



LAKEHEAD REGION
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Conservation Lands Strategy

Version 1.0

September 2024

VERSION	DATE	Resolution No.
Version 1.0	September 25, 2024	#101/24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Conservation Authorities Act*, Ontario Regulation 686/21, Sections 9 and 10, requires the LRCA to develop a Conservation Area Strategy. In order to be clear on the scope of the Strategy, the Strategy will be called the “Conservation Lands Strategy” to indicate that it applies to all Authority owned land. In compliance with the *Act*, LRCA-owned lands were classified into land use categories, outlining the types of activities and significant features on the various parcels of land. The Strategy further highlights the mandatory and non-mandatory services that are provided on the LRCA-owned lands, including the revenue sources for each. A set of objectives were developed to guide decision-making related to the lands owned and controlled by the LRCA. The objectives also pertain to policy development to streamline the delivery of programs and services provided on LRCA-owned lands. The objectives align with the LRCA’s Five-Year Strategic Plan, focused on four priorities that further the delivery of programs and services related to the conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources within the Lakehead Watershed. The Conservation Lands Strategy will be reviewed and updated every five years or sooner if conditions warrant.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) is a community-based environmental non-profit agency that provides for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources within the Lakehead Watershed. The LRCA was established in 1954 (initially the Neebing Valley Conservation Authority) by the Province of Ontario at the request of municipalities in the Lakehead watershed.

As legislated, the LRCA provides mandatory programs that manage the risk of natural hazards, manage lands owned or managed by the Authority, protect sources of drinking water and monitor groundwater and surface water. The Authority also provides non-mandatory programs including programs at the request of the municipality (GIS mapping service) and programs that the LRCA considers to be beneficial to the watershed such as, stewardship on public and private lands and environmental education programming.

As part of the Land Management Program, the LRCA owns and maintains over 2,600 hectares of land. The land owned by the Authority was acquired through purchase, donation, or expropriation (Neebing-McIntyre Floodway). Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, O. Reg. 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services, Section 9 outlines the required components of the Conservation and Management of Lands Program and Section 10 outlines the requirements of creating and maintaining a “Conservation Area Strategy”. In order to be clear on the scope of the Strategy, the Strategy will be called the “Conservation Lands Strategy” to indicate that it applies to all Authority owned land. The “Conservation Lands Strategy” includes the management of LRCA’s Conservation Areas as well as all other land owned by the Authority. For budgeting purposes, all land is categorized as either a “Conservation Area” or “Other Owned Land”.

This document is the first version of the LRCA’s Conservation Lands Strategy, which will guide the efficient, transparent, and inclusive approach for the long-term management of Conservation Areas and other lands owned by the LRCA. The document is intended to outline land-based objectives, mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services, natural heritage management, land uses, and procedures for stakeholder and public engagement in the decision-making process. The primary intent of the Strategy is to inform decision-making regarding lands owned and controlled by the LRCA.

In addition to the Conservation Lands Strategy, a Lands Inventory and Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy are being developed as legislated.

1.1 Legislative Requirements

Ontario Regulation 686/21 under the *Conservation Authorities Act* outlines the Mandatory Programs and Services which must be delivered by all Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Ontario. As outlined in subsection 9(1), each Conservation Authority is required to prepare a “Conservation Lands Strategy” on or before December 31, 2024. The required components of the Strategy are further outlined in subsection 10(1) of the regulation:

Section 10. (1) A Conservation Lands Strategy referred to in paragraph 1 of subsection 9 (1) shall include the following components:

1. Objectives established by the authority that will inform the authority's decision-making related to the lands it owns and controls, including decisions related to policies governing the acquisition and disposition of such lands.
2. Identification of the mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services that are provided on land owned and controlled by the authority, including the sources of financing for these programs and services.
3. Where the authority considers it advisable to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1, an assessment of how the lands owned and controlled by the authority may,
 - i. augment any natural heritage located within the authority's area of jurisdiction, and
 - ii. integrate with other provincially or municipally owned lands or other publicly accessible lands and trails within the authority's area of jurisdiction.
4. The establishment of land use categories for the purpose of classifying lands in the land inventory described in section 11 based on the types of activities that are engaged in on each parcel of land or other matters of significance related to the parcel.
5. A process for the periodic review and updating of the Conservation Lands Strategy by the authority, including procedures to ensure stakeholders and the public are consulted during the review and update process.

(2) The authority shall ensure stakeholders and the public are consulted during the preparation of the Conservation Lands Strategy in a manner that the authority considers advisable.

(3) The authority shall ensure that the Conservation Lands Strategy is made public on the authority's website, or by such other means as the authority considers advisable.

2 BACKGROUND

The current LRCA Five-Year Strategic Plan 2023-2027 outlines the overall priorities and initiatives for the Authority over the five-year period, carrying on from the Authority's first-ever Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2018. The plan provides a focus on the continual protection of natural hazards, natural heritage, and ecosystems, in partnership with the community and organizations in the watershed.

The Conservation Lands Strategy will encompass the LRCA's vision to provide a healthy, safe, and sustainable Lakehead Watershed for future generations, with a mission to lead in the conservation and protection of the Lakehead Watershed. The Conservation Lands Strategy will serve as a complimentary document to the Strategic Plan, that specifically relates to the lands owned and operated by the LRCA and the associated programs and services. The two documents encompass similar themes, focused on achieving goals and objectives that align with the LRCA's mandate. The Conservation Lands Strategy will follow the same pillars focusing on the four priorities: Conserve and Sustain, Protect and Support, Connect and Explore, and Govern and Enhance.

2.1 Area of Jurisdiction

The LRCA's area of jurisdiction is approximately 2,719 square kilometres (Map 1) and includes the eight Member Municipalities of the LRCA including: City of Thunder Bay, Municipalities of Neebing, Shuniah and Oliver Paipoonge and the Townships of Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies, and Dorion. The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for the areas outside the jurisdiction of the Authority.

2.2 LRCA Owned Lands

As of 2024, the LRCA owns 2,603 hectares of land. The lands owned by the LRCA offers a diversity of services to the Member Municipalities including recreation, water management, protection of natural heritage features, flood mitigation, erosion control, and forest management. The properties owned by the LRCA fall into three different land use categories as indicated within the Land Inventory:

1. **Conservation Area for Passive Recreation:** intended for passive recreation, accessible to the public (i.e., Conservation Areas) (1550 hectares)
2. **Conservation Authority Administration Area:** LRCA's administration office and grounds (130 Conservation Road, Thunder Bay) (3.4 hectares)
3. **Management Area:** public accessibility varies or is completely restricted (e.g. Natural Hazard Lands, Water Management Areas, Forest Management Lands, Environmentally Sensitive Lands) (1049.3 hectares)

2.2.1 Conservation Areas

The LRCA offers the public ten Conservation Areas which have been identified as “Conservation Area for Passive Recreation” land use category (Map 2). The Conservation Areas include:

- Mission Island Marsh (City of Thunder Bay)
- Cascades (City of Thunder Bay)
- Mills Block (City of Thunder Bay)
- Silver Harbour (Municipality of Shuniah)
- Mackenzie Point (Municipality of Shuniah)
- Hurkett Cove (Township of Dorion)
- Little Trout Bay (Municipality of Neebing)
- Cedar Falls (Township of O’Connor)
- Hazelwood Lake (Unorganized Township of Gorham)
- Wishart (Unorganized Township of Gorham)

The LRCA’s Conservation Areas provide facilities for passive outdoor recreation including: hiking, geocaching, bird-watching, canoe/kayaking, paddle boarding, swimming, fishing, snowshoeing, and more. Combined, the Conservation Areas have 28 kilometres of hiking trails that offer different unique views including waterfalls, rivers, and lakeside views. Based on the traffic counter studies and the sale of Explore Cards, it is estimated that the Conservation Areas have over 375,000 visitors annually. The Conservation Areas are highly valued by residents of the Lakehead Watershed, often used by community groups for public events. Furthermore, the Conservation Areas provide physical and mental health benefits to community members of the Lakehead Watershed.

Conservation Areas provide public access for passive recreation; however, also protect the natural heritage features on the landscape while contributing to the overall health of the Lakehead Watershed. While offering recreational opportunities for community members, the lands also provide ecological benefits to water quality, protect land susceptible to erosion or flooding hazards, and increase resilience to climate change. Each Conservation Area is unique and provides varying functions to local ecosystems. Conservation Areas can also be utilized as a tool to build knowledge and understanding of natural ecosystems and the impacts of anthropogenic activity. See Appendix A for a full review of the facilities and amenities available at each Conservation Area.

2.2.2 Conservation Authority Administration Area (Other Owned Land)

In 1974, the LRCA acquired its Administration Office and Headquarters at 130 Conservation Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario. The Administration Grounds are composed of two parcels, totaling 3.4 hectares. One parcel (Property Number 39) contains the office infrastructure and the other parcel (Property Number 38) is a vacant lot that the LRCA intends to develop into an Urban Conservation Area (funding dependent). The administrative building includes open and private office space, meeting rooms, and an attached garage. The meeting space is available to the public and organizations to rent for a fee. Other buildings on site include a detached garage, a greenhouse, a pollinator garden, a community garden, and storage containers. The grounds also offer an EV charging station for public use for a fee. Within the Lands Inventory, these properties are referred to as “Conservation Authority (CA) Administration Areas”.

2.2.3 Management Areas (*Other Owned Land*)

2.2.3.1 Floodplain and Erosion Control Lands

Defined by the *Conservation Authorities Act* Section 25(d), “Hazardous Land”, also referred to as regulated land, “means land that could be unsafe for development because of naturally occurring processes associated with flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches or unstable soil, or bedrock”. The LRCA has acquired certain properties to afford further flood protection, erosion control and prevent development on hazard lands.

McVicar Creek: The LRCA owns eight parcels of land in the City of Thunder Bay (6.2 hectares), some of which have been amalgamated by MPAC. Some of the properties were acquired for channel improvement along McVicar Creek between 1966 and 1976. Remedial erosion efforts included the placement of rip-rap gabion baskets, channel straightening, and re-vegetation. Some of the lots are considered to be un-developable from a residential perspective due to the land being with the regional floodplain. One parcel was donated.

Kaministiquia River: The LRCA owns seven properties in the City of Thunder Bay (3.7 hectares), along the Kaministiquia River (Victor Street/Broadway Avenue), six of which were residential properties purchased in 1982 due to the impending risk from the adjacent erosion hazard. The at-risk dwellings were removed from the parcels and the properties re-naturalized over time. The properties are considered to be undevelopable due to the erosion risk.

Neebing River: The LRCA acquired 11 properties in the City of Thunder Bay (8.1 hectares), along the banks of the Neebing River (west of Ford Street). The intent of acquisition was to rehabilitate and beautify the banks, with a specific focus on reducing erosion and providing floodplain control. The LRCA has leased some of these parcels to the City of Thunder Bay until 2060 for park and recreational purposes. A sea-lamprey barrier weir is located upstream of Edward Street on LRCA owned land. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) operates a sea-lamprey trap at the site. Previously, portable traps were installed each spring. A permanent concrete trap was approved by the LRCA Board of Directors to be installed at the site by DFO in 2024. DFO executes a contract each year for the maintenance of the trap. LRCA staff were awarded the contract in 2024 and conducted the work as a Category 3 – Non-Mandatory program. Future contracts may be undertaken depending on time and staff availability.

Arthur's Bog: The LRCA purchased 54.26 hectares of property within the boundaries of Arthur's Bog in the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge. The property protects a portion of a large wetland that holds water in high flow conditions of Pennock Creek, reducing downstream flooding. Not only do the parcels provide floodplain protection, but the wetlands also provide recharge for the local water table.

2.2.3.2 Forest Management Property

The LRCA owns one Forest Management Property, Williams Forest, which is located within the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge. The property is comprised of nine parcels of land (non-contiguous), with approximately 554 hectares of forest. In accordance with the Managed Forest Plan, the parcels are managed for the health of the forest, to provide habitat for wildlife, protection against floods and erosion and the protection and production of water supplies. Williams Forest is not open to the public and has not been designated as a recreational area, therefore the properties have been classified as a Management Area.

The property receives a tax reduction as it is registered under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP). The program provides tax relief as well as a plan for proper long-term forest management. See Section 3.2.3 Mandatory Programs and Services for additional information on the MFTIP and how it relates to the lands owned by the LRCA.

It is noted that this property is being considered as a location to deposit future dredged material from the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway, within previously harvested areas. The goal after in-filling would be to re-forest the previously harvested/in-filled areas.

2.2.3.3 Nature Reserves

The LRCA owns five nature reserves, including:

- Granite Point (Municipality of Shuniah)
- Harpell/Bocking Area (unorganized Township of Ware)
- Jim Jessiman Nature Preserve (City of Thunder Bay)
- LaCaine-Bailey Bird Sanctuary Island (Municipality of Shuniah)
- Wakefield Common (City of Thunder Bay).

Within the Lands Inventory the properties are classified as Management Areas, as the intent of these properties is to protect the flora, fauna, provide wildlife habitat and other features of ecological or special interest. Two of the properties, Granite Point and LaCaine-Bailey Bird Sanctuary, are landlocked or are only accessible by boat. The nature preserves are currently not open to the public. Additional land securement may be required to provide site access, if the properties were to be developed into Conservation Areas. Future development of these sites is subject to funding availability and approval by the LRCA's Board of Directors.

2.2.3.4 Neebing-McIntyre Floodway

The LRCA has acquired many parcels of land along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway through expropriation or purchase to provide flood protection within the City of Thunder Bay. Construction of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway was completed in 1984 by the LRCA with a final cost of \$15 million dollars. The Floodway was constructed to address flooding in the lower Neebing River and Intercity Area of Thunder Bay. The properties are also intended to provide access for required maintenance (i.e., dredging) and to prevent development on the floodplain, hazard lands, or near erosion hazards. Maintenance ensures that the Floodway remains

operational and provides flood protection to the lower Neebing River and Intercity Area to the magnitude of the Regional Storm. The main features of the Floodway include:

- Diversion Structure at Ford Street
- Diversion Channel
- Sediment Trap at Balmoral Street
- Sediment Trap at CPR Bridge
- Widened and deepened Floodway Channel to Lake Superior
- Outlet into Lake Superior

Construction of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway has provided a valuable legacy to the City of Thunder Bay. Green space was created along the Floodway and, in partnership with the City of Thunder Bay, six kilometres of access pathways have been developed for public enjoyment and connects to the City's network of recreation trails and provides public access to Lake Superior.

An Operation, Maintenance, and Surveillance Plan has been developed that details the past and future operation of the Floodway.

2.2.3.5 Hope and Memory Garden

The Hope and Memory Garden is located adjacent to the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Channel downstream of the Balmoral Street Bridge. The extensive perennial, tree, and shrub garden was initiated in 1999, in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society; however, the Cancer Society is no longer involved with the garden. The living garden was created as a symbol of hope for those who had been touched by cancer and to continue the memory of those who had passed away from cancer. The garden has been a volunteer-led initiative for 24 years; however, in 2024, governance of the garden was returned to the LRCA. The LRCA is working with the remaining volunteers to create a plan for the continued operation of the garden, including recruiting new volunteers and donations to assist in funding the operation of the garden.

2.2.3.6 Victor Street Erosion Lands

On behalf of the City of Thunder Bay, the LRCA has managed erosion prone City-owned land between the Kaministiquia River and Victor Street in order to protect access and egress on Victor Street and the municipal infrastructure within the bank. Extensive studies and remedial work have been conducted over the years to address on-going erosion in the area. Monitoring of the at-risk areas is conducted annually. An Operation, Maintenance and Surveillance Plan has been developed that details the past and future management at the location.

2.2.3.7 Leased Lands

Presently, the Mission Island Marsh Conservation Area is the only land leased by the LRCA. The property is owned by the City of Thunder Bay and is leased to the LRCA on a five-year basis as per Section 21 (1)(d) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. The property was previously a landfill site that has been remediated and transitioned into a Conservation Area for passive recreation, public enjoyment, and access to Lake Superior.

2.3 Section 29 Regulation in Conservation Areas

The LRCA has designated Provincial Offences Officers to enable enforcement under the *Conservation Authorities Act R.S.O 1990*, Part VII Enforcement and Offence, Section 30.1 and associated regulations. The Section 29 Regulations Officers are appointed to manage, patrol, and monitor activities on all authority-owned land to encourage compliance with the associated regulations. Under the *Provincial Offences Act R.S.O 1990*, c. P.33, a Provincial Offences Officer who believes that one or more persons have committed an offense may issue a certificate of offense (i.e., ticket). Additionally, enforcement is conducted under the City of Thunder Bay's Parking By-Law to enforce the required payment of parking fees at Cascades and Mission Island Marsh Conservation Areas.

The LRCA will be developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), that allows the LRCA's designated Provincial Offences Officers to follow a uniform process and provide a higher level of consistency regarding compliance matters within the Conservation Areas. The SOP will assist officers in navigating complex situations, providing a set of best practices to enhance officer safety when performing their duties. By following the SOP, the LRCA's Provincial Offences Officers can maintain consistent interactions with the members of the public, while ensuring visitors to the Conservation Areas are in compliance with the safety rules and regulations.

2.4 Public/Private Use of LRCA Owned Land

Members of the public or groups can request the use of LRCA-owned land through the submission of a Land Use Request form. Staff review all requests and where the activity is permitted a Land Use Permit is issued. Fundraising conducted on LRCA-owned land is subject to Board approval. Fees are charged for weddings and shelter rentals and the parking fee/day use fee is applicable to all users attending the public/private event. When warranted the user is required to obtain liability insurance for the event. Conservation Areas remain open to the public and all other rules and regulations apply (i.e., no alcohol, no fires, open dawn to dusk, etc.).

2.5 Land Connections and Networks

Many of the LRCA's landholdings provide recreational connections, wildlife corridors, or integrate with other significant features within the Lakehead Watershed. The following section provides a review of how the LRCA's land holdings integrate with other provincially or municipally owned lands or other publicly accessible lands and trails within the LRCA's area of jurisdiction (O.Reg. 66/21, s.11(1)). As part of the Land Acquisition Strategy, the proximity of land holdings to other nature reserves and recreational lands, LRCA-owned or otherwise, is prioritized.

2.5.1 Natural Heritage

The management of natural heritage features and interconnected systems is necessary to protect biodiversity, important ecological processes, sensitive habitats, and wildlife corridors for the long term. Many of the lands owned and controlled by the LRCA protect and conserve natural heritage systems within the Lakehead Watershed; however, a full assessment of these significant features and linkages has yet to be completed.

In 2022, the LRCA started a natural heritage inventory of the Conservation Areas that are open to the public for passive recreation. The LRCA seeks to expand this work to develop a full inventory of significant features on the lands owned and controlled by the Authority. The inventory will assist in identifying linkages between natural heritage features, hydrologic features, document the presence of flora, fauna, and species at risk, and any other special habitat elements. An inventory of natural heritage features will allow the LRCA to:

- Maximize ecosystem services on LRCA owned lands through the management and restoration of natural heritage features.
- Facilitate a Natural Heritage Protection and Regeneration Program to restore and naturalize degraded ecosystem features.
- Collaborate, educate, and engage with municipal members to deliver coordinated natural heritage management.
- Analyze connectivity with adjacent municipal or like-minded organizations to determine where a collective approach can achieve wildlife corridors, protect entire systems, wetlands, etc.
- Continue ongoing monitoring and tracking of natural heritage features and ecological indicators.

Information on the natural heritage systems and their linkages can guide important planning decisions and further support municipal objectives and initiatives. The Natural Heritage System inventories will remain as a working document that can be updated with new information.

While the properties owned along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway do provide a corridor for wildlife, the primary function is to address flooding in the lower Neebing River and Intercity Area. The land parcels related to the Floodway are primarily maintained to provide access for maintenance and dredging; however, the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway also serves as a recreational attraction, with paved recreational trails for wildlife viewing opportunities including amphibians, waterfowl, groundhogs, and songbirds as well as access to Lake Superior.

2.5.2 Land Connectivity

The LRCA currently has three Conservation Areas that connect with other municipally or private/organization-owned land, including Cascades, Mission Island Marsh, and Little Trout Bay Conservation Areas. Currently, Cascades Conservation Area connects to two other popular trail systems within the city limits: Trowbridge Falls and Centennial Park. The trail system is popular amongst community members for trail running, hiking, and dog walking. Mission Island Marsh Conservation Area connects to Thunder Bay's Waterfront Trail, a larger initiative by the City of

Thunder Bay to connect parklands across the waterfront. In partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Little Trout Bay Conservation Area “Lookout Trail” connects to the James Duncan Memorial Trail and Big Trout Bay Nature Reserve. Additionally, the trails along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway connect with the many trails within the City of Thunder Bay.

3 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ON LRCA-OWNED LANDS

The Conservation Lands Strategy is to identify the programs and services (Category 1 – mandatory, Category 2 – at the request of a municipality, and Category 3- non-mandatory/other) that are provided on Conservation Authority owned lands, including the sources of financing for these programs and services.

3.1 Applicable Legislation

3.1.1 Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services

Section 9 of O. Reg. 686/21 outlines the mandatory components of the Conservation and Management of Lands Program:

Required components

9. (1) Programs and services provided by an authority with respect to the conservation and management of lands under subparagraph 1 ii of subsection 21.1 (1) of the Act shall include the following:

1. A Conservation Lands Strategy, prepared on or before December 31, 2024, for all lands owned or controlled by the authority, including any interests in land registered on title, that meets the requirements set out in section 10.

2. Where the authority considers it advisable to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1 of subsection 10 (1),

i. programs and services to secure the authority's interests in its lands that include measures for fencing, signage, patrolling, and any other measures to prevent unlawful entry on the authority's land and to protect the authority from exposure to liability under the Occupiers' Liability Act,

ii. programs and services to maintain any facilities, trails, or other amenities that support public access and recreational activities in conservation areas and that can be provided without the direct support or supervision of staff employed by the authority or by another person or body,

iii. programs and services to enable the authority, in its capacity as an owner of land, to make applications or comment on matters under the Planning Act,

iv. programs and services to conserve, protect, rehabilitate, establish, and manage natural heritage located within the lands owned or controlled by the authority,

v. programs and services to plant trees on lands owned or controlled by the authority, excluding commercial logging, and

- vi. the development of one or more policies governing land acquisitions and land dispositions.*
- 3. A land inventory, prepared on or before December 31, 2024, that meets the requirements set out in section 11.*
- 4. Programs and services to ensure that the authority carries out its duties, functions and responsibilities to administer regulations made under section 29 of the Act.*

(2) For greater certainty, programs and services with respect to the conservation and management of lands under subparagraph 1 ii of subsection 21.1 (1) of the Act do not apply to any lands where the authority has no legal interest in the lands registered on title and the authority has entered into an agreement with another person or body to manage the lands on the person's or body's behalf.

3.1.2 Occupiers Liability Act R.S.O 1990

The LRCA has a duty to maintain the condition of the Conservation Areas (*Occupiers Liability Act* Section 3(2)) to reduce the level of danger when properties owned by the LRCA are open to the public and community members are on the premises participating in passive recreation. The *Occupiers Liability Act R.S.O 1990, C. O.2* provides a framework to establish the duty of care of those who occupy premises and the liability for injuries or damages that occur on the property.

- S.3(1) An occupier of premises owes a duty to take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that persons entering on the premises, and the property brought on the premises by those persons are reasonably safe while on the premises.
- S.3(2) The duty of care provided for in subsection (1) applies whether the danger is caused by the condition of the premises or by an activity carried on the premises.
- S.3(3) The duty of care provided for in subsection (1) applies except in so far as the occupier of premises is free to and does restrict, modify or exclude the occupier's duty. R.S.O. 1990, c. O.2, s. 3.
- S. 5(3) (3) Where an occupier is free to restrict, modify or exclude the occupier's duty of care or the occupier's liability for breach thereof, the occupier shall take reasonable steps to bring such restriction, modification or exclusion to the attention of the person to whom the duty is owed. R.S.O. 1990, c. O.2, s. 5.

In compliance with the *Occupiers Liability Act R.S.O 1990, C. O.2*, the LRCA has a duty to ensure that any persons or their property within the premises of a Conservation Area reasonably safe and free of danger.

3.2 *Mandatory Programs and Services*

The LRCA conducts a variety of mandatory programs and services on the land owned and operated by the Authority. As of 2024, the Lands Program staff complement includes 3 full-time staff (Lands Manager, Environmental Planner, and Field Operations Lead Hand) and one 33-week recurring contract position (Floodway Labourer). Additionally, four summer students are hired annually during the summer months.

3.2.1 *Management and Operation*

The LRCA utilizes a variety of methods to manage and operate its various land holdings.

3.2.1.1 *Asset Management Plan*

In 2021, the LRCA updated the Authority's Asset Management Plan (AMP). The purpose of an AMP is to provide a strategy for maintaining, renewing, rehabilitating, and replacing LRCA assets while ultimately maintaining financial goals. The AMP is used for the short and long-term planning related to all of the Authority's assets and is used annually during the budgeting process to determine required maintenance in a given year. The AMP includes Conservation Areas Condition Assessments, LRCA Administrative Building Condition Assessment, Diversion Structure Condition Assessment, and an overall Asset Management Plan.

3.2.1.2 *Health and Safety of Visitors*

The safety of visitors to LRCA's lands are of utmost importance. Employed safety measures include:

- Installation of shepherd hooks and life buoys at each Conservation Area where the public access the water for swimming.
- Routine inspections of all land and facilities.
- Hazard tree removal program.
- Installed rope on steep section of Little Trout Bay trail.
- Snow removal and application of sand in parking lots in the winter months, when warranted.
- Weekly cleaning of all outhouses.
- Garbage collection at areas open to the public.
- Trail maintenance.

3.2.1.3 *Signage*

The LRCA utilizes signage on its land to notify the public on a variety of topics, including:

- Entrance signs
- Conservation Area information panels (operating hours, address, disclaimers, emergency contact numbers, etc.)
- Information panels in pavilions
- Trail maps
- Trail directional signage
- Signs advising of permitted and non-permitted activities.

Signage is a tool that easily conveys expected conduct within the Conservation Area. The *Occupiers Liability Act* Section 4 (3)(b) indicates the necessity to have posted notice in respect to operating hours. Signage regarding the rules and regulations must be present, specifically when enforcement officers are patrolling and ticketing for infractions. Staff keep an up-to-date inventory of the signs installed at each Conservation Area. The LRCA recently modified regulations signage from text-based to infographics to visually inform visitors of Conservation Areas rules. The signs are updated and replaced as necessary to continue clear communication with the users of LRCA-owned land.

3.2.1.4 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a proactive technique that utilizes proper design and efficient use of the built environment to deter vandalism, reduce crime, and minimize the concern of unlawful behavior (COM, 2013). The LRCA practices natural surveillance by ensuring maximum visibility of amenities such as pavilions, picnic tables, washrooms, and interpretive signage. Where warranted, the bottom branches of trees are removed to increase visibility. The LRCA uses natural parking lot barriers as a method of territorial reinforcement to deter vehicles from driving onto landscaped areas and causing damage to the grounds (i.e., tire ruts, etc.). The most effective methods have been using built-up natural grass-covered berms or the placement of large boulders around the perimeter of the parking lot.

3.2.1.5 Section 29 Enforcement

Patrolling occurs at the Conservation Areas, under Section 29 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, where the public access the lands for passive recreation. Designated Provincial Offences Officers patrol the Conservation Area to encourage compliance with the *Conservation Authorities Act R.S.O 1990*, Part VII Enforcement and Offence, Section 30.1., and under the City of Thunder Bay Parking By-Law at Cascades and Mission Island Marsh Conservation Areas. Patrolling occurs regularly where Provincial Offences Officers walk the trail systems to educate visitors about the rules and regulations of the Conservation Areas and issue tickets where warranted. Officers follow the Procedure for City By-Law Parking Enforcement for Conservation Areas within Thunder Bay and follow the Procedure to issue a Provincial Offences Notice when outside of city limits. Developing a Standard Operating Procedure for enforcement will streamline the patrolling process, to ensure adequate staff presence at Conservation Areas.

3.2.2 Facility Maintenance Activities

3.2.2.1 Major Maintenance

The Asset Management Plan is followed to fund, plan and complete the recommended major maintenance of all facilities. Long-term funding strategies are employed to ensure adequate funds are available when major maintenance is required.

3.2.2.2 Routine Maintenance

Routine maintenance is undertaken at all publicly open properties and at the Office Administrative Facility. Activities include:

- Grass cutting and trimming.
- Trail brushing.
- Weekly commercial cleaning of Office Administrative Facility.
- Weekly cleaning of outhouses.
- Commercial emptying of underground garbage and recycling containers at the Cascades and Mission Island Marsh Conservation Areas.
- Staff emptying garbage and recycling receptacles at Conservation Areas.
- Disposal and recycling delivery to the City of Thunder Bay landfill.

Facility maintenance requirements of the Conservation Areas vary seasonally. During the main operating season (late spring to early fall), staff conduct weekly inspections of the majority of the Conservation Areas. Little Trout Bay and Hurkett Cove are inspected less frequently due to their distance, visitor volumes, and winter access. Standard maintenance includes garbage removal, privy stocking and cleaning, grass cutting, and cleaning of the grounds. Additional maintenance tasks that occur less frequently include painting, sign installation, and removal or repair of vandalized infrastructure. In the winter, maintenance is limited to garbage removal, snow plowing, and sanding icy sections of the parking lots.

Two Conservation Areas offer boat launches that provide public access to Lake Superior. Little Trout Bay and Silver Harbor both have permanent docks and concrete ramps that are inspected and repaired as required. The LRCA also provides floating docks and EZ Launch Kayak Docks at four Conservation Areas including: Hurkett Cove, Hazelwood Lake, Silver Harbour, and Little Trout Bay. The floating docks and kayak launches are removed in the fall for the winter season and are re-installed in the spring.

3.2.2.3 Trail Maintenance

Trail Maintenance is important for the safety and enjoyment of visitors to the Conservation Areas. Regular trail inspections are integral to the maintenance and overall continued operation of the Conservation Areas. Basic trail maintenance requires the pruning of trees and shrubs. Staff inspect the trail systems for trail widening, erosion, fallen trees, and other natural hazards to ensure they are as safe as reasonably possible for visitor use. All railings, boardwalks, stairs, bridges, and trails are cleared of garbage, debris, vegetation growth, and vandalism and maintained/repaired as warranted. Inspections also involve the assessment of trail signage to ensure safety and directional signage is present, visible, and legible.

3.2.2.4 Conservation Area Water Quality Monitoring

Staff conduct water quality testing from June to the end of August for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) at Hazelwood Lake and Mission Island Marsh Conservation Areas as part of the bathing beach program in conjunction with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. In the event the criterion is

exceeded, the beaches are posted with a swimming advisory notifying potential bathers of the presence of *E. coli* at the area.

The LRCA began monitoring Cyanobacteria in 2022 as a protective measure to better understand the presence of cyanobacteria within four Conservation Areas (Mission Island, Silver Harbour, Hazelwood, and Hurkett Cove). Testing sites were selected based on the frequency of visitor contact with open water. Conservation Area Water Quality Monitoring is proactively undertaken to keep visitors and their pets safe when participating in water-based recreation at the LRCA's Conservation Areas.

3.2.2.5 Structure Monitoring and Inspections

Annual structure monitoring and inspections are carried out on five LRCA-owned structures including: Mission Island Marsh Conservation Area Board Walk, Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Diversion Structure, Neebing River Free-flow Wier, Hazelwood Lake Weir Dam Structure, and Hazelwood Lake Causeway. Inspections are conducted by structural engineers or LRCA staff by completing a pre-established checklist specific to the features of each structure. Required maintenance is addressed as warranted.

The erosion control soil-nailing completed along Victor Street is inspected bi-annually by contracted engineers to monitor the completed sites and look for additional sites that may require remediation.

3.2.2.6 Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Operation, Maintenance, and Surveillance

The Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Operation, Maintenance, and Surveillance Plan ensures that the Floodway remains operational and capable of providing flood protection up to and including the Regional Storm. The sediment traps installed within the Floodway are a part of the original design and were anticipated to require periodic dredging. The sediment traps are classified as major maintenance; where dredging is required in the sediment traps approximately every seven to ten years or based on the frequency of diversion. Removal of sediment at the lip of the Diversion Channel is required approximately every four years. From the ice annually, the LRCA hires consultants to conduct an annual sediment accumulation survey within the Floodway channel. Additionally, the lip is surveyed every spring. When dredging is required, sediment samples are taken to assess the quality before disposal. A long-term major maintenance schedule is maintained ensuring that funds (i.e., sole-benefitting City of Thunder Bay Levy) are available to fund the required minor and major maintenance annually.

In 2024, the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway Integrity Study was completed, which is conducted every 10 years to assess the overall operation of the Floodway and to determine long-term maintenance requirements to ensure the continued operation of the Floodway.

3.2.2.7 River Clean Up Program

The River Clean Up Program is conducted annually during the summer months, in which staff maintain the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway and other riverside properties that are owned by the

LRCA. The program reduces the volume of garbage within the City's waterways. This routine maintenance also ensures the optimal functioning of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway. The program is funded by the City of Thunder Bay as a sole benefiting program, with River Clean Up Crew wages budgeted annually.

3.2.3 Forest Management

The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) is utilized by the LRCA to maintain the health of the forest and deliver forest management for a tax reduction. The LRCA has ten properties enrolled in the MFTIP, which all have an approved Managed Forest Plan. In 2017, the LRCA contracted KBM to develop and approve Managed Forest Plans for a twenty-year period, from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2036. The LRCA is taxed at 25 percent of the municipal residential property tax rate for managed areas. The regular tax rate still applies to parts of the property that are not managed (i.e., infrastructure, buildings). Activities in the MFTIP are to be carried out according to "good forestry practices" as defined in the *Forestry Act*. Appropriate management activities for the MFTIP include:

- Tree planting of native tree species, tending, thinning, pruning and harvesting,
- Recreational activities,
- Wildlife management involving habitat work or participating in monitoring programs,
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas by limited disturbance, and
- Learning about the forest.

Costs to manage the forestry component of the Forest Management Properties are funded through self-generated revenue. The Managed Forest Plans are intended to guide the sustainable management of forest health, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, recreation, and education.

3.2.3.1 Hazard Tree Program

The Hazard Tree Program is conducted to proactively deal with trees that are dead, dying, or have the potential to fall on trails or infrastructure. All staff involved in the Hazard Tree Removal Program have Chainsaw Safety and Operations Certification. While smaller trees are removed by LRCA staff, professional tree contractors are hired when hazardous trees could become a safety risk during felling or if they are near infrastructure. The Hazard Tree Removal Program ensures the safety of staff and visitors, while also minimizing the risk to LRCA-owned infrastructure. The program is budgeted annually as a part of the LRCA's levy process.

3.2.4 Invasive Species Management

The LRCA has taken progressive steps to monitor and address invasive species on LRCA-owned lands and throughout the Lakehead Watershed. Invasive species are a growing threat to the ecological and recreational benefits afforded by the lands owned and operated by the LRCA. The LRCA seeks to protect and conserve natural ecosystems and their biodiversity by implementing proactive projects to prevent the negative effects of invasive species. The LRCA manages invasive species through specific actions and tactics including:

- Identification and mapping,
- Monitoring and assessing risk,
- Management and control of identified invasive species,
- Education and outreach,
- Prevention of new invaders, and
- Application or development of Best Management Plans.

Through education and outreach campaigns, visitors to the Conservation Areas are urged to report any observations of invasive species to the LRCA. Facts sheets have been developed to assist staff and the public with the identification of known invaders.

3.3 Municipal Programs or Services

The LRCA has no Municipal (Category 2) Programs related to lands owned by the Authority. Municipal Programs that would fall into this category refer to those that are focused on municipal priorities, such as the operation of museums or heritage buildings. No such establishments have been developed to date on LRCA-owned property.

3.4 Non-Mandatory Programs and Services

The LRCA provides watershed residents with outdoor environmental education programming and nature interpretive programs, hosted at Conservation Areas that are open to the public for passive recreation. Educational programming offered by the LRCA provides an opportunity for participants of all ages to discover new trails, learn from the land, and become environmental stewards. Environmental education programming and nature interpretive programming are provided on LRCA-owned land through the LRCA's Non-Mandatory Education Program. No municipal levy is used for this program area.

Stewardship programming is offered by the LRCA on private and public lands as a Non-Mandatory program, with no municipal levy used for the programming. Stewardship programming on LRCA land is considered to be a mandatory program as it relates to managing LRCA-owned land. Stewardship activities include Species at Risk and invasive species monitoring, riparian and shoreline naturalization, maintenance of habitat structures, and restoration activities.

The LRCA does not conduct any Category 3 (Non-Mandatory) programming related to "active" recreation requiring direct support or supervision of CA staff or other person/body or land management activities for education, training, and cultural purposes. The timber harvesting completed by the LRCA is conducted to maintain the health of the forest, and not primarily as commercial logging (which is non-mandatory) and is therefore considered a mandatory program. It is noted that any activities related to harvesting (i.e., hiring of a registered forester) are funded using self-generated forestry revenue.

Beginning in 2024, LRCA was awarded a contract by DFO for the emptying and maintenance of sea-lamprey traps installed on LRCA-owned Neebing River property. This non-mandatory program is fully funded by the DFO.

3.5 Funding of Land Management Programs and Services

During the annual budget process, costs associated with the operation and maintenance of LRCA-owned land are estimated for the year. Expenses related to land management include: property taxes, staff wages and benefits, regular and major maintenance, equipment, vehicle, garbage removal, plowing, health and safety, tree removals, structural inspection, training, monitoring supplies, outhouse rentals, tools, etc. As a private landowner, the LRCA pays property taxes to the Municipality/Township in which the land resides. The Asset Management Plan provides guidance on scheduling required maintenance and the estimated life span of assets.

Levy collected from the Member Municipalities funds the majority of the costs associated with the Lands Program. The LRCA's self-generated funding is used to partially fund the Lands Program and comes from the collection of parking fees/day use fees, Explore Card Sales, and fees charged for the public to hold a wedding or rent a picnic shelter.

The Neebing-McIntyre Floodway and the Victor Street Erosion lands are eligible structures under the provincial Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECl) fund. Annually, the province provides five million dollars to fund 50% of eligible major maintenance projects conducted by the 36 Conservation Authorities in the province. The funds are distributed through an application process, where projects are scored, and the highest-ranking projects are funded with the available funds. Funding is not guaranteed year to year.

The Land Management Programs offered by the LRCA are funded by both municipal levy, external funding, and self-generated funds. Table 1 outlines the funding type used for each of the Land Management Categories.

Table 1: Funding sources of Programs related to Land Management

Land Management Program Areas	Funding Type					
	Levy-All	Levy Sole-Benefiting (City of Thunder Bay)	Provincial Funding	Federal Funding	Other Grants and Donations**	Self-Generated (Fees)
Category 1 – Mandatory Programs						
Needing-McIntyre Floodway		X	*WECL projects			
Victor Street Erosion - City Lands		X	*WECL projects			
Conservation Areas	X				X	X
Section 29 Regulations	X					
Other Owned Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admin Office Nature Reserves Floodplain and erosion lands Forest Management Land 	X	X				X
		X				X
		X				
		X				
Category 2 – Non-Mandatory at the request of a Municipality						
No programs						
Category 3 – Non-Mandatory Programs and Services						
Environmental Education					X	X
Nature Interpretive Programming					X	X

*WECL – Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Funding (used for major maintenance)

**When available, funding applications are submitted for special projects on LRCA land

3.5.1 Provincial Programs Utilized to Reduce Property Taxes

3.5.1.1 Conservation of Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP)

The LRCA applies annually to the Conservation of Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) for four LRCA-owned properties to recognize the Provincially Significant Wetlands on the lands. This program reduces the taxes in recognition of natural heritage features for the following lands:

- 330 Beaver Avenue
- Wakefield Common
- Hurkett Cove Conservation Area
- Mills Block Conservation Area

3.5.1.2 Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)

Several LRCA-owned lands have Forest Management Plans developed under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive program (MFTIP), which provides some tax relief as well as a plan for proper long-term forest management. As warranted, harvesting occurs with revenue used to maintain the forest management area and the associated Forest Management Plans. Surplus generated funds in a given year are allocated to the Forest Management Reserve which is used to fund all tree/forest-related expenses (i.e., costs related to maintaining forest management plans, hiring of Registered Foresters to oversee harvesting operations, promotion of tree planting in the watershed, etc.).

Forest Management Plans registered under the MFTIP are for the following LRCA-owned properties:

- Cascades Conservation Area
- Cedar Falls Conservation Area
- Hazelwood Lake Conservation Area
- Hurkett Cove Conservation Area
- Little Trout Bay Conservation Area
- Wishart Conservation Area
- Mills Block Conservation Area
- Harpell/ Bocking (no public access)
- William's Forest (no public access)
- Granite Point (no public access)

4 CONSULTATION STRATEGY

The *Conservation Authorities Act*, Ontario Regulation 686/21 Section 10(2) mandates that the LRCA consult stakeholders and the public during the preparation of the Conservation Lands Strategy. The LRCA completed consultation in a timely manner to ensure adequate feedback from a wide range of participants. Effective consultation is key for decision-making and for furthering the goals and objectives of lands owned by the LRCA. The LRCA developed the following principles when conducting public, staff, and board consultation:

- To provide accessible and inclusive opportunities for Lakehead Watershed residents provide comments, or concerns related to the Conservation Lands Strategy.
- To allow decision-makers to make informed choices by clarifying objectives and developing a greater understanding of values, interests, issues, and concerns.
- To provide early engagement on multiple platforms to reach a broad range of participants during the consultation process.
- To conduct public consultation in a respectful manner, acknowledging differing views, values, and interests, ensuring that all input is documented.
- To build trust between the LRCA, stakeholders, and community members through a transparent consultation process to facilitate collaborative decision-making.

4.1 Public Consultation

The LRCA utilized a variety of outreach activities to consult with stakeholders and the public during the development of the Conservation Lands Strategy. Public consultation was offered both online and in person to reach a higher demographic of participants. The LRCA selected methods that would provide transparency and enough time for adequate feedback including:

- Online Survey
- Social Media Promotion
- Newsletters
- Webpage
- Webinar
- Open House/Information Session

As part of the public consultation process, the LRCA circulated a Conservation Areas Visitor Survey to establish a current set of objectives to inform decision-making related to the Conservation Areas or lands owned and operated by the Authority. The survey was available on the LRCA's website and advertised on established social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram). To generate a high volume of interest, the posts were financially boosted through social media advertising and incentivized with a \$100 LRCA prize pack. The survey was successful in generating interest, with over 866 submitted surveys. The intent of the Conservation Areas Survey was to solicit feedback related to the operation of the LRCA's Conservation Areas and other owned lands. The data collected from the survey has been incorporated into the Conservation Lands Strategy as a component of the public consultation process.

Results from the Conservation Areas Survey were shared with the public during a spring webinar. The presentation highlighted a total of 14 different improvement categories that were derived from the “Ideal Changes” and “Comments” sections of the survey (Appendix B). The webinar was shared on the LRCA’s YouTube channel, and the public was provided with a second opportunity to provide feedback on the Conservation Lands Strategy.

On July 18, 2024, the LRCA held an “Open House” for the organization’s 70th anniversary. As part of the event, the LRCA had a public engagement booth where information panels and fact sheets about the Conservation Lands Strategy were available to the public for review. To encourage participation, the LRCA gave away 70 Explore Cards (one per household) to community members who provided feedback on the Strategy. Over 120 community members participated in the outreach event, and their comments and suggestions were integrated into the objectives.

Information regarding the Conservation Lands Strategy was disseminated through an online newsletter to over 600 watershed residents. Further, a draft of the Conservation Lands Strategy and a fact sheet were posted on the LRCA’s main website with a link to provide direct feedback. The webpage and survey link were advertised on the LRCA’s social media platforms allowing a final opportunity for community members to comment and provide input on the Conservation Lands Strategy. The web page was available to the public from July to September of 2024.

4.2 Staff Consultation

LRCA staff were provided various opportunities to review and deliver feedback on the Conservation Lands Strategy. The LRCA routinely has staff meetings to share information about ongoing projects and initiatives. A presentation was delivered to the staff to review the results of the Conservation Areas Survey, discuss the mandatory legislative requirements, and generate feedback on the Strategy. Staff were provided with sufficient time and information prior to the meeting to enable them to contribute to discussions.

The second draft of the Strategy and a comments sheet were circulated to staff via e-mail to provide employees with a final opportunity to give feedback on the Conservation Lands Strategy. The suggestions from the questionnaire were reviewed and integrated into the final version of the strategy.

4.3 Board Consultation

The LRCA’s Board of Directors are responsible for overseeing the organization’s strategies, policies, and budget. Consultation was completed during four of the scheduled Meetings of the Board of Directors.

- February 28, 2024 – Conservation Area Survey Results Presentation
- May 29, 2024 – First Draft Conservation Lands Strategy (Res. #69/24)
- June 27, 2024 – Approval of Acquisition and Disposition Policy (Res. #76/24)
- September 25, 2024 – Approval of Final Conservation Lands Strategy (Res. #____/24).

4.4 Strategy Review Schedule

The Conservation Lands Strategy will be reviewed and updated every five years or sooner if conditions warrant. Updates to the Conservation Lands Strategy will align with the LRCA's Five-Year Strategic Plan. Changes to the Conservation Lands Strategy will be at the discretion of the Board of Directors and approved by resolution. Stakeholders and the public will be consulted as considered advisable during the periodic review and update process for the Strategy.

5 OBJECTIVES

The Conservation Lands Strategy is to establish Authority objectives that will inform the authority's decision-making related to the lands it owns and controls, including decisions related to policies for the acquisition and disposition of these lands.

The objectives of the Conservation Lands Strategy provide high-level context, guidance, and direction for actions related to the lands owned or controlled by the LRCA. Aligning with the LRCA's Five-Year Strategic Plan, the objectives focus on four key priorities relating to the programs and services provided by the LRCA. Objectives may vary for each parcel dependent on the land use category, specifically if they are Conservation Areas open to the public for passive recreation. The Conservation Lands Strategy Objectives have been grouped under each of the four pillars and initiatives as outlined in the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The next step after completion of the Conservation Lands Strategy will be to develop specific actions. Each year, staff will consider the objectives when setting their priorities in their workplans and budgets.

The LRCA's four pillars as outlined in the Strategic Plan include:

- 1) **Conserve and Sustain:** Enhance the management and sustainability of natural habitats and ecosystems through an integrated approach.
- 2) **Protect and Support:** Safeguard people, property, and communities through robust watershed and lands management.
- 3) **Connect and Explore:** Maximize intergenerational educational, engagement, and recreational opportunities through strong collaborations.
- 4) **Govern and Enhance:** Distinguish the organization as a leader in environmentally sustainable practices and responsible stewardship.

5.1 **Conserve and Sustain Objectives**

Conserve and Sustain: Enhance the management and sustainability of natural habitats and ecosystems through an integrated approach.

The LRCA aims to protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and ecosystems on LRCA-owned lands through an integrated approach. This will be accomplished by managing land holdings through systemic evaluations, inventories, and strategies. The protection of these natural assets will positively impact the health and sustainability of the Lakehead Watershed for future generations.

Table 2: Conserve and Sustain Objectives

Strategic Plan Initiative	Conservation Lands Strategy Objective
<p>Engage stakeholders, the environmental community, and our watershed residents in a collective effort to protect, restore, and enhance our local environment through stewardship programs, strategies, and best management and sustainable practices.</p>	<p>Promote the Stewardship of the Lakehead Watershed by leading by example on all LRCA-owned land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize LRCA-owned land to provide a source of seed from native plants, propagating native plants sustainable for use in LRCA projects, and encouraging local organizations to utilize native species in their local projects. Prioritize the use of only native species on LRCA-owned lands. Ensure the sustainable management of forest resources on LRCA-owned lands for future generations through sound forest management practices in accordance with completed Managed Forest Plans (MFTIPs). Maintain, enhance, or restore ecologically significant habitats on LRCA-owned lands to prevent the loss of biodiversity. Properties owned by the LRCA should contribute to the continual protection of natural hazards, natural and cultural heritage, ecological functioning, and the integrity of the Lakehead Watershed.
<p>Manage land holdings through systemic evaluations, inventories, and strategies.</p>	<p>Assess and Monitor LRCA-owned land to understand the current status of natural heritage and natural hazards and to monitor for emerging issues and trends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct adequate water quality monitoring to detect trends over time and identify emerging issues. Complete a natural heritage inventory of significant features on LRCA-owned lands, incorporating these assets into the Conservation Area Master Plans and Land Management Plans. Evaluate all wetlands on LRCA lands under the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System. Identify and protect Species at Risk, or species with Conservation Status Rank, and their respective habitats on LRCA-owned lands. Continue to identify and protect Cultural Heritage Sites on LRCA-owned lands to preserve the history and traditions of past communities. Assess all erosion prone land to identify any areas that may need remediation. Monitor and manage invasive species on LRCA-owned land.

	<p>Create and maintain Land Management Policies, Procedures, and Plans to promote a consistent level of management on all LRCA-owned lands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Land Use Policy to guide land use planning and the development process to maintain property standards on LRCA-owned lands. • Develop an Invasive Species Policy to guide the identification, control, and management of invasive species on LRCA-owned lands to maintain high levels of biodiversity. • Streamline land inspections and inventories by utilizing digital data collection apps to provide accurate and complete records. • Develop a Service Level Policy that will outline the method and frequency of which staff are inspecting land holdings, how often maintenance is required, and associated reporting requirements. • Develop a reporting system for visitors and staff to report hazards on the trail systems to be directly received by maintenance personnel. • Create a Trail Development Policy that outlines the guiding principles and procedures when developing new or multi-use trail systems for passive recreation. • Develop an Encroachment Policy to maintain property boundaries and protect the land from encroachments or illegal activity to preserve the ecological integrity of LRCA-owned land. • Develop a Standard Operating Procedure outlining the general processes Provincial Offences Officers should take when addressing visitor violations of the <i>Conservation Authorities Act</i>. • Update the Hazard Tree Policy.
Collaborate and partner with agencies and community organizations to take action in the protection of natural habitats and ecosystems, share decision-making, and address emerging issues that impact the health and sustainability of the Lakehead Watershed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage visitors to practice citizen science, through online platforms such as iNaturalist or EddMapps, to continue to build species data sets. • Develop a fact sheet to assist community members with reporting on these online platforms. • Consider citizen science monitoring programs such as “Chronolog” or “Coastie” to monitor coastal erosion at Conservation Areas.
Increase the availability of data and knowledge to our partners and the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the public of emerging issues occurring on LRCA-owned land through the LRCA website, fact sheets, online notifications, etc.
Other Objectives	

5.2 Protect and Support Objectives

Protect and Support: Safeguard people, property, and communities through robust watershed management.

The LRCA owns lands that contribute to the protection and management of floodplains, erosion hazards, recharge areas, and significant wetlands. These lands further the objective of safeguarding people, property, and communities throughout the Lakehead Watershed.

Table 3: Protect and Support Objectives

Strategic Plan Initiative	Conservation Lands Strategy Objective
Increase capacity to issue relevant and timely flood messaging by utilizing technology and best practices to enhance the flood-readiness of our partners.	
Create and update policies, guidance documents, and technical data to streamline the LRCA approvals process that provides transparency of process and rules of service.	
Continue maintaining and enhancing flood control infrastructure in an effort to minimize the impacts of riverine flooding, erosion, and sedimentation.	<p>Maintain the Integrity of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct adequate surveys on the Floodway to have a continual understanding of required maintenance (i.e., dredging). Conduct annual maintenance in an effort to maintain the integrity of the Floodway. Conduct major maintenance as required to maintain the integrity of the Floodway. When applicable apply for WEI funding for major maintenance to reduce the financial burden of maintenance. <p>Protect People from Natural Hazards by owning undevelopable land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key properties for acquisition that provide a benefit to the Lakehead Watershed, prioritizing floodplain, hazard lands, erosion prone lands, and source water areas.

Prioritize and promote the protection and management of natural hazards, wetlands, and natural heritage features within the LRCA Area of Jurisdiction.	Utilize users of LRCA land to aid in identifying issues on LRCA-owned land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage watershed residents to report any observed environmental hazards on LRCA-owned property to the LRCA (such as erosion, algal blooms, or invasive species).
Promote and implement programs to alleviate the impacts of climate change, habitat degradation, and threats to biodiversity.	Consider climate change, impacts to habitat, and threats to biodiversity during the planning of any updates or new developments on LRCA land.
Align watershed decision-making with stakeholders both within and outside the jurisdiction.	Solicit Public Input on the operation of Conservation Areas and projects on LRCA land. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit public and stakeholder input on significant projects conducted on LRCA-owned land. Engage the public's opinion by conducting a Visitor Survey on a five-year cycle to assess and identify visitor needs to improve satisfaction, which in turn will assist in generating revenue for maintenance and amenities.
Other objectives.	

5.3 Connect and Explore Objectives

Connect and Explore: Maximize intergenerational educational, engagement, and recreational opportunities through strong collaborations.

The LRCA manages and enhances recreational areas for current and future generations through robust land management, efficient maintenance programs, and reinvestment in the land. Enhancing access into nature through land holdings, the LRCA enables community members to build a connection to the land and an appreciation for natural or cultural heritage features. In providing spaces and opportunities to connect with the land, the LRCA supports the physical, psychological, mental, and emotional health of community members within the Lakehead Watershed. Visitor satisfaction is a priority, as it boosts customer loyalty and recurring revenue that can be reinvested into the lands owned and operated by the LRCA. Further, providing passive recreation opportunities will encourage advocacy within the community, increasing public awareness of the LRCA.

Table 4: Connect and Explore Objectives

Strategic Plan Initiative	Conservation Lands Strategy Objective
<p>Provide spaces, opportunities, and experiences that focus on physical and mental well-being through a connection with the land.</p>	<p>Increase Accessibility in Conservation Areas when feasible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the Conservation Areas and their respective facilities to determine if AODA facilities would be complementary to the site (i.e., trails, washrooms, rest areas). • Where feasible and funding-dependent, continue to integrate AODA infrastructure in the Conservation Areas, including accessible washrooms, trail systems, and rest areas.
<p>Engage diverse stakeholders through effective communications, outreach, and education initiatives.</p>	<p>Advertise and Promote Conservation Areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote lands that are open for passive recreation, increasing accessibility to a natural setting to improve the physical, psychological, mental, and emotional health of its community members. • Build the LRCA's social media following to reach a greater audience within the Lakehead Watershed. • Enhance public relations by providing fun and engaging materials on social media platforms that promote Conservation Areas. <p>Provide Educational Programming on LRCA Owned Land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver engaging and high-quality educational programming through external funding to enhance environmental literacy through programs such as the "Living Classroom" and Watershed Explorers. • Seek funding to permit additional non-mandatory programs to provide events year-round and during after-hours on LRCA land. • Incorporate both Indigenous and Western knowledge into programming, including "two-eyed-seeing" where appropriate.
<p>Grow partnerships, collaborations, and relationships with new and existing partners who share the LRCA's Vision and Mission.</p>	<p>Increase available amenities at Conservation Areas utilizing partnerships with other organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where feasible, partner with like-minded agencies to enhance user experience and/or expand services offered on LRCA-owned lands. • Review lands inventory to determine which properties could be integrated with other provincially, municipally, or publicly accessible lands or trail networks.

<p>Manage and enhance recreational areas for current and future generations through robust land management, efficient maintenance programs, and reinvestment in the land.</p>	<p>Enhance User Experience at Conservation Areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding where appropriate to integrate new assets into the Conservation Areas that will enhance the visitor experience. • Consider the installation of interactive amenities such as public art, scavenger hunts, interpretive signage, or recreational equipment (ex. outdoor gym, playground, or disc golf course). • Assess what nature-based amenities could be added to the Conservation Areas to improve aesthetics and prevent shoreline erosion, cyanobacteria blooms, or nuisance algae. <p>Maintain and enhance amenities provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Conservation Area inventories to determine which locations would benefit from the installation or upgrade of amenities, such as washrooms or pavilions. • Identify trail development priorities and establish a fieldwork schedule to meet timelines for completion. • Review waste management practices at the Conservation Areas to reduce pollution of the natural ecosystems and recreational zones. • Assess current maintenance practices to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Conservation Areas (garbage, washrooms, and site amenities). • Ensure adequate access and parking facilities, and where necessary add or update facilities. <p>Provide adequate signage at Conservation Areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new trail classification system that provides essential and consistent information, allowing visitors to select trails that meet their physical requirements, expectations, and preferred experience. • Provide signage regarding the rules and regulations of the Conservation Area, while being mindful to not visually pollute the natural areas. • Where appropriate, incorporate interpretive signage on LRCA lands to enhance visitors' knowledge or perceptions of the natural heritage systems, cultural relevance, or significant species. • Maintain up-to-date maps of each LRCA-owned property that provides applicable information on the site such as: wetlands, natural heritage features, infrastructure, trails and amenities, etc.
Other Objectives	

5.4 Govern and Enhance Objectives

Govern and Enhance: *Distinguish the organization as a leader in environmentally-sustainable practices and responsible stewardship.*

Deliver transparent organizational governance and services that reflect our commitment to environmentally sustainable practices and responsible stewardship of LRCA-owned lands. The LRCA is committed to reducing costs where feasible and exploring opportunities for revenue to reinvest into the lands owned and operated by the LRCA.

Table 5: Govern and Enhance Objectives

Strategic Plan Initiative	Conservation Lands Strategy Objective
Continue to commit to accountable and transparent organizational governance.	<p>Increase Compliance to Rules and Regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage visitor compliance with the rules and regulations outlined in the <i>Conservation Authorities Act</i> through regular enforcement in Conservation Areas. <p>Reduce Liability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install adequate signage in all accessible areas, outlining the applicable rules and regulations within the <i>Conservation Authorities Act</i> and regulations. Conduct frequent documented inspections of lands, maintaining essential infrastructure and amenities. Continue to have substantial infrastructure inspected by engineers on a recurring basis to ensure their proper function. Monitor for hazards on LRCA property; once identified, address hazards as soon as possible to maintain the safety of visitors and staff. Maintain the marking of boundaries of all property boundaries, especially on properties open to the public for passive recreation.
Find and implement efficiencies and streamline processes across all program areas.	Develop a Standard Operating Procedure for routine undertakings on LRCA-owned land.
Maintain a stable model of financial resiliency based on capacity, capabilities, and public expectations by maximizing new funding opportunities, fundraising, and self-generated revenue.	Maintain a long-term financial plan to maintain the assets on LRCA-owned lands.

<p>Maintain a stable model of financial resiliency based on capacity, capabilities, and public expectations by maximizing new funding opportunities, fundraising, and self-generated revenue.</p>	<p>Increase Revenue Generation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase self-generated revenue to offset costs to maintain and enhance land. • Increase payment accessibility by installing Pay and Display units where warranted. • Continue to educate and market Explore Cards. • Review the marketing plan to identify the most strategic methods of promoting and advertising Explore Cards. <p>Reduce Costs to Operate Lands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease property taxes by applying to the Conservation of Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) and the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) for applicable properties. • Obtain grants or funding to reduce the cost of maintenance staff wages, such as the Canada Summer Students Programs wage subsidies. • Continue applying to funding opportunities to enhance recreational facilities and provide additional amenities at Conservation Areas open for passive recreation. • Dispose of any surplus lands to generate funds for more favorable parcels of land.
<p>Build upon and nurture a healthy, diverse, and positive workplace through a dynamic culture of learning, safety, inclusion, and mental well-being.</p>	
<p>Continue to work with Indigenous partners and community members to incorporate traditional knowledge and practices into programming and organizational decision-making.</p>	<p>Increase engagement with Indigenous Partners and community members within the Lakehead Watershed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Indigenous Engagement Policy to guide meaningful collaboration on holistic programming or events with local Indigenous Communities.
<p>Build organizational capacity to provide new and developing program areas.</p>	
<p>Other objectives</p>	

5.5 ***Performance Evaluation Framework***

The Performance Evaluation Framework is a cyclical systematic approach to effectively measure the completion of objectives over a five-year period (Figure 1). The simplicity of the framework allows the LRCA to reevaluate established objectives to ensure they are being met or that there is significant progress toward completion.

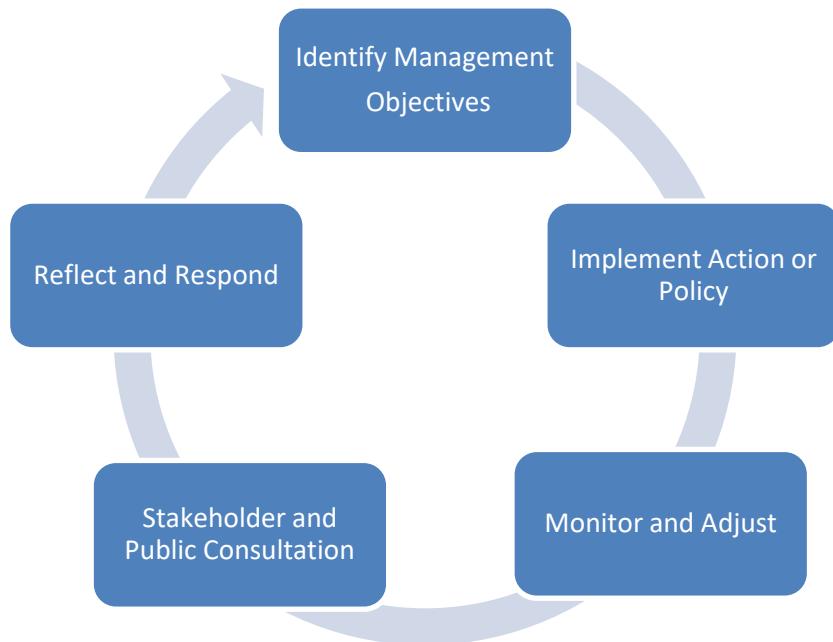


Figure 1: Performance Evaluation Framework

1) Identify Improvement Objectives

The LRCA will continue to identify objectives that are prudent to the management, maintenance, and protection of the lands owned by the LRCA. Over the course of a five-year period, the objectives identified in the Conservation Lands Strategy should be a primary focus.

2) Implement Action or Policy

Where feasible, the LRCA will work towards completing the established set of objectives. Objectives vary significantly between policy development, land management, information gathering, and maintenance of capital assets. Staff availability and project costs can be prohibitive; therefore, the framework must be flexible to account for available resources and management requirements.

3) Monitor and Adjust

While the scope of the objectives varies between short-term, long-term, and ongoing, it's important to keep track of progress. The LRCA will assess the success of completed objectives, adjusting for shortcomings when necessary. Progress of objectives will be documented in annual staff reports, and when applicable, shared with the public.

4) Stakeholder and Public Consultation

The LRCA seeks to update the Conservation Lands Strategy on a five-year basis, or as otherwise warranted. Periodic review and updates of the Conservation Lands Strategy must include consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Conservation Area Survey will be considered for future consultation, as past surveys proved to be effective, allowing the public to bring forward requests, concerns, or feedback on the maintenance. The survey highlighted successes and shortcomings of current land management, specifically relating to those that are open to the public for passive recreation. New objectives can be derived from public consultation, leading to positive change on LRCA-owned lands.

5) Reflect and Respond

Once the consultation process has ended, the Authority will compile and assess the recommendations and feedback, translating them into feasible objectives. Public feedback will assist with final decision-making and identify programs or services that could be improved. The outcomes of the consultation process should be reported back to participants with the updated recommendations rendered.

5.6 Land Acquisition and Disposition

The Land Acquisition and Disposition Policy (Appendix C) provides an administrative framework and evaluation scheme for future land acquisitions by the LRCA, whether by design or in response to an offer of a land donation. Further, the policy provides guidance for the disposal of surplus lands.

6 CONCLUSION

The Conservation Lands Strategy will be utilized as a resource for tracking the mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services offered on the lands owned and controlled by the LRCA. The Strategy provides a review of current operation and maintenance programs and policies in place that further the conservation, restoration development, and management of natural resources. Further, the mandatory public review process was beneficial for highlighting areas for improvement and the development of practical objectives to be addressed by the LRCA. The objectives developed will inform decision-making regarding the management, maintenance, and restoration of the LRCA's lands. The Conservation Lands Strategy will be made publicly available for full transparency, allowing for continued understanding and appreciation for the roles and mandated responsibilities of the LRCA.

7 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: Amenities in Conservation Areas

Appendix A: Amenities provided at Conservation Areas

Conservation Area	Hectares	Trails (km)	Amenities	Passive Recreation Activities
Cascades	157.61	5km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • AODA Compliant Trail System • Interpretive Signage • 2 Outdoor Privies • 2 Bridges • 3 Staircases • Picnic Tables • BBQ Grills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Birding • Photography • Trail Running • Swimming • Fishing • Snowshoeing
Cedar Falls	22.66	1km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • 2 Staircases • Picnic Tables • Bench 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Photography • Birding • Trail Running • Fishing • Snowshoeing
Hazelwood Lake	669.39	7km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Kayak Launch • Fishing Dock • Pavilion • 3 Outdoor Privies • 1 Seasonal Privy • Picnic Tables • Interpretive Signage • 3 Benches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Photography • Birding • Trail Running • Kayaking/Canoeing • Geocaching • Swimming • Fishing • Snowshoeing
Hurkett Cove	121.8	2km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Kayak Launch • Trail Boardwalk • Outdoor Privy • BBQ Grills • Pavilion • Interpretive Signage • 3 Benches • Picnic Tables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Photography • Birding • Swimming • Fishing • Snowshoeing • Kayaking/Canoeing
Little Trout Bay	17.70	2km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Boat Launch • Dock • 2 Outdoor Privies • Pavilion • Picnic Tables • BBQ Grills • 2 Benches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Birding • Trail Running • Swimming • Fishing • Snowshoeing • Kayaking/Canoeing • Scuba Diving • Photography
MacKenzie Point	0.93	0.5km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga

Conservation Area	Hectares	Trails (km)	Amenities	Passive Recreation Activities
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing • Picnicking • Birding • Photography • Swimming • Nature Appreciation
Mission Island Marsh	62.77	2.5km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • AODA Compliant Trail • Boardwalk • 2 Outdoor Privies • 1 Seasonal Privy • Interpretive Signage • Picnic Tables • Benches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature appreciation • Birding • Photography • Swimming • Fishing • Scuba Diving • Geocaching • Kite Surfing/Wind Surfing
Mills Block	287.16	4km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Interpretive Signage • 1 Seasonal Privy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Birding • Geocaching • Snowshoeing • Photography
Silver Harbour	69.39	0.5km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Boat Launch • 3 Docks • 2 Outdoor Privies • Pavilion • Picnic Tables • BBQ Grills • Benches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Birdwatching • Swimming • Photography • Fishing • Kayaking/Canoeing • Scuba Diving
Wishart	215.09	2.3km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Interpretive Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking/Dog Walking • Nature Appreciation • Birding • Cross Country Skiing • Snowshoeing • Fishing • Photography

APPENDIX B: Conservation Areas Survey



CONSERVATION AREAS VISITOR SURVEY

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) is gathering information from visitors to our Conservation Areas to better understand how our lands are being utilized, and to determine if there are realistic goals we can achieve to create a better user experience. Please consider filling out the questionnaire below in order to share your valuable feedback.

The LRCA is developing a Conservation Area Strategy to establish a current set of objectives that will inform decision-making related to the Conservation Areas or lands owned and operated by the Authority. The intent is to identify the gaps, necessary actions, and funding required to support the services provided by these lands in the future. The data collected from this survey will be incorporated, as warranted, into the Conservation Area Strategy as a component of the public consultation process.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this voluntary survey. It should take approximately 2-5 minutes to complete. Please note that individual responses are confidential. Data obtained from the survey will be reported to the LRCA Board of Directors and Management.

By selecting "I Agree", you are indicating that:

- you are willingly participating in this survey
- you agree to the above information

I Agree *

First Name

Last Name

E-Mail

Age

Phone

Where do you reside? If you selected "Other", please specify in the space provided.

Please select *

Specify Other

Do you purchase an Explore Card Parking Pass annually? If you selected "Yes", for how many years have you been purchasing Explore Cards?

Please select *

0

Years Purchased *

When visiting a Conservation Area, approximately how many people are typically accompanying you in your vehicle?

0

Number of People in Vehicle *

What activities do you participate in when visiting Conservation Areas? (Select all that apply, and add your own in the space provided)

Please select *

Additional Activities



How often do you visit each Conservation Area? If you visit an area frequently, use the Visits Per Week column; if you visit an area rarely or only sometimes, use the Visits Per Year column.

Cascades	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Mission Island Marsh	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Silver Harbour	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Hazelwood Lake	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Little Trout Bay	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Hurkett Cove	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Cedar Falls	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
MacKenzie Point	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Mills Block	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year
Wishart	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Week	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Visits Per Year

Do you visit Conservation Areas with a club/organization/group? Please list below.

Please specify

In your own personal opinion, what are the ideal modifications, improvements or changes that you would like to see at the Conservation Areas that you visit (funding and personnel permitting)?

Please specify

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please specify

Would you like to be contacted to further discuss your survey responses? (If yes, please ensure your contact information is filled out above.)

APPENDIX C: Land Acquisition and Disposition Policy

Section:	FINANCE		
Title:	FIN-12: Land Acquisition and Disposition Policy		
Resolution	#76/24	Approval Date:	June 27, 2024
Revisions			

1.0 Purpose

This policy establishes the framework for the acquisition and disposition of land by the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA).

2.0 Legislative Framework

The *Conservation Authorities Act RSO 1990 C.27*, Section 21(1) outlines the powers of the authority to accomplish objects. Sections related to the acquisition and disposition of land include:

- (c) *to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise any land that may require, and, subject to subsections (2) and (4) to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of land so acquired;*
- (d) *despite subsection (2) to lease for a term of five years or less land acquired by the authority;*
- (g) *to enter into agreements with owners of private lands to facilitate the due carrying out of any project.*

O. Reg. 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services outlines the following:

Section 9(2), Programs and Services provided by an authority with respect to the conservation and *management of lands...* shall include the following:

- vi. *the development of one or more policies governing land acquisitions and land dispositions.*

Section 10(1), a Conservation Area Strategy must be developed with the following component:

1. *Objectives established by the authority that will inform the authority's decision-making related to the lands it owns and controls, including decision related to policies governing the acquisition and disposition of such lands.*

3.0 Definitions

“Bequest” is an act of transferring a parcel of land to the Authority, often by means of a will or trust.

“Conservation Easement” is a legal agreement between the Conservation Authority and a landowner that outlines permissible and restricted land uses on the property. Also commonly referred to as a Land Protection Agreement.

“Cooperative Land Use Agreement” is a land agreement that gives the Authority or second party the right to use land for mandatory programs and services or passive recreation.

“Donation of Land” refers to a gratuitous transfer of property to the Authority, transferring full title of the parcel and property rights. Variations to this type of acquisition include donation with a retained life interest or donation of land through a bequest.

“Hazard Lands” are parcels of land that are subject to bank instability, flooding, shoreline erosion, or dynamic beach hazards.

“Fee Simple Ownership” refers to a landowner’s outright purchase of a property and transfer of land title to the owner.

“Land Acquisition” refers to the procurement of a parcel of land intended for conservation purposes from a willing landowner in response to an offer of sale or donation.

“Land Disposition” refers to the sale, exchange, or long-term lease of a lot or parcel of land to a willing buyer.

“Land Securement” attainment of land title for long-term conservation purposes.

“Natural Heritage” refers to the diversity and connectivity of the natural features on a parcel of land. The long-term ecological function should be maintained, restored, or improved to protect linkages between

“Right of First Refusal” is a contractual right to have the first opportunity to purchase a parcel of land upon the owner’s decision to sell on the same terms.

4.0 Policy Application

The LRCA does not actively seek out properties to purchase but will consider securement of lands located within the watershed, on a parcel-by-parcel basis, to increase its Conservation Lands base and contribute to its vision, mission and objectives.

Land securement includes obtaining from a willing landowner, interest in land title for conservation purposes through land bequest, land trading, donation, and fee simple purchase, as well as other means of holding rights on land such as leasing, restrictive covenants, and easements. When protecting environmentally significant lands, the preferred tool is holding title to land.

Disposition of land will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.0 Approval Authority

The LRCA's Board of Directors is the approval authority for land acquisition and disposition, including the approval of any related agreements, plans, or policies.

All proposed acquisitions and dispositions will be outlined in a staff report for the Board's consideration, with approval or denial by resolution.

6.0 Land Acquisition

6.1 Land Securement Criteria

All land considered for securement must be assessed to determine whether or not the property adds value to the land base owned by the LRCA. A property considered for securement must meet one of the following five primary criteria:

1. Lands near or adjacent to existing LRCA land holdings or other secured public natural areas.
2. Land identified with public outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. linkage to existing Conservation Authority trails, access to Lake Superior).
3. Protects people and property from natural hazards (i.e., floodplain, erosion prone land, etc.).
4. Lands that protect natural heritage features (i.e. riparian zone, fish habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, species at risk habitat, species at risk, etc.).
5. Identified for securement (through a Conservation Area Master Plan or other Strategy/Plan/Priority List developed by the Conservation Authority or in conjunction with partners).

6.2 Acquisition Costs

While there are many benefits to ownership of Conservation Lands, there are also associated costs:

- Securement costs (e.g. appraisal, purchase price, surveys, legal fees, etc.)
- Property development costs (e.g. fencing, trails, signage, etc.)
- Ongoing maintenance costs (e.g. taxes, insurance, grass mowing, etc.)
- Potential management issues (e.g. trespassing, invasive species, accessibility, etc.)

A "Land Securement Evaluation Form" (Appendix A) is to be completed to assist with evaluating the conservation qualities of the property, identifying any other assets on the property, and estimating the short-term and long-term costs of securement. This form should be completed for potential securements (including donations, easements, and securement through partnerships) that consider the criteria.

Following completion of the "Land Securement Evaluation Form", staff will prepare a report for potential acquisitions that warrant Board of Directors consideration. The report will consider both the benefits and the short-term/long-term costs for Board decision making purposes.

Finance Policy FIN:04- Reserve Policy, Section 4.9 Land Acquisition, outlines the reserve funds available for this purpose.

6.3 Land Donations

If a land donation is accepted, a charitable tax receipt in the amount of the fair market value of the property will be issued. For property valued at less than \$10,000 an appraisal by a Real Estate Agent is acceptable. For property valued in excess of \$10,000 the appraisal must be completed by an accredited appraiser.

The LRCA will pay all costs associated with a land donation (i.e., appraisal costs, legal costs, etc.).

6.4 Land Leased to the Authority

Lands leased to the Authority must be for a term not greater than five years (per Section 21(1)(d) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*).

6.5 Land Acquisition Process

The following process is to be completed:

1. Complete Land Securement Evaluation Form (Appendix A).
2. CAO to review Land Securement Evaluation and if warranted, prepare a Staff Report for the Board's consideration with a recommendation.
3. Board of Directors to review and approve or deny acquisition by resolution.
4. If approved complete Land Acquisition Checklist (Appendix B).

7.0 Land Disposition

LRCA will consider disposing of any of its properties that do not contribute to its conservation objectives. Disposal may also be considered for any land that has significant management or liability issues.

7.1 Land Disposal Criteria

All land considered for disposal must be assessed considering the following:

1. Are lands near or adjacent to existing LRCA land holdings or other secured public natural areas.
2. Are lands identified with public outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. Conservation Area, linkage to existing Conservation Authority trails, access to Lake Superior).
3. Do the lands protect people and property from natural hazards (i.e., floodplain, erosion prone land, etc.).
4. Are the lands used for access or the on-going and long-term maintenance of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway.
5. Do the lands protect natural heritage features (i.e., riparian zone, fish habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, species at risk habitat, species at risk, etc.).
6. How was the land acquired (i.e., expropriation, donation, provincially funded, etc.).

7. Financial considerations (i.e., source of original funds, disposal costs, on-going ownership costs, offered price meets or exceeds fair market value).

7.2 LRCA initiated Sale of Land

If the Board of Directors determines land to be surplus, it will first offer Right of First Refusal to:

- Municipality in which the land resides.
- Other Member Municipalities.
- Other like-minded agencies (i.e., Thunder Bay Field Naturalists, Nature Conservancy of Canada, etc.).
- Adjacent land-owners.

7.3 Disposition Costs and Proceeds from Sale

Costs associated with a disposition should be funded by sale proceeds or covered by the group requesting an easement, etc.

Finance Policy FIN:04- Reserve Policy, Section 4.9 Land Acquisition, outlines that proceeds from the sale of LRCA owned land will be appropriated to the Land Acquisition Reserve.

7.3.1 Section 39 Funded Lands

If the Province provided a grant under section 39 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* with respect to a given property, disposal (to sell, lease or otherwise dispose) of the lands must follow the procedures set out by the Province under Section 21(2) of this Act.

A summary of this process includes:

1. Provide a written notice of the proposed disposition to the Minister at least 90 days before the disposition.
2. Consultation and written notice to the Minister is not required if:
 - the disposition is for provincial or municipal infrastructure and utility purposes;
 - the province, the provincial agency, board or commission affected by the disposition or the municipal government, agency, board or commission affected by the disposition has approved it; and
 - the authority informs the Minister of the disposition.
3. Conduct public consultation and post a notice of the consultation on the Authority's website with the public for a minimum of 45 days for any properties that include:
 - areas of natural and scientific interest or wetlands as defined in section 1 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*;
 - the habitat of threatened or endangered species;
 - natural hazard lands (as per subsection 1 (1) of Ontario Regulation 686/21)
4. Describe how the comments received during the public consultation, if any, were considered by the Conservation Authority prior to the disposition, and provide this in the notice to the Minister (under item 1 above).

It should be noted that the Minister may, within 90 days after receiving the notice, direct the Conservation Authority to apply a specified share of the proceeds of the disposition to support programs and services provided by the Conservation Authority under section 21.1 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

7.4 Land Disposition Process

The following process is to be completed if a land disposition is considered:

1. Complete Land Disposition Evaluation Form (Appendix C).
2. CAO to review Land Disposition Evaluation and if warranted, prepare a Staff Report for the Board's consideration with a recommendation.
3. Board of Directors to review and approve or deny disposition by resolution.
4. If approved complete Land Disposition Checklist (Appendix D).
5. If denied, advise prospective purchaser/easement requestor in writing.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Land Acquisition Evaluation Form

Appendix B: Land Acquisition Checklist

Appendix C: Land Disposition Evaluation Form

Appendix D: Land Disposition Checklist



APPENDIX A:

LAND SECUREMENT EVALUATION FORM

Date	
Completed by	
Reviewed by	

1. Type of Land Acquisition

Type	Y/N – specify any specific details
Offer to Purchase	Price -
Offer of Donation	
Bequest	
Conservation Easement	
LRCA desired Purchase	Price -
Other	

2. Landowner

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

3. Agent for landowner (if applicable)

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

4. Property Description

Property Address	
Municipality	
Lot/Concession	
Roll Number	
Size	
UTM Coordinates	
Attach map	
Details/Comments	



5. Conservation Considerations

The property must meet one of the five primary criteria below to be considered for acquisition.

Primary Criteria	Yes	No
1. Lands near or adjacent to existing LRCA land holdings or other secured public natural areas.		
2. Land identified with public outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. linkage to existing Conservation Authority trails, access to Lake Superior).		
3. Protects people and property from natural hazards (i.e., floodplain, erosion prone land, etc.).		
4. Lands that protect natural heritage features (i.e. riparian zone, fish habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, species at risk habitat, species at risk, etc.).		
5. Identified for securement (through a Conservation Area Master Plan or other Strategy/Plan/Priority List developed by the Conservation Authority or in conjunction with partners).		
Details/Comments		

If the property meets one of the primary criteria, identify any of the following on the subject parcel:

Secondary Criteria	Yes	No
Significant Wildlife Habitat, including wildlife corridors		
Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI - Earth or Life Science)		
Access to Lake Superior		
Provincially Significant Wetland		
Evaluated or Unevaluated Wetland		
Environmentally Significant Area or Significant Features and Vegetation Community		
Fish Habitat		
Species at Risk and Habitat of Species at Risk		
Significant Water Resources (e.g. headwaters, floodplain, significant		



recharge/discharge areas, riparian lands)		
Hazard Lands (floodplain, erosion prone, etc.)		
Improves access to existing LRCA property		
Other – provide details		
Details/Comments		

6. Financial Considerations

a. Available Funding

Available Funding Source	
Available amount of Funding	
Secured	Y/N

b. Securement Costs

Acquisition Cost Estimate	Estimated Cost
Land appraisal fee (less an \$10,000 value - real estate appraisal, over \$10,000 to be completed by an accredited appraiser)	
Purchase price	
Legal fees	
Survey cost	
Partnership arrangements	
Staff resources	
Easement costs, if applicable	
Other	
TOTAL	
Details/Comments	

c. Property Development Costs

Property Development Costs	Estimated Cost
Preparation of Management/Master Plan	
Fencing	
Existing infrastructure that needs removal	
Trail development	
Signage needs	
Partnership arrangements	
Future capital needs	
Other	



TOTAL
Details/Comments

d. Ongoing Maintenance Costs

Ongoing Maintenance	Estimated Cost
Property taxes	
• Eligibility for tax incentive programs (CLTIP, MFTIP)	Y/N
Insurance	
Easement costs, if applicable	
Grass mowing	
Winter maintenance	
Litter, tree removal, etc.	
Invasive species management	
Other	
TOTAL (annually)	

Details/Comments

e. Beneficial Property Assets

Beneficial Property Assets	Estimated Revenue
Surplus lands that can be severed and sold	
Existing infrastructure that adds value	
Partnership arrangements	
Ongoing revenue opportunity	
Other	
TOTAL	

Details/Comments

f. Potential Management Issues

Potential Management Issues	Yes	No
Evidence of ongoing trespassing		
Presence of invasive species		
Significant degradation/environmental damage		
Significant numbers of neighbouring properties		



Lack of accessibility		
Other management issues		
Details/Comments		

7. Overall Analysis

8. Staff Recommendation



APPENDIX B:

LAND ACQUISITION CHECKLIST

Date	
Completed by	
Reviewed by	

1. Landowner

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Name to be used on Charitable Tax Receipt (if warranted)	

2. Agent for landowner (if applicable)

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

3. Property Description

Property Address	
Municipality	

4. Tasks to be Completed

Task	Completed	Notes
1. Staff report to the Board.		
2. Board resolution obtained to acquire property.		
3. Appraisal completed		
4. Survey completed or provided (if warranted).		
5. Confirm any restrictions limiting future sale, use, requirements, etc. (i.e., ownership reverts back to donator if sold, required signage acknowledging donation, naming of property, etc.).		
6. Engage solicitor to process purchase/donation.		
7. Issue Charitable Tax Receipt, if warranted.		
8. Add land to Land Inventory.		
9. Inform Insurer of land addition.		
10. Apply for MFTIP/CLTIP, if warranted.		



APPENDIX C:

LAND DISPOSITION EVALUATION FORM

Date	
Completed by	
Reviewed by	

1. Type of Land Disposal

Type	Y/N – specify any specific details
Offer to Purchase	Price -
Request for Easement	
LRCA desires to sell	
Other	

2. Prospective Landowner/Easement Holder

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

3. Agent for landowner (if applicable)

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

4. Property Description

LRCA Property Number	
Property Address	
Municipality	
Lot/Concession	
Roll Number	
Size	
UTM Coordinates	
Attach map	
Details/Comments	

5. Conservation Considerations

Primary Criteria	Yes	No
1. Lands near or adjacent to existing LRCA land holdings or other secured public natural areas.		
2. Land identified with public outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. Conservation Area, linkage to existing Conservation Authority trails, access to Lake Superior).		
3. Protects people and property from natural hazards (i.e., floodplain, erosion prone land, etc.).		
4. Lands are used for access or the on-going and long-term maintenance of the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway.		
5. Lands that protect natural heritage features (i.e. riparian zone, fish habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, species at risk habitat, species at risk, etc.).		
Details/Comments		

Identify any of the following on the subject parcel:

Secondary Criteria	Yes	No
Significant Wildlife Habitat, including wildlife corridors		
Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI - Earth or Life Science)		
Access to Lake Superior		
Provincially Significant Wetland		
Evaluated or Unevaluated Wetland		
Environmentally Significant Area or Significant Features and Vegetation Community		
Fish Habitat		
Species at Risk and Habitat of Species at Risk		
Significant Water Resources (e.g. headwaters, floodplain, significant recharge/discharge areas, riparian lands)		
Hazard Lands (floodplain, erosion prone, etc.)		



Provides access to existing LRCA property		
Easements on the land		
Other – provide details		
Details/Comments		

6. Financial Considerations

a. Source of original funds to acquire property:

Provincial Section 39 funds	Y/N
Donated lands	Y/N
Municipal funds	
Other	

b. Disposal Costs

Disposal Cost Estimate	Estimated Cost
Land appraisal fee (less an \$10,000 value - real estate appraisal, over \$10,000 to be completed by an accredited appraiser)	
Legal fees	
Survey cost	
Partnership arrangements	
Staff resources	
Easement costs, if applicable	
Other	
TOTAL	

Details/Comments



c. Ongoing Cost of Ownership

Ongoing Maintenance	Estimated Cost
Property taxes	
• Eligibility for tax incentive programs (CLTIP, MFTIP)	Y/N
Insurance	
Easement costs, if applicable	
Annual maintenance costs	
Other	
TOTAL (annually)	
Details/Comments	

d. Items for Consideration

Easements on land	
Land was expropriated by the LRCA	
Restrictions on sale (i.e., ownership reverts to donator)	
Land offered to municipality in which it resides prior to sale	
Source of original funds to acquire property	
Public consultation required (may be required if Section 39 funds provided)	
Any disclosure requirements (i.e., known contamination, invasive species, designated substances, etc.)	
Other	
Details/Comments	

7. Overall Analysis

8. Staff Recommendation



APPENDIX D:

LAND DISPOSITION CHECKLIST

Date	
Completed by	
Reviewed by	

1. Landowner

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Name to be used on Charitable Tax Receipt (if warranted)	

2. Agent for landowner (if applicable)

Name	
Mailing Address	
Telephone	
Email	

3. Property Description

LRCA Property Number	
Property Address	
Municipality	

4. Tasks to be Completed

Task	Completed	Notes
1. Staff report to the Board.		
2. Board resolution obtained to dispose of property/grant easement.		
3. Appraisal completed.		
4. Survey completed, if warranted.		
5. If Section 39 funds provided for acquisition, CA Act requirements are determined and met.		
6. Conduct public consultation, if warranted.		
7. Engage solicitor to process disposal/easement.		
8. Easement executed, if warranted.		
9. Remove land from Land Inventory/add easement to Land Inventory.		
10. Inform insurer of land disposal.		

MAPS



**LAKEHEAD REGION
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

Area of Jurisdiction

