



NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

NPCA MISSION, VISION & VALUES STATEMENT

"The objects of an authority are to establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals."

R.S.O. 1990, c.C.27 s.20

Responsibilities of NPCA include;

- Floodplain Management (1970's)
- Hazard Land Management including the management of local areas susceptible to flood and erosion risks (1983)
- Great Lake Shoreline management (1988)
- Ontario Regulation 155/06 NPCA: Regulation of Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses (2006)
- Level II agreement with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to administer the review of projects under section 35(1) of the Fisheries Act (1998)

Mission

To manage our watershed's natural resources by balancing environmental, community, and economic needs.

Vision

Balancing conservation and sustainable development for future generations by engaging landowners, stakeholders and communities through collaboration.

Values

To the landowners, stakeholders and communities affected by our actions, we value:

1. A sustainable balance between environmental conservation, economic growth and agricultural prosperity.
2. Clear and respectful communication.
3. Integrity, fairness and sensitivity to all impacted by our actions and decisions.
4. Creativity and innovation in service delivery to clients.
5. Transparency, accountability and quality in our services.
6. Pragmatic solution oriented approaches to decision making.
7. A respectful work environment and professional development.



It was an honour to be elected as Chair of the NPCA Board of Directors in 2015, which marked year two of NPCA's first-ever Strategic Plan. We have seen significant progress from staff at all levels delivering on the objectives of the plan. I am confident that the changes set forth are improving transparency, accountability and quality of services.

2015 was a critical year. Many pieces of provincial legislation came under review including the Conservation Authorities Act. The Board has been proactive in these files and has given a voice to our watershed at Queen's Park. The Board has also been active in many other areas, including a partnership with NCDSB at St. Johns Centre, the Cave Springs Management Plan, Binbrook's Blue Flag beach, and updating the Welland River/ Chippawa Creek floodplain mapping. NPCA also launched public consultation projects in 2015 with Welland River Floodplain Mapping and NPCA Policy Review. We have exhaustively engaged members of the public with these two projects to date, and I am happy to see many new faces interacting with the organization.

D. Bruce Timms
Chair, NPCA Board of Directors



The 2015 NPCA operating year has been very successful. Among the accomplishments were:

- Development and launch of a new NPCA website for improved customer service.
- Board approval to invest in a new development tracking software system for improved record retention, performance measurements, and streamlining permit approvals.
- Partnership agreements to enhance conservation and recreational programmes with the Fort Erie Conservation Club (Stevensville Conservation Area), Glanbrook Conservation Committee (Binbrook Conservation Area), and the Catholic Youth Organization (Binbrook Conservation Area).
- Initiated a review of the Welland River floodplain map based on modernized datasets and technology, and, a review of the Planning Policy Document for updated land use purposes.
- Record numbers at the Balls Falls Thanksgiving Festival, and
- The inaugural Rt. Hon. John Turner Water and Environmental Leadership Award that raised funds for local ecological programming and a university scholarship.

The above examples is just a brief glance of the many successes achieved at the NPCA, associated with a dedicated and professional workforce, the assistance of volunteers, the partnership with community groups, and the valuable support from the Board of Directors. As we commence 2016, the NPCA will be introducing a number of innovative initiatives to continuously meet the Mission "To manage our watershed's natural resources by balancing environmental, community, and economic needs.

Carmen D'Angelo
CAO/Secretary Treasurer

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers have worked with NPCA staff to plant trees in our Conservation Areas, participate in ecological studies, build bird boxes, deliver events, gather data, assist with educational programs, sit on NPCA Committees and assist with Conservation Area maintenance.

The Conservation Achievement Awards, now in their 24th year, were established to celebrate and recognize the efforts of numerous citizens and volunteers whose time, energy and resources help make the Niagara watershed a great place to live.

OVER
350
VOLUNTEERS

OVER
FIVE THOUSAND
VOLUNTEER HOURS



2015 Award of Merit Recipients

Leo Trigatti

Volunteer blacksmith for Ball's Falls heritage programming for over 15 years

Andy Fevez

Founding member of the Glanbrook Conservation Committee, works 2-4 hours weekly at Binbrook CA, habitat improvement at Binbrook CA, former member of NPCA Board of Directors

Niagara Handweavers and Spinners Guild

Volunteering at Ball's Falls CA for over 15 years, Thanksgiving Festival demonstrations

Gauld Nurseries

Implementation of the Canopies for Kids program 2010-2015



Left to Right: Vice-Chair Sandy Annunziata, Andy Fevez, Glanbrook Conservation Committee, Chair Bruce Timms

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

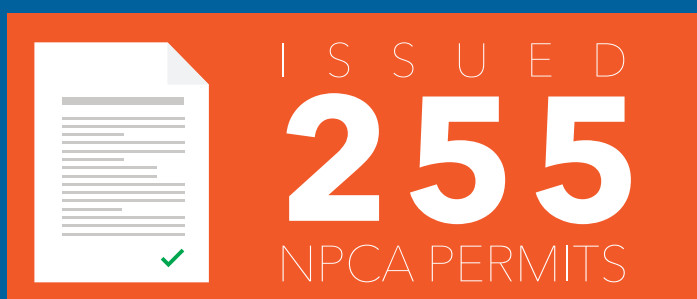
NPCA appointed four new members to the Source Protection Committee in 2015, and re-appointed two existing members. The new members to the committee are:

- Paul Grenier, Regional Councillor representing Niagara Region and the 12 local municipalities.
- Tony Dalimonte, Haldimand County Councillor representing Haldimand County
- Carmen Ches, Senior Project Manager representing City of Hamilton
- Adrin Willems, representing the public-at-large

NPCA staff have been working closely with Niagara Region and the local municipalities to ensure the policies in Niagara's Source Protection Plan are implemented within the specified timelines. Some of the progress that has been made by the municipalities includes:

- Niagara Region's Official Plan was amended in April 2015 to comply with the Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Plan policies.
- City of Thorold recently adopted a new Official Plan that includes source water protection policies. The newly adopted Official Plan will be reviewed by the Niagara Region who is the approval agency for Thorold's Official Plan.
- The City of Port Colborne and the City of Niagara Falls are in the process of drafting their amendments and intend to begin the statutory process in 2016.
- After the Official Plan amendments are in place, updates will be made to the zoning by-laws at these municipalities.
- In January 2015, NPCA received the first Annual Progress Report from Niagara Region's Risk Management Official (RMO), as required under the legislation. The RMO's Annual Progress Report outlines what activities the RMO completed in 2014 to ensure our municipal drinking water sources are protected. The RMO's Annual Progress Report for 2015 activities was recently received in January 2016.

The municipalities are not the only ones who have made progress on implementing source protection policies and safeguards. The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) collaborated with Niagara Region to install hooks on the Welland Canal to hold spill containment buoys in place around the Port Colborne Water Treatment Plant intake. With the hooks installed, it will be much easier to deploy spill containment buoys to protect the intake from impacts of fuel spills on the canal if they were to occur.



NIAGARA RIVER REMIDIAL ACTION PLAN

A Niagara River RAP Public Meeting was held at the Queens Landing Hotel in NOTL on Thursday, May 28th, 2015. The goal of the meeting was to provide a brief update on RAP progress to reignite the public engagement process. A number of "reporting to the public" sessions will be occurring over the next several years to communicate the accomplishments made for the river. In anticipation of the meetings, public engagement documents are being developed to assist with the communications of the technical / scientific work that has been undertaken. In addition, a stand-alone Niagara River RAP website is being developed (similar to the Source Water Protection website) to allow for public review and commenting on RAP related documents.

NEW NPCA CONSERVATION AREA GUIDE

The marketing and communications team has produced a new Conservation Area Guide in consultation with the Operations Department. The full colour brochure lays out the various activities that are available at the most active NPCA conservation areas. It also highlights the benefits of purchasing the new NaturePlus card, a redesigned annual membership pass. An electronic version is available for email distribution and posted on npca.ca. Hard copies will be distributed at our conservation areas and other tourist stops throughout the watershed and beyond.

WELLAND RIVER FLOODPLAIN MAPPING PROJECT

One of the responsibilities of the NPCA is to implement programs that contribute to public safety from flooding and erosion (including Floodplain Management). As such, the NPCA is updating and creating new floodplain mapping along the entire length of the Welland River. NPCA issued a request for proposal and MMM Group was selected to complete this work ensuring that all interested stakeholders remain connected and informed throughout the project.

Three rounds of public consultation will begin in early 2016, with the expectation of delivering a recommendation to the Board of Directors before the end of the year.



6 FLOOD OUTLOOK
STATEMENTS



92 RESTORATION
PROJECTS



28 NATURALIZATION
PROJECTS

PROVINCIAL PLAN REVIEWS

On February 27, 2015 the Province launched a co-ordinated review of Provincial Plans including; The Greenbelt Plan, The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and The Niagara Escarpment Plan. The co-ordinated review has two rounds of consultation. The first seeks input to inform the development of amendments to the plans, and the second is to consult on the proposed amendments, if any.

The Province hosted Town Hall meetings from March to May 2015 across southern Ontario. Two meetings took place within the NPCA Watershed (April 15th in St. Catharines and April 16th in Hamilton). Both meetings were well attended with well over 350 people at each. Each meeting had presentations by provincial staff followed by round table facilitated discussions. Staff and several Board members attended the meetings.

NPCA's Provincial Plan Review consultation with stakeholders took place from April 1-15, 2015. NPCA Board members, Community Liaison Advisory Committee (CLAC) members, NPCA staff and municipal planners were consulted. The intent was to inform participants of the Provincial Plans that are under review, invite participants to provide their perspective on the Plans in terms of their benefits, impacts, and implementation opportunities, as well as provide participants the opportunity to share their views on how the Plans can be improved to align with the needs of the NPCA. NPCA submitted board-approved responses to these plans, as well as *Wetland Conservation in Ontario: A Discussion Paper*.



ENHANCED/RESTORED
40 ACRES
OF WETLAND

45,000+
TREES PLANTED

POLICY REVIEW

In late 2015, NPCA initiated a review of their policy document. The objectives of this comprehensive policy review include:

- 1) A thorough background review of all relevant legislation, regulations and policies.
- 2) A review, validation, integration and/or establishment of guiding principles for the policy review (e.g. leveraging best practices from other from other Municipalities, Conservation Authorities).
- 3) Extensive public and agency consultation, guided by an Engagement/Communications Strategy that will include public meetings, as well as other forms of engagement and communications throughout the policy review process.
- 4) Identification and compilation of key stakeholder concerns and needs and comparing those needs with existing policies (i.e. gap analysis).
- 5) Re-write of existing Policy Document

This Policy Document will primarily be utilized by NPCA Staff through its Watershed Planning Services program; however, this updated Policy Document will also be referenced and utilized as a valuable reference and evaluative tool by the NPCA Board of Directors and Staff and by watershed municipalities, the development industry, agricultural community and the general public. Public consultation will continue in 2016 as the policy review continues throughout the year.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

The NPCA collects and analyzes hundreds of water samples each year from the streams, rivers and groundwater resources within the watershed. From this information, the NPCA is able to identify sources of pollution, track water quality trends, and help assess and direct NPCA stewardship programs. The monitoring and reporting of watershed conditions is another important example of how the NPCA is delivering its programs with transparency and accountability. As well, the long term data collected serves as a baseline by which to compare the success of all the various water quality improvement initiatives being undertaken within the watershed.

In general, water quality monitoring data collected between 2001 and 2014 is summarized as follows; Based on the results of the 2010 to 2014 WQI, 60% of the NPCA surface water monitoring stations are rated as poor, 32% are rated as marginal, 5% are rated as fair and 3% are rated as good. None of the stations were able to achieve a WQI rating of excellent.

Generally, the WQI ratings at water quality stations were relatively stable when compared to historic NPCA data. However, water quality improvements were observed in Drapers Creek and the lower Welland River when comparing to previous water quality assessments. The Effingham tributary of upper Twelve Mile Creek, the lower section of Twelve Mile Creek in Port Dalhousie, the Welland Canal, Frenchman Creek (Fort Erie), Lyons Creek (Welland/Niagara Falls) and the Welland River downstream of Binbrook Conservation Area continue to achieve the highest water quality ratings in the NPCA watershed. WQI ratings decreased in the St. John's sections of Twelve Mile Creek, Lowbanks Drain, Kraft Drain, and in Eight Mile Creek (NOTL) because of increased exceedances of water quality parameters.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

By the end of Q4 2015, all but three planned capital projects were initiated by NPCA - one of which was delayed due to ecological considerations at the site. 95% of NPCA capital projects for 2015 were either completed or expected to be completed in early 2016. Some key improvements were:

- Washroom and electrical upgrades at Ball's Falls
- Splash pad health & safety improvements at Binbrook
- Updated/replaced the roof at Central Workshop
- Entry/Gate improvements at Chippawa Creek
- Chain link fence replacement at Long Beach

GROUNDWATER

89

REVIEWS

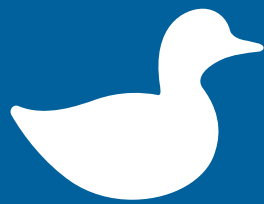
NATIONAL WETLAND CONSERVATION FUND

The NPCA was successful in securing \$19,350.00 from the NWCF fund for the creation of a wetland project titled the Willoughby Marsh / Niagara River Corridor Wetland Improvement Project. The project is located on private lands beside the Willoughby Marsh Conservation Area.

Willoughby Marsh Conservation Area is a 232 hectare swamp ecosystem located in south Niagara Falls. Willoughby Marsh is a provincially significant wetland that supplies the headwaters of Black, Usher, and Tee Creeks. It is one of the largest forested wetlands in the Niagara Peninsula, and contains swamp, marsh and Carolinian Forest communities and associated species including Sandhill Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, white tailed deer and numerous species of ducks. This natural area provides a wilderness setting with no formal trails. Bird watching, seasonal hunting and passive recreational activities can be enjoyed at this site.

The NPCA looks for opportunities to expand the habitat of existing protected areas. Increasing the protection of natural areas through additional "buffering" can limit adjacent human disturbance, serve as wildlife corridors, limit the spread of non-natives, and provide long-term benefits for wetland species and the public who enjoy these places for multiple uses including recreation and education.

Staff successfully negotiated the wetland restoration opportunity with a landowner adjacent to the Willoughby Marsh Conservation Area. The project site is also located within the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Area of Concern (AOC). The project goal is to construct a 2 acre marsh wetland with naturalization through the planting of wetland species including trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges, etc. The project was initiated in the summer of 2015 and completed by the fall of 2015.



ENHANCED/RESTORED
40 ACRES
O F W E T L A N D

ST. JOHN'S CENTRE AND NCDSB PARTNERSHIP

At the May 20th, 2015 Board meeting, staff was directed to issue a Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) related to the use of the St. Johns Centre, in Thorold. A joint proposal from the Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) and Brock University was the successful proposal as chosen by the NPCA Board of Directors.

Brock University will provide an education coordinator who will lead Outdoor Education Activities for NCDSB students from Kindergarten to grade eight. The NCDSB is also working with the Niagara Native Centre and other aboriginal organizations to establish an alternative education program for disengaged aboriginal students. Further, the partnership of Brock University and NCDSB will establish summer camps at the St. Johns Centre.



FORMALIZED AGREEMENT WITH GCC

The Glanbrook Conservation Committee is a group of passionate and knowledgeable local community volunteers that was established in 1990. Its primary mandate is to work to improve the habitat for wildlife in what was previously Glanbrook Township; now part of the City of Hamilton. The GCC includes naturalists, environmentalists, bird watchers, hikers, canoeists, as well as fishermen and hunters.

The majority of GCC activities occur at Binbrook Conservation Area in cooperation with the NPCA staff. From helping to establish and maintain a number of hiking trails to a large aquatics planting program and tree planting program, the GCC has improved the natural habitat for both wildlife and visitors in and around the shores of Lake Niapenco.

The NPCA is grateful for the contributions made by the GCC over the years. The agreement will further open communication between the GCC and NPCA staff. This Agreement gives staff and volunteers a clearer direction and will help build a framework for other partnerships at Binbrook Conservation Area and other parks as the NPCA moves forward.



BINBROOK'S BLUE FLAG BEACH



The Blue Flag program is an international eco-label awarded to beaches and marinas. In Canada, Blue Flag is operated by Environmental Defence Canada, a national charitable organization committed to protecting the environment and human health.

To date in Canada, there are two beaches in Manitoba, two in Nova Scotia, nine in Ontario, and one in Quebec designated as a "Blue Flag Beach". The NPCA has applied for and is anticipating that Binbrook Conservation Area's beach will be the first Blue Flag Beach in Ontario that is owned by a Conservation Authority.



NEW LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

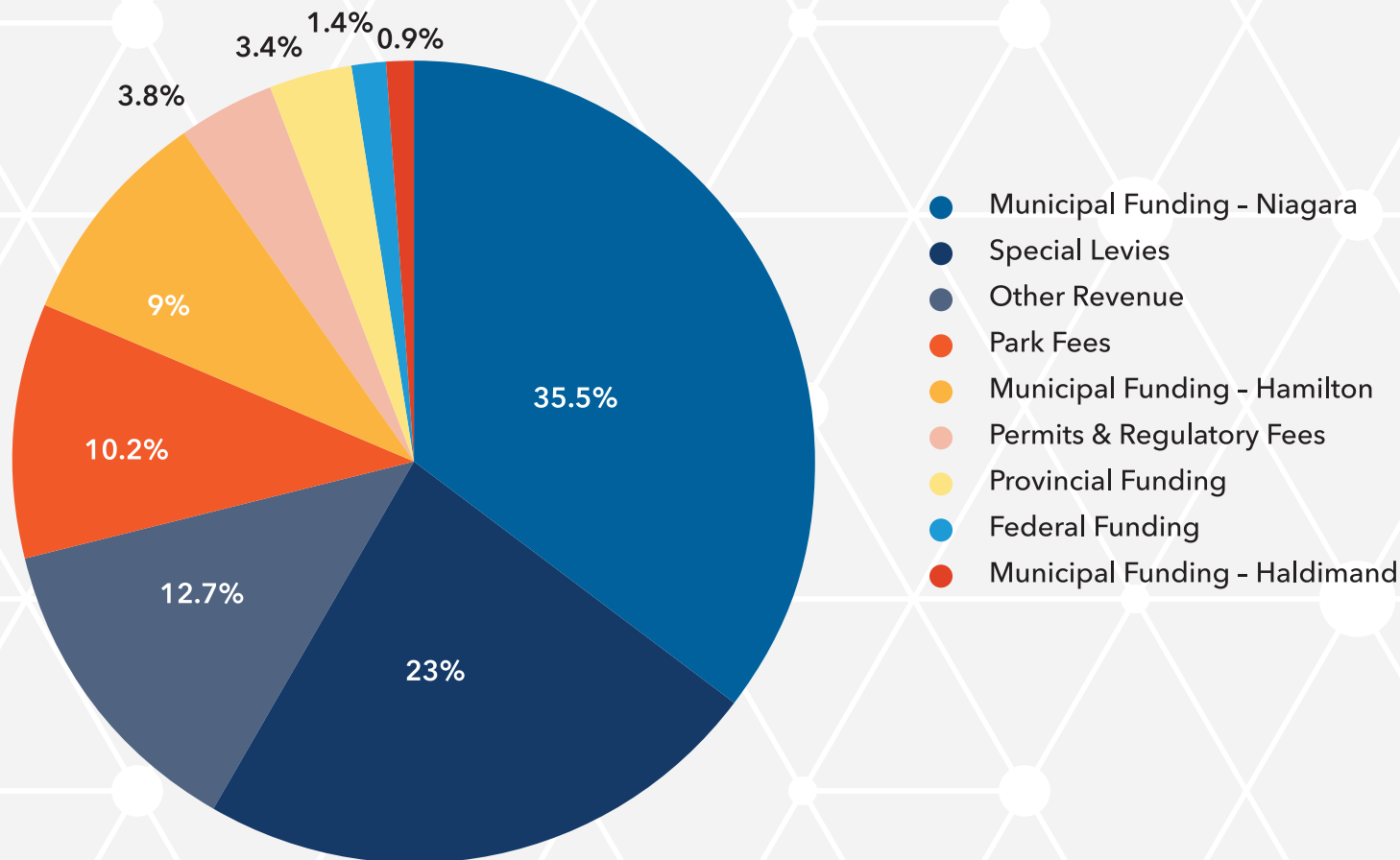
To meet the objectives of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, with a focus on new land acquisition criteria, NPCA staff prepared a new Land Management Plan. Much of the new plan adopts language from existing Ministry of Natural Resources Policies and Procedures, and captures the best practices of other Conservation Authorities in Ontario. The plan was presented to the Community Liaison Advisory Committee for their comments and feedback, and was approved by the Board in June 2015.

CAVE SPRINGS MANAGEMENT PLAN

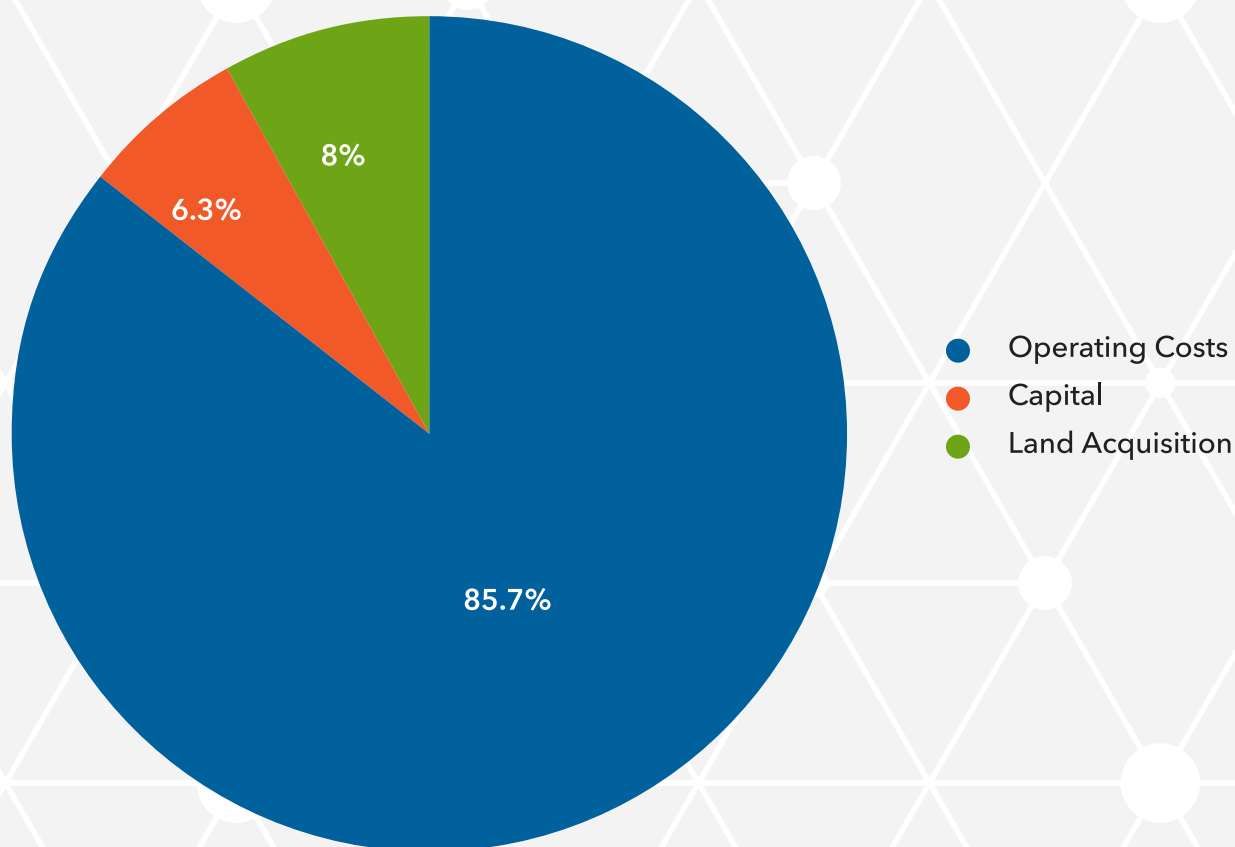
In early 2015, rather than outsource the Management Plan process, NPCA staff began planning their work schedules to internally create the Cave Springs Management Plan. Through extensive public consultation and tireless efforts of staff and volunteers, the Management Plan will be completed in the first-half of 2016. The plan examines many aspects of this property, which is located in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The study looks at the geology, cultural heritage, and ecology of the property, and will capture how meaningful the property has been for several years.

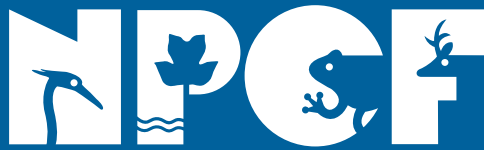


2015 REVENUES



2015 EXPENSES





— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION



Rt. Hon. John Turner

As the Foundation for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, we help raise funds for educational programs, restoration projects and capital and environmental improvements to our Conservation Areas. The NPCF shares the wonderful stories of the great work staff do every day at the NPCA. This work is often overshadowed by discussions about policy and regulation; important conversations that need to happen but sometimes make people forget about the actual, tangible work being done to help conserve and make more beautiful our Conservation Areas and natural areas throughout our watershed for all of us to enjoy now and for generations to come. This work and these improvements can't be done without the help of our many generous supporters.

This past year was very successful for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. More than half a million dollars was raised to improve our conservation areas and our natural treasures throughout our watershed. In addition to the generous support from individuals we were very fortunate to receive significant grants and donations to help with some major improvement projects including \$245,000 from the Government of Canada to improve our recreational facilities at Binbrook Conservation Area; \$224,750 from the Niagara Lakefront Enhancement Strategy to provide significant improvement to our Long Beach Conservation Area; and a \$100,000 dollar gift from Niagara Region Wind Corporation to improve Conservation Areas specifically in Wainfleet.

In September, we hosted a successful gala fundraising dinner; the Rt. Hon. John Turner Award for Water & Environmental Leadership, which raised more than \$20,000. Those funds will go towards new, more accessible and safer outdoor stairs at Ball's Falls Conservation Area as well as fund ten \$1,000 annual scholarships for a second-year Brock University student studying environmental science.

We are grateful to all of the individuals, service clubs, private foundations, and businesses who recognize the value of the NPCA's work and the role the NPCA plays in providing beautiful natural areas to enjoy. Our donors' generous financial and in-kind contributions to the Foundation have allowed us to support many exciting and much-needed projects.





**NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION**
AUTHORITY

250 Thorold Road West; 3rd Floor
Welland, ON

Phone: 905-788-3135
Fax: 905-788-1121