study now provides up-to-date information on the flood hazard in the area near the Eastman Drain. Flood hazard maps also help inform municipal official plans and zoning schedules.

The RRCA hosted a virtual public information centre on April 10, 2024, to provide residents living near or within the flood hazard area the opportunity to view the updated maps to better understand the risks and provide feedback.

The new flood hazard mapping for the Eastman Drain is the result of a partnership between the RRCA, United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (SDG), Township of South Stormont, and City of Cornwall, with funding from the Government of Canada, Province of Ontario, and United Counties of SDG. The RRCA also completed a flood hazard identification and priority setting project within its jurisdiction thanks to support from the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario.



A section of the updated flood hazard mapping.



SIGNIFICANT LAND DONATION FROM THE MCKAY FAMILY

In 2024, the RRCA received its first land donation through Canada’s Ecological Gifts program when the McKay family donated 89 acres of environmentally significant land in South Glengarry to the RRCA for perpetual preservation. The property features a diverse range of landscapes, including old growth forests and significant wetlands.



DRAFT DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PLAN UPDATES COMPLETED

The Raisin–South Nation Source Protection Committee completed the draft updates to the Drinking Water Source Protection Plan, under the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The draft updates were prepared to increase clarity, incorporate consistent terminology and references, and update policies related to new thresholds for potential drinking water threats related to the storage of fuel, salt, and snow. The public was invited to provide feedback on the updates during a public consultation period launched in December 2024.



ALISON McDONALD SUCCEEDS RICHARD PILON AS GENERAL MANAGER

In June 2024, the RRCA was pleased to welcome Alison McDonald as its new General Manager. Alison grew up on a small family farm in the RRCA jurisdiction and has worked for both South Nation Conservation and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. She holds a master’s degree in environmental science from Trent University. She replaces Richard Pilon, who retired after a 37-year career with local conservation authorities, including seven years as RRCA General Manager.



WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP: 52,000 TREES PLANTED

The RRCA enhanced the health and resilience of local watersheds in 2024 by adding 52,000 trees to the landscape, facilitating landowner stewardship projects such as creating and enhancing wetlands and grasslands, and, through its Agri-Action Program, supporting farmers looking to incorporate best management practices in their operations. The Agri-Action Program is supported in part by the Government of Canada through the Canada Water Agency and by the Government of Ontario.



MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS AT COOPER MARSH CONSERVATION AREA

Significant repairs to the Marsh’s ring dyke system were finished in 2024 thanks to provincial funding secured by Ducks Unlimited Canada. The RRCA also successfully completed its multi-year Cooper Marsh Biodiversity Project, which brought a series of a habitat creation and enhancement at the Marsh, including additional open water space within its main impoundment. The Biodiversity Project was undertaken with the support of the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, a Government of Canada’s Department of Environment and Climate Change program in partnership with Conservation Ontario. Funding was also awarded by Ontario Power Generation.

RRCA BY NUMBERS

- Established in **1963** to address local flooding, drainage, and water supply concerns
- **1,680** km² watershed jurisdiction
- Owns and protects **2,000+** acres of environmentally significant land
- **86,500** residents
- **5** member municipalities
- **8** municipally-appointed board members
- **3** Conservation Areas

IN 2024

- **215** development applications processed
- **52,000** trees planted
- **173,500** Conservation Area visitors
- **5** flood statements issued
- **0** low water response statements issued
- **17** summer students hired



SCAN TO SEE ALL RRCA NEWS



Watercourse alteration permit site visit in North Glengarry.

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

Permit timelines under the *Conservation Authorities Act* are established by the Province of Ontario: 30 days for minor applications and 90 days for major applications. In the 2024 reporting period, the RRCA issued 98 percent of minor permits and 100 percent of major permits within the prescribed service standards. The average review time for all complete applications was 8 calendar days.

The RRCA also serves as the lead reviewing agency for 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 2024, the RRCA completed a flood hazard regulatory mapping update for the Eastman Drain and finalized a project for flood hazard identification and priority setting within its jurisdiction.



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

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

113 PLANNING ACT APPLICATION REVIEWS

81 PERMITS ISSUED UNDER THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT

20 PROPERTY INQUIRIES

1 CORNWALL SEDIMENT STRATEGY REVIEW



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



Salt Responsibly

DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION
Our Actions Matter

Did you know?

1 tablespoon of salt will melt a one-metre square area.



Keep lid closed to protect from rain/snow.



Shovel or plow before applying salt.



A little salt goes a long way. Apply sparingly.



Salt works best between 1 and -10°C. Try an alternative as temperature drops.



Salt contaminated runoff can enter ground & surface water sources.

The Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region launched a salt awareness campaign in 2024 to encourage best practices.

Under the *Clean Water Act*, the RRCA 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 2024, under subsection 36 (1) of the *Clean Water Act*, the SPC completed a comprehensive review of the Source Protection Plan to revise its policies under the direction of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. A public consultation for feedback on the draft changes was launched in December 2024.

RAISIN-SOUTH NATION SOURCE PROTECTION PLAN

Covers an area of **6,900 km²** with approximately **274,000** residents (2016 census)

25
municipal drinking water systems

50%
of residents, approximately, 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





RRCA staff record data from a water sample taken from the main branch of the Raisin River in South Stormont.

The RRCA's jurisdiction encompasses 1,680 km² of eastern Ontario and 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.

In 2024, the RRCA assembled a Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy in accordance with changes made to Ontario's *Conservation Authorities Act* in 2021.

FLOOD AND DROUGHT MESSAGES

- 2 Water Safety Statements
- 1 Flood Outlook Statement
- 2 Flood Watches
- 0 Flood Warnings
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 1
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 2
- 0 Low Water Responses Level 3

WATER CONTROL STRUCTURE PROJECTS

COOPER MARSH RING DYKES

- Completion of ring dyke reconstruction

FLY CREEK FLOOD CONTROL

- Completion of pumping station updates
- Installation of new roadside sign

MONITORING NETWORKS

10

STREAM GAUGE MONITORING SITES

9

PROVINCIAL SURFACE WATER QUALITY MONITORING SITES

9

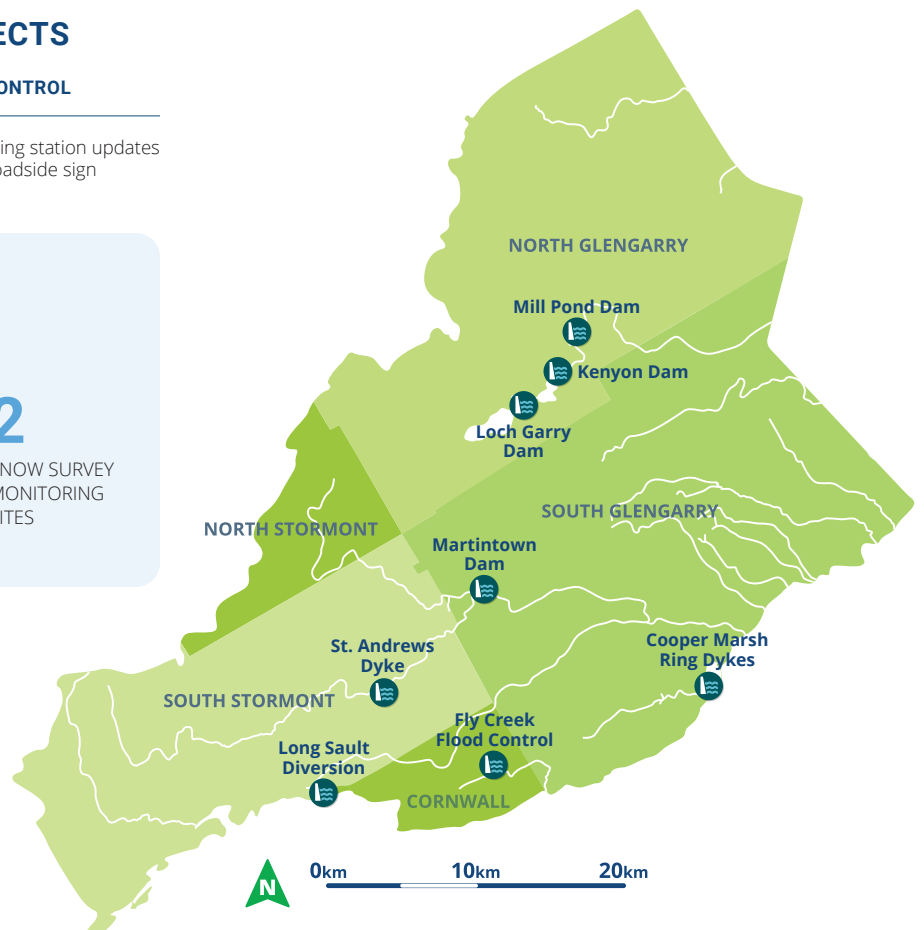
PROVINCIAL GROUNDWATER MONITORING WELLS

2

SNOW SURVEY MONITORING SITES



SCAN TO SEE RRCA'S CURRENT FLOOD STATUS INDICATOR





ALUS Ontario East Coordinator Brendan Jacobs (right), Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Andrea Khanjin (centre), and MPP Nolan Quinn at the site of a future wetland project on a farm in South Stormont after a provincial announcement of over \$2.8 million in wetland funding to ALUS through Ontario’s Wetlands Conservation Partner Program.

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, and hosting the ALUS Ontario East (Alternative Land Use Services) Coordinator. The RRCA also facilitates the implementation of stewardship projects such as wetland and grassland creation and enhancement, erosion control, cover crops, and more.

In 2024, alongside various partners and funders, the RRCA completed 11 wetland creation and enhancement projects. The RRCA currently owns and manages over 2,000 acres of environmentally significant land to enhance forest cover, conserve ecological habitat, provide recreational opportunities, and secure green infrastructure for natural hazard resilience. Landowners looking to leave a natural legacy may consider donating their land to the RRCA for perpetual preservation and management. The RRCA is a qualified recipient under Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program.



Over-the-counter seedling program.

**1.3M TREES
PLANTED SINCE 1994**

**52,000 TREES
PLANTED IN 2024**



SCAN TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT RRCA
STEWARDSHIP SERVICES



STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

102

NEW ACRES DEDICATED TO ALUS PROJECTS

34

ALUS AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

48

ACRES RENEWED FOR ALUS PROJECTS

15

ADVISORY SERVICE GRANTS TO LOCAL FARMERS & LANDOWNERS

15

LANDOWNERS PARTICIPATING IN ALUS PROJECTS

11

WETLAND PROJECTS COMPLETED



Local farmer Brigitte Bérubé leads a guided tour of a newly excavated wetland at her North Glengarry farm during a RRCA tour hosted with ALUS Ontario East.

In 2024, the 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 afternoon, canoe race, tree giveaways, guided hikes at Cooper Marsh Conservation Area, an ongoing geocaching tour, a farm stewardship tour, and more.

OUTREACH

2,900+

OUTREACH & EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS

10

COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDED

18

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS & OUTREACH EVENTS DELIVERED

5

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING EVENTS

5

TREE GIVEAWAYS

1

FARM STEWARDSHIP TOUR



Tree Giveaway in North Stormont.



Raisin River Canoe Race start line in South Stormont.



SCAN TO ACCESS THE RRCA EVENTS CALENDAR



173,500 TOTAL VISITORS IN 2024



RRCA Vice-Chair, Jacques Massie (centre), joins MPP Nolan Quinn's Constituency Assistant, Michael Lazaris (third from left), and RRCA and Ducks Unlimited Canada staff for the official reopening of Cooper Marsh Conservation Area's trails after 7.5 kilometres of trails were rebuilt.

RRCA's three Conservation Areas provide recreation and eco-tourism opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Amenities include park and picnic areas, wildlife viewing blinds and platforms, a marina, campground, interpretive centre, and over 20 kilometres of nature trails. In 2024, with the support of multiple partners, the RRCA completed several large-scale habitat and visitor experience enhancement projects at its conservation areas. The RRCA also created a Conservation Area Strategy in accordance with changes made to Ontario's *Conservation Authorities Act* in 2021.

GRAY'S CREEK

113,000 visitors

600-square-foot picnic shelter constructed

250 native trees planted

161 iNaturalist observations logged

121 species observed

100 acres surveyed for invasive phragmites mapping

3 fingerpost wayfinding signs installed

1 roadside sign installed

Hazardous tree management completed along all nature trails

COOPER MARSH

34,500 visitors

673 acres surveyed for invasive phragmites mapping

522 native wildflowers planted (25 species)

509 iNaturalist observations logged

250 species observed

16 new interpretive signs installed

7.5 km of ring dyke repairs completed

3 beaver baffles installed

2 acres of new open water areas created

World Wetlands Day celebration hosted with Mohawk Council of Akwesasne



Staff stand above one of five beaver baffles installed at Cooper Marsh and Charlottenburgh Park thanks to funding from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and the Government of Ontario.



RRCA staff give a planting demonstration during a TD Tree Days event at Gray's Creek Conservation Area.

CHARLOTTENBURGH PARK

26,000 visitors

235 acres surveyed for invasive phragmites mapping

48 iNaturalist observations logged

42 species observed

2 beaver baffles installed

Reconstruction of boardwalk over Fraser Creek

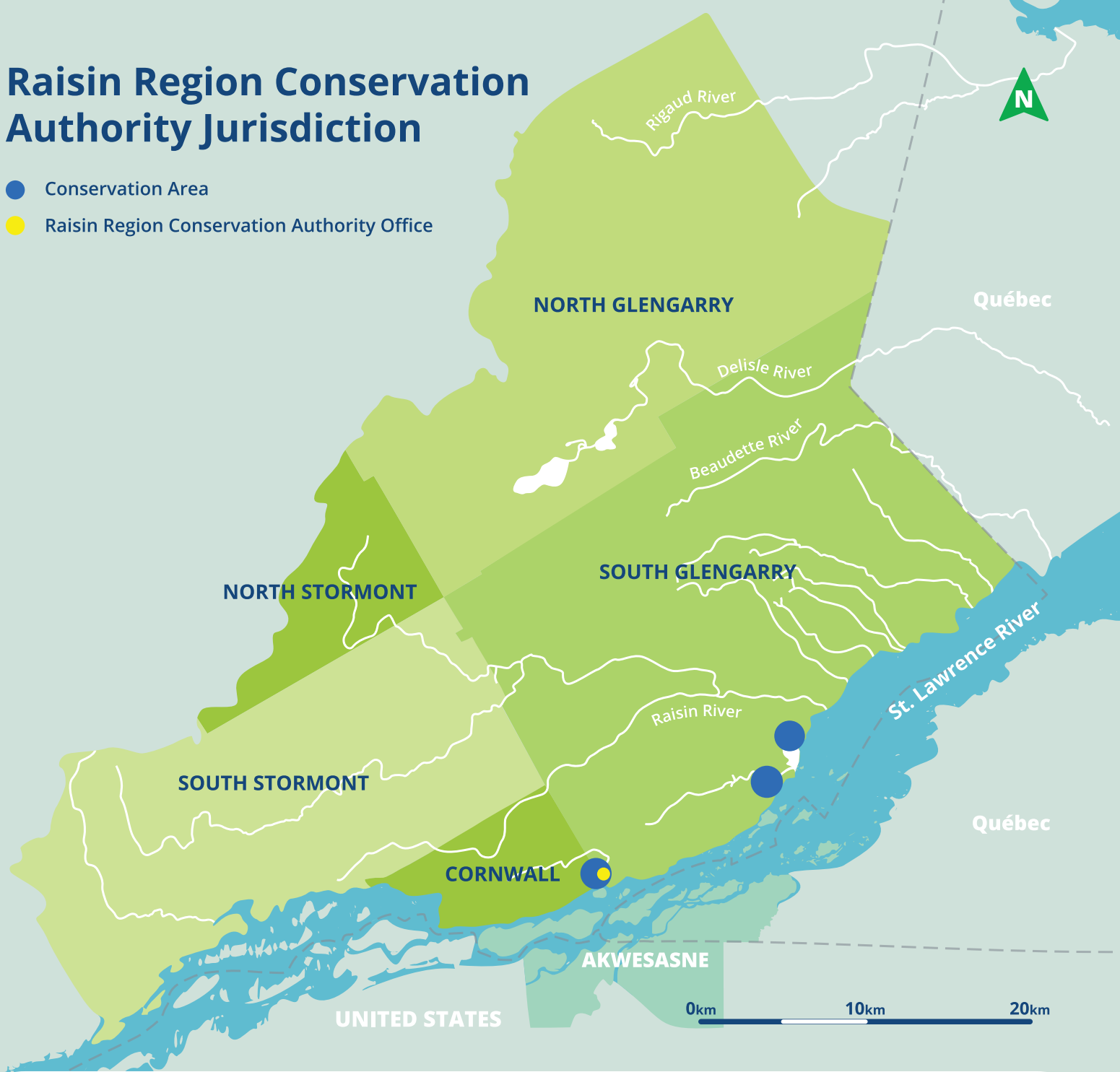
Hosted 2024 South Glengarry Haunted Drive by the Optimist Club of Lancaster

SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RRCA'S CONSERVATION AREAS



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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