


ANNUAL REPORT 2021



NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

Aspiring for Next Generation Conservation

A photograph of a forested area with a rocky ledge and a waterfall. The foreground shows a rocky ledge with a small waterfall cascading over it. The background is a dense forest with trees showing autumn foliage in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

The Niagara Peninsula watershed is situated within the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and the Anishinaabeg, including the Mississaugas of the Credit—many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties (No. 3, 4, and 381) and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today, the watershed is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Through the 2021-2031 Strategic Plan, we reconfirm our commitment to shared stewardship of natural resources and deep appreciation of Indigenous culture and history in the watershed.





Message from the CAO

On behalf of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), I am pleased to share our 2021 Annual Report, "Aspiring for the Next Generation Conservation." Over the past few years, we have made significant progress in rebuilding a solid organization based on 60 years of conservation. The ongoing pandemic challenged our resilience as an organization, but our transformation journey continued in 2021.

One of our most celebrated achievements in 2021 was completing the NPCA's 2021-2031 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan has clearly articulated our aspiration for the next generation of conservation. We have the energy and drive to build conservation-inspired action capacity and collaboration in the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

In 2021 we also continued to navigate and respond to legislative changes in the *Conservation Authorities Act* while effectively delivering on our mandate of protecting people and property from flooding, natural hazards and conserving natural resources. I want to thank Conservation Ontario and the Provincial Working Group for their collaboration and ongoing support of the conservation authorities through this transition.

Our significant challenges in the coming years will be the growth, intensification, and climate change impacts on our watershed resources. Our 41 conservation areas and greenspace will continue to be a critical asset for community health and well-being. They also support a biodiverse natural heritage system for critical Carolinian flora and fauna across the Niagara Escarpment and Greenbelt. We stay committed to strengthening our

science capacity and innovative research to support evidence-based decision-making and the application of best practices. We continue to update our policies and procedures to adapt to our watershed's changing needs, and our commitment to addressing climate change is at the forefront of our watershed work.

The NPCA is fortunate to have more than 1,600 volunteers and partners that have helped us increase our conservation impact in the Niagara Peninsula watersheds. I want to thank and celebrate the achievements of staff, volunteers, and partners who make up this vibrant community of conservation champions. I also thank our Chair, Vice-Chair, and Board of Directors for their ongoing support and leadership through a challenging yet rewarding year.

The 2021 Annual Report is our story about how our programs, services, thought leadership, and community are transforming the future of conservation across our jurisdiction. We look forward to working with our municipal partners, stakeholders, and community to deliver on our promise of bringing forward the next generation of conservation.



Chandra Sharma
CAO, Secretary-Treasurer
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority





Ball's Falls Conservation Area

Message from the Chair

As I reflect on my final term as the Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, I applaud the incredible achievements and dedication of each of the directors, our CAO Chandra Sharma, the hard-working staff, our volunteers, partners, and the entire watershed community.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the Board of Directors remained committed to ensuring the safe and successful delivery of NPCA programs and services that are essential to those we serve. Last year, we approved many restoration projects and various capital projects.

To address the increased demand for greenspaces, we have explored improvements to our passive conservation areas while securing many valuable Memorandums of Agreement. We also engaged local and regional stakeholders to support the "2 Billion Trees" initiative and helped to establish new policies to ensure appropriate stewardship of NPCA's financial assets.

The NPCA also embarked on a significant consultative process to engage the entire watershed community in developing a new strategic plan. The Board of Directors was honoured to oversee this staff-led project and provide guidance through the Strategic Planning Committee. The result is an ambitious strategic plan that reaffirms our vision of nature for all and our mission to create a common ground for conservation action and accountability to nature.

We are committed to implementing actions that support Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through our new strategic plan. We will also continue to proactively seek their diverse perspectives on land management and shared stewardship.

This strategic plan also promises to be a critical milestone in the transformation of the NPCA, and I commend the enthusiasm and professionalism of staff in driving the process and setting the bar high.

I want to conclude by thanking both the public and my colleagues for their support and confidence in me to serve as Chair for two consecutive terms. It has truly been an honour.

I am so grateful to everyone who helped us achieve so many successes in 2021. I look forward to seeing the NPCA continue this strong path towards a great future.



Brenda Johnson

Brenda Johnson
Chair, Board of Directors
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

2021 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is committed to serving the Niagara Peninsula watershed on behalf of their municipalities and communities. They contribute their leadership and expertise to decisions that determine the policies and programs of the NPCA.

James Stewart Beattie

Hamilton

Rick Brady

Niagara Falls

Deborah Coon-Petersen

West Lincoln

Brad Clark

Hamilton

Donna Cridland

Wainfleet

Leah Fear

Fort Erie

Robert Foster

Lincoln

Jack Hellinga

Port Colborne

Diana Huson

Pelham

John Ingrao

Welland

Brenda Johnson (Chair)

Hamilton

Ken Kawall

Lincoln

Bruce Mackenzie (Vice-Chair)

Grimsby

John Metcalfe

Haldimand County

William Rapley

Niagara-on-the-Lake

Ed Smith

St. Catharines

Rob Shirton

Haldimand County

Bill Steele

Port Colborne

Malcolm Woodhouse

Thorold

Brian Wright

Hamilton

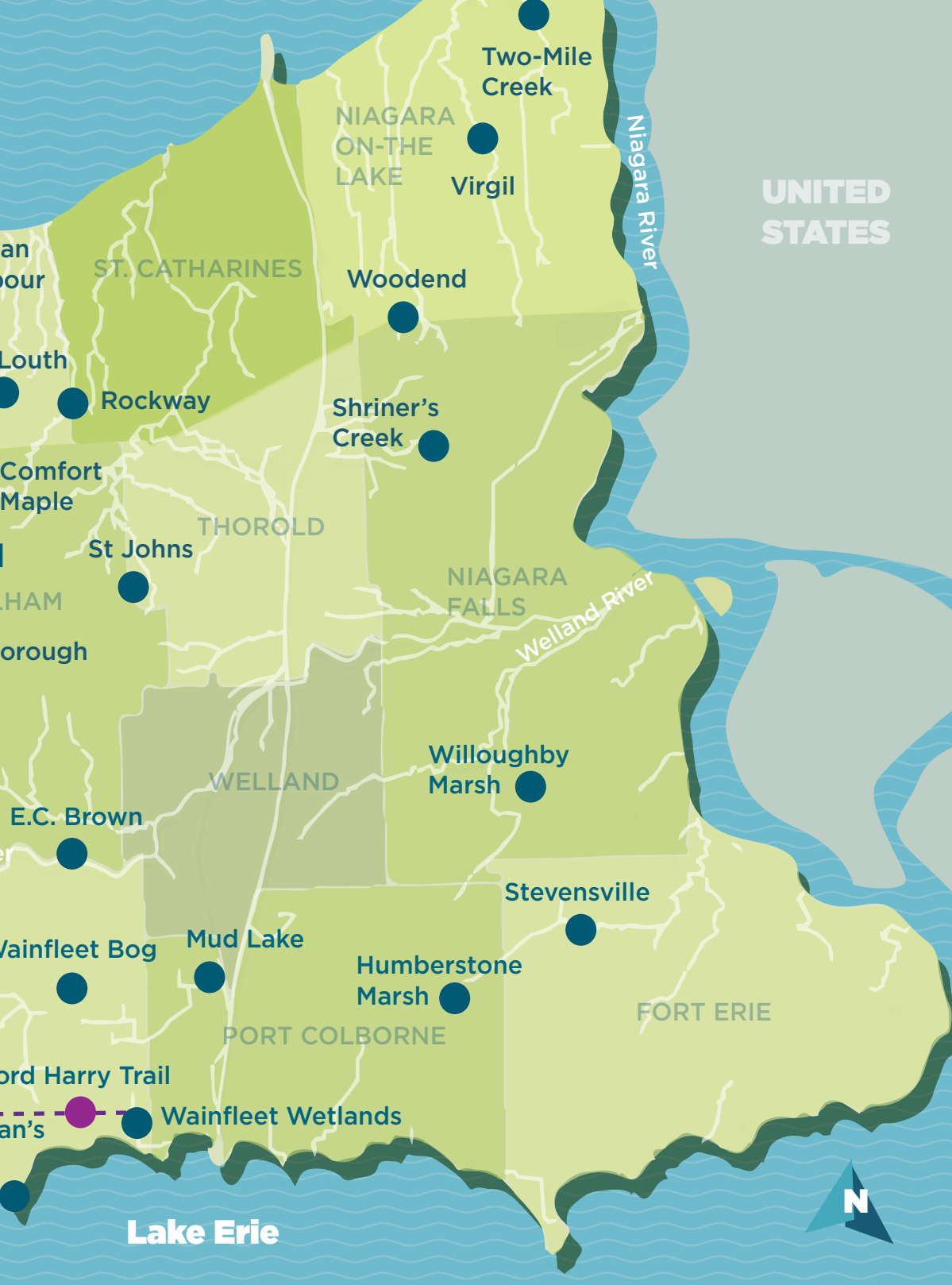


About Us

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) is a community-based natural resource management agency that protects, enhances, and sustains healthy watersheds. With over 60 years of experience, the NPCA offers watershed programs and services that focus on flood and hazard management, source water protection, species protection, ecosystem restoration, community stewardship, and land management.

The NPCA is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in the Province of Ontario and manages 41 Conservation Areas within the Niagara Peninsula watershed held in public trust for recreation, heritage preservation, conservation, and education.

NIAGARA PENINSULA WATERSHED



Purpose

To further the conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources in the Niagara Peninsula watersheds, as per the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Vision

We envision a healthy and vibrant environment with shared greenspace and clean water that sustains life for future generations.

Mission

To create a common ground for conservation-inspired action and accountability to nature.

YEAR IN REVIEW

CONSERVATION AREAS



90,500

Visitors at 4
Flagship Parks



16%

Increase in Visitors



381

Seasonal Campers



1,800+

Membership Passes
Sold



25,000

Visitors to
Signature Events

FLOOD MANAGEMENT



10

Flood Bulletins Issued



42 KILOMETERS

Floodplain Mapped



NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

VOLUNTEERS



409

Active Volunteers



8,977

Volunteer Hours



6,865

Trees Planted



7,384

Wildflowers Planted

RESTORATION



26.77

Hectares Reforested



1.21

Hectares Wetland
Restore



2.26

Hectares of Riparian
Habitat



63,393

Trees Planted



7,926

Shrubs Planted



BY THE NUMBERS

OUR WATERSHED



474,217

Residents



242,980

Hectares Watershed
Jurisdiction



41

Conservation Areas



2,946.39

Hectares
Land Holdings



202

Local Waterways



15

Municipalities



4

Flagship Properties



80

Surface Water
Monitoring Stations



46

Groundwater
Monitoring Wells

PLANNING FOR A BETTER FUTURE



St Johns Conservation Area

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2031

In 2021, the NPCA Board of Directors approved the NPCA Strategic Plan (2021-2031). The plan reaffirms our commitment to the mandate of conservation authorities as per the *Conservation Authorities Act*. It charts the course for the next generation of work to address the evolving issues of climate change, growth, and the need for green infrastructure.

Through extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders, the NPCA developed six strategic priorities to guide its work over the coming years. Each strategic priority includes specific goals and actions for the NPCA to undertake with its partners and communities to achieve a thriving environment that sustains life for future generations.



1 Healthy and Climate Resilient Watersheds



2 Supporting Sustainable Growth



3 Connecting People to Nature



4 Partner of Choice



5 Organizational Excellence



6 Financial Sustainability



Morgan's Point Conservation Area

HEALTHY AND CLIMATE RESILIENT WATERSHEDS

Creating health and climate resilient watersheds improves nature for the betterment of all life across the Niagara Peninsula watershed. Decisions that promote greater resiliency in our watershed require an understanding of the current state of the local natural environment. This understanding begins with collecting information, making assessments, and developing strategies to restore or improve the health of our water and land resources.

In 2021, the NPCA continued its science and technical support to preserve natural resources by participating in integrated watershed planning activities and various watershed studies, including:

- **Smithville's Master Community Plan and associated subwatershed study**
- **Niagara Region's Watershed Plan Equivalent study for the New Official Plan**
- **Haldimand County's Natural Heritage System Study for its Official Plan**
- **Digital Terrain Model and Ecological Land Classification mapping updates**

The NPCA continued to work with private and public landowners to restore the watershed's natural resources. These restoration projects were made possible through significant partnerships with various organizations, including Ducks Unlimited Canada, Land Care Niagara, the Haldimand Stewardship Council, the Niagara Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada, and Forests Ontario.

To further program goals of increasing forest cover across the watershed and engaging with local partners, the NPCA signed an agreement with Forests Ontario to become a Program Delivery Agent. This partnership will help subsidize tree planting projects selected by the Restoration Grant Program. The NPCA also engaged with local municipalities to identify restoration opportunities to improve forest cover, water quality, and wildlife habitat on municipal land. For example, the NPCA and partners (City of St. Catharines and Friends of Walker's Creek) received a TD Tree Days Grant to engage over 50 volunteers through October's successful community planting event.





Niagara River Remedial Action Plan

The NPCA has been leading the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) initiative since the late 1990s and has completed many activities in the watershed to improve the Niagara River ecosystem. The Niagara River RAP's mission is to restore environmental conditions according to established criteria to achieve the significant environmental goal of removing the Niagara River from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs).

In 2021, RAP partners reached a tremendous milestone in restoring the Niagara River's water quality and ecosystem health! An assessment report indicated that all remedial actions were complete and met all RAP criteria. As a result, the Niagara River is one step closer to being removed from the list of Great Lakes AOCs.

NPCA staff completed a comprehensive shoreline habitat assessment of the Niagara River's Canadian shoreline to target high-priority habitat restoration areas. Through a partnership with the Niagara Parks Commission, with funding support from the Province of Ontario and Environment and Climate Change Canada, the planting of native species at targeted locations began to improve the shoreline. In addition, two coastal wetland habitat creation projects (near the mouth of Frenchman's Creek and Black Creek) were completed in 2021. To date, RAP partners have installed six out of seven planned coastal wetland projects and restored 1.5 kilometres of the Niagara River's Canadian shoreline.

Visit niagarariver.ca to learn more about these recent initiatives.

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHT

VISUAL ASSESSMENT SURVEY TOOL

Community coastal monitoring program will inspire stewardship of shoreline resiliency

The Niagara Coastal Community Collaborative (Niagara Coastal), NPCA, and Niagara College partnered to launch a community-based monitoring program to engage the coastal communities of Lake Erie in the stewardship of shoreline resiliency and healthy coastal ecosystems. Niagara's Visual Assessment Survey Tool (VAST) allows coastal communities, residents, and visitors to track the changing conditions of Niagara's coasts by submitting photos or completing a short survey. They can share valuable data to create a real-time map of coastal conditions to guide visitors' interactions with these water bodies. This data will support Great Lakes management, inform future restoration decisions, and track results over time.

BY THE NUMBERS

RESTORATION PROGRAM

- 61 restoration projects completed
- Over 63,000 trees and 7,000 shrubs planted
- 26.77 hectares of reforestation, 1.12 hectares of hedgerow establishment, and 2.26 hectares of riparian area/shoreline enhancement
- 1.21 hectares of wetland constructed with over 4,000 wetland plants, enhancing 2.39 hectares of wetland area
- Three agricultural best management practices projects completed



SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Land-use planning and technologies help build a sustainable Niagara Peninsula watershed that can respond to a changing climate and related environmental challenges. As a critical part of watershed management, the NPCA identifies issues and targets solutions to manage our activities' impacts on natural resources. The NPCA develops programs and services that effectively manage our water resources, and safeguard the significant natural heritage of the watershed.

In 2021, the NPCA continued to work with partners to monitor, assess, and conduct targeted research, and deliver information on a wide range of water resources and conditions, including:

- **Monitoring daily water levels at 19 stream gauge stations and climate data at 11 stations**
- **Issuing flood warnings of potential river flooding or Great Lakes storm events**
- **Sampling water from 80 water surface water and 46 groundwater sites**
- **Updating the Source Water Protection Plan**
- **Mapping over 42 kilometres of floodplain along watercourses in Grimsby, Lincoln, and St. Catharines**

Water resources engineering provided technical, procurement, and project management support to the organization to achieve a more resilient watershed. For example, the NPCA is proactively undertook erosion protection and studies on the earth dikes of both the Upper and Lower Virgil Dams to mitigate any damage that may result from the dams being overtopped by severe storm events. The NPCA is also in the process of mapping the floodplain of over 184 kilometres of watercourses with the intent of directing new development away from flood-prone areas.

WATER RESOURCES HIGHLIGHT



DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ZONES

Province-wide education blitz on drinking water protection signs

The NPCA joined forces with Conservation Ontario for a three-week public information campaign about drinking water protection zone signs, including a song, music video, social media posts, and an online mapping application about the signs across Ontario. Drinking water protection zones are areas where extra protective measures are in place to keep drinking water safe and clean. This outreach program was a fun way to bring attention to the signs and spread the word about the importance of source water protection.

Visit sourceprotection-niagara.ca to learn more about what actions have taken place since 2006 to keep Niagara's water safe and clean.

BY THE NUMBERS WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

- 474 permits issued
- 1,150 planning applications reviewed
- 330 complaints/ potential violations received
- 80 surface water quality samples collected
- 46 groundwater samples collected

The NPCA Planning and Permits Division is an essential partner in the municipal land-use planning process. We provide valuable advice to our municipal partners and community developers to ensure development is completed in a sustainable manner that avoids natural hazards and protects wetlands.

Our watershed planners reviewed approximately 1,150 planning applications across our entire watershed in 2021, including Environmental Assessments, Niagara Escarpment Commission Development permits, and pre-consultation meetings for *Planning Act* approvals.

The NPCA Planning and Permits Division also issued more than 474 NPCA permits. The NPCA permit program applies to valleylands, wetlands, watercourses, flood plains, hazard lands, the Lake Ontario and Lake Erie shoreline, and lands adjacent to these (e.g., Regulated Areas).

To strengthen our relationships with agency partners, including municipalities, the NPCA established regular meetings with agency partners to discuss key issues and provide advice on environmental impacts. For instance, NPCA staff reviewed and consulted with the Niagara Region about natural areas and watershed management during the

Regional Official Plan (ROP) update process. The NPCA continues to be a key stakeholder in the Smithville Subwatershed Study by providing the data and technical review of the Township of West Lincoln's Urban Boundary Expansion.

ISSUED 474 PERMITS IN 2021

Compliance and enforcement activities concerning the NPCA's authorizing legislation and regulations play a significant role in protecting people and property from development activities in and around natural hazards throughout the watershed. For occurrences where a violation is likely or confirmed, the compliance and enforcement team engages with landowners by providing education and engaging landowners willing to work with the NPCA on appropriate solutions. As a regulatory agency, NPCA compliance and enforcement staff work collaboratively with other agencies, including partner municipalities, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

We are fortunate enough to have

the climate, soils, and forest tree species in the watershed woodlots that support wildlife, nature enjoyment, and sustainable harvesting activities. Forests utilize wood from trees to build products and help moderate the cycle of spring floods and summer droughts. As such, sustainable forest management is crucial to conserve the long-term health of these forests and help preserve healthy ecosystems. The NPCA ensured sustainable forest management practices, such as applying an organic pesticide to reduce the population of *Lymantria dispar*, commonly known as gypsy moth. Staff applied this pesticide to over 65 hectares of hardwood forest at Chippawa Creek Conservation Area. In addition, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was identified at Two Mile Creek Conservation Area. EAB is an invasive insect that attacks and kills ash trees, killing up to 99% of the trees it impacts. As a result, the NPCA cleared most ash tree cover except for designated wildlife trees. In 2022 the NPCA will replace the cleared areas with native deciduous and coniferous trees appropriate to the site, which will encourage the re-establishment of a healthy, resilient, and diverse ecosystem that will support a variety of wildlife.

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHT



MORGAN'S POINT ROAD

NPCA purchases 28.3 hectares of environmentally significant public greenspace

The NPCA was pleased to announce the additional purchase of 28.3 hectares on Morgan's Point Road in Wainfleet, Ontario. The property is designated as an Environmental Conservation Area and Significant Woodland, serving as a vital habitat and migratory stopover for birds, bats, and butterflies. The new land purchase includes important ecological features, such as interior forest providing critical habitat for interior species, a significant water recharge area, a highly vulnerable groundwater area throughout the parcel, and a potential Alvar ecosystem with characteristic shallow soils. It also serves as prime habitat for species at risk, including the Monarch Butterfly, and various snakes, birds, and toads.



Cave Springs Conservation Area

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

Research shows that people with a greater connection to nature are more likely to behave positively towards the environment, wildlife, and habitats. Therefore, establishing an enduring relationship between people and nature is critical for future nature conservation. The NPCA

DAY-USE PARK ADMISSIONS INCREASED 16%

provides access to greenspace for our communities to initiate and develop a connection to nature.

Our 41 Conservation Areas within the Niagara Peninsula watershed are accessible to everyone for recreation and conservation. These natural and shared greenspaces merge nature, culture, and adventure to create limitless opportunities for discovery.

In 2021, the NPCA once again saw a significant increase in visitation and interest in our conservation areas. From the sandy beach of Lake Niapenco at Binbrook to the pebble shores at Long Beach, day-use park admissions increased 16 per cent marking another record-setting year

in visitation and recreation use. The NaturePlus Membership Pass program continues to grow in popularity, with an 80 per cent increase in sales, indicating the importance and demand of access to natural spaces for the community.

As a steward of both natural and cultural heritage and to support active outdoor recreation, the NPCA undertakes

large capital infrastructure projects annually. In 2021, the NPCA initiated work on an upgraded wastewater system and water treatment facility at Binbrook Conservation Area in response to the increasing popularity and visitation. In addition, as a growing hub and access point for outdoor adventure, the NPCA is the host location for TreeTop Trekking Hamilton, where a new pavilion was completed to serve visitors and participants better.

Other capital projects included the restoration of the historical St. Johns Mill and Upper Canada's oldest Common Schoolhouse, both located at St. Johns Valley Centre Conservation

BY THE NUMBERS

OPERATIONS

- 90,500 paid day-use visitors at all parks
- 1,800 NaturePlus memberships sold
- 25,000 people attended NPCA's signature events
- 8 hectares of tall grass meadow conserved
- 12 research permits for sustainable, safe, and ecological studies within conservation areas



Holiday Trail at Ball's Falls Conservation Area

Area. Other heritage buildings, including the late-Victorian Field Centre house and Victorian-era Ball Family Home at Ball's Falls Conservation Area, also underwent exterior and foundation restoration work.

Ecology staff led significant work on conservation area lands, utilizing nature-based solutions to manage and restore natural spaces to create and maintain healthy ecosystems. This year, the NPCA initiated the development of a tall grass meadow across eight hectares of land at Binbrook CA, resulting in habitat for rare birds and other at-risk species such as the bobolink and Eastern meadowlark. This large project was designed to enhance wildlife habitat and ecological diversity and support the future of conservation across the watershed.

The NPCA is a leader in conservation and environmental education within the Niagara Peninsula watershed. We celebrated the graduation of the first cohort of Ball's Falls Nature School students in June 2021 and delivered a sold-out summer season of Outdoor Adventure Day Camp at Ball's Falls and the St. Johns Valley Centre. In addition, the NPCA offered an outdoor education program through a partnership with the District School Board of Niagara during the summer.

The NPCA safely delivered its two signature community events: the 47th Annual Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival and the 2nd Annual Ball's Falls Holiday Trail. The Fall Festival included online and limited in-person elements, with more than 50 participating virtual vendors, and a sold-out traditional in-person festival with over 80 vendors, live music, and heritage demonstrations. The festive Holiday Trail returned to Ball's Falls with the generous support of the Government of Ontario and Ontario Power Generation, featuring an illuminated walking trail and waterfall, weekend entertainment, and safe, outdoor family fun.

OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHT



NATUREPLUS PASS LOANER PROGRAM

NPCA and Lincoln Public Library encourages everyone to get outside and explore

The NPCA remains committed to ensuring equitable access to greenspace for people and communities across the watershed. The NPCA partnered with municipal libraries, such as the Lincoln Public Library, to provide access to conservation areas by loaning out our NaturePlus passes. Passes can be borrowed for one week and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis at local library branches, often accompanied by nature backpacks complete with binoculars and guidebooks. The libraries loaned out NaturePlus passes hundreds of times throughout the 2021 season, providing families with the opportunity to step into nature.



PARTNER OF CHOICE

The NPCA strives to be the conservation service partner of choice in the public and private sectors, primarily because of our unique ability to create a common ground for conservation-inspired action by leveraging available support and maximizing impact. We expanded our influence by choosing engagement strategies and tactics, identifying target stakeholders, and compelling others to take the desired conservation actions to advance the organization's mission and objectives.

The NPCA increased the use of digital technologies to promote the organization's valuable work, celebrate the achievements of staff, volunteers, and partners, and educate, inform, engage, and consult with stakeholders on matters that fall within NPCA's mandate. We highlighted opportunities and benefits of outdoor recreation and education, and projects completed through the restoration and water-well decommissioning programs. In addition, we kept the community informed on potential flooding and showcased conservation leadership on important days such as International Women's Day, Earth Day, Volunteer

Recognition Week, and World Wetlands Day.

In 2021, the NPCA shared meaningful stories with our communities, including but not limited to:

- **NPCA's 17-year partnership with Friends of One Mile Creek**
- **Birds on the Niagara, a bi-national celebration of winter birds**
- **The launch of the 2021-2031 Strategic Plan**
- **Rehabilitation work at Two Mile Creek Conservation Area**
- **Restoration and water-well decommissioning grant programs**

With the support of our media partners both locally and nationally, the NPCA shared information to the public through 45 news releases and 949 earned media stories, which garnered more than 290 million impressions.

2021-2031 Strategic Plan Engagement

With guidance from the Board of Directors and Public Advisory Committee, NPCA staff led the way to engage, inform, and develop its new Strategic Plan. The NPCA committed to communicating frequently and creating opportunities for meaningful, respectful dialogue with the watershed community, partners, Indigenous groups, and other stakeholders throughout the entire strategic planning process. Due to limitations for traditional in-person engagement activities such as town halls, the NPCA relied on digital tools and a comprehensive approach with a mix of communication methods to inform and engage a wide range of people across the NPCA jurisdiction.

The NPCA strategic plan received its highest-ever project engagement results, with more than 5,700 web page visits and a digital marketing campaign that reached over 1 million people in the Niagara Peninsula watershed. The strategic plan project earned 18 media stories with only two media releases. A public survey

on draft strategic priorities garnered more than 500 responses, which were carefully reviewed and considered for developing the components of the NPCA's draft strategic plan.

Community Outreach

The NPCA collaborated with various municipal partners and local community groups to expand communications with watershed residents and accomplish shared stewardship goals. In 2021, we worked with local municipalities on floodplain mapping projects to better protect people and properties from flooding and communicate the importance of good planning to avoid environmental hazards. To help with stewardship projects of local community organizations, the NPCA assisted with pollinator garden maintenance, tree planting, invasive species removal, and community clean-ups.

DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS REACHED 1 MILLION PEOPLE

The Mickey DiFruscio and Family Legacy Pollinator Program saw two new pollinator gardens installed in the City of St. Catharines and Haldimand County with support from community groups, including the Fitzgerald Neighbours, Links for Greener Learning, and the Friends of LaFortune Park. These pollinator gardens increase local habitat, improve water quality, and allow residents to learn about the importance of native plants and how they can help improve the habitat for pollinators.

The NPCA was a Community Collaborator of the Six Nations Development Corporation, supporting the Six Nations Water Access Program and local community events. Staff also worked with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) to support their Caring Together week and bring partners together to develop a "Fishes of the MCFN traditional territory" handout with fish names translated to Anishnaabemowin.

The NPCA continued to engage the Public Advisory Committee on various projects in 2021, including the NPCA 2021-2031 Strategic Plan, floodplain mapping projects, Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, and the changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*. This multi-stakeholder committee continues to be an essential part of the NPCA's communication with residents and community organizations.

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT



HYSLOP PROPERTY RESTORATION AT BINBROOK CONSERVATION AREA

Partners and volunteers are at the heart of the restoration project

The collaborative efforts of many partners and hundreds of volunteers resulted in the planting of 2,360 native trees and 3,215 native shrubs that will help re-naturalize 16.18 hectares of land at Binbrook Conservation Area. In addition, this restoration project enhances wildlife habitat and ecological diversity. From flagging planting sites, digging holes, laying out trees, preparing lunches, driving tractors of mulch, and planting trees into wet clay for countless hours, every element of this project was equally important. The Glanbrook Conservation Committee was instrumental to the project's success, leading its conservation efforts and contributing more than 538 on-site volunteer hours to restoring the Hyslop property.

BY THE NUMBERS ENGAGEMENT

- 10,600 visits to the Get Involved NPCA online portal
- 342,000 impressions on Twitter
- 83,214 impressions on LinkedIn
- 44,700 engaged users on Facebook
- Top 25 articles reached more than 70 million readers

PARTNER OF CHOICE



Volunteers

The NPCA is very grateful for the many wonderful volunteers who share their time, talents, passion, and dedication with us throughout the year. In 2021, we added more than 100 new volunteers to our growing database of 1,600. While the pandemic presented many challenges, NPCA volunteers and partners never stopped doing the great work they have always done and we are fortunate to count on their support.

In 2021, volunteers were involved in numerous conservation actions, including:

- **Building, installing, and monitoring wildlife boxes at Ball's Falls Conservation Area**
- **Leading day camps, the Nature School, and educational programs**
- **Planting trees and wildflower gardens and maintaining pollinator gardens**
- **Participating in co-op placements, internships, and experiential learning opportunities**
- **Helping with community clean-ups, and monitoring and maintaining hiking trails**
- **Offering heritage demonstrations at various events such as the Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival**

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT



HOWIE MCRAE

Howie has been volunteering with the NPCA since 2016. He has donated more than 1,500 volunteer hours, helping with special projects from carpentry work to trail maintenance. In recent years, Howie built new ticket booths for the Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival and Binbrook Conservation Area, improved the Camp House, updated the Bridal Suite at Ball's Falls, and provided interpretive tours of the Grist Mill. Howie continues his work as a Niagara Bruce Trail volunteer to assess trail systems within NPCA conservation areas and explore areas for improvement for way-finding and user experience.

2021 PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



Our Annual Report allows us to recognize our incredible staff and their meaningful work and formally acknowledge the municipalities, volunteers, donors, and community partners who help make our work possible.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquired Brain Injury Program – Hamilton Health Sciences • Aviva Gives Back • Bert Miller Nature Club • Birds Canada • Brock University • Carolinian Canada • City of Niagara Falls • City of Port Colborne • City of St. Catharines • City of Thorold • City of Welland • Cogeco • Community Cares St. Catharines and Thorold • Community Cares West Niagara • Community Cares West Lincoln • District School Board of Niagara • Ducks Unlimited Canada • Earth Day Hamilton-Burlington • Eco-Defenders • Fitzgerald Neighbours • Forests Ontario • Fort Erie • Fort Erie Conservation Club • Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park • Friends of LaFortune Park • Friends of One Mile Creek | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of Walker's Creek • Ganawageh Urban Homes Inc. • General Motors • Glanbrook Conservation Committee • Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce • Grimsby Benevolent Fund • Haldimand County • Haldimand Stewardship Council • Haldimand Horticultural Society • Hamilton Airport • Hope Centre Welland • Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club • Land Care Niagara • Landscape of Nations • Links for Greener Learning • Mel Swart Conservation Park Committee • Métis Nation of Ontario • Mississaugas of the Credit • Niagara Antique Power Association • Niagara Bruce Trail Club • Niagara Catholic District School Board • Niagara Chapter Native Women • Niagara Coastal (VAST) • Niagara College (NC) • Niagara Falls Nature Club • Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre • Niagara Handweavers and Spinners Guild | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niagara Parks Commission • Niagara Peninsula Aspiring Global Geopark • Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation • Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch • Niagara Region • Niagara Regional Native Centre • Niagara Restoration Council • Niagara Woodcarvers • Park in the City Committee • Pelham Cares • Peninsula Field Naturalists • Port Colborne Garden Club • Port Colborne Conservation Club • Ridgeway and District Garden Club • Rotary International • Scouts Canada • Six Nations of the Grand River • Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation • Society for Ecological Restoration • Stratus Vineyards • TD Friends of the Environment Foundation • Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake • Trout Unlimited Canada, Niagara Chapter • Town of Wainfleet • Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre |
|--|--|---|



NPCA Staff, Centre for Conservation

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The NPCA aims to be a purpose-driven organization that aligns with our strategic priorities, providing a framework of continual improvement to build a culture of excellence.

The NPCA's focus in 2021 was to ensure that any internal changes positively affected our residents, community members, and stakeholders. We have made an ongoing effort to establish internal standards and processes to engage and motivate employees. We invested in various development opportunities to equip staff with the skills and tools to meet the evolving needs of our community, stakeholders, and the watersheds we steward. With increasing demands for NPCA services and resources, we continued to grow and develop talent by adding resources to the areas of watershed planning and ecology. Conservation area staff were poised to deliver exceptional service while adhering to COVID-19 protocols and responding to a significant increase in visitors to our conservation areas.

The Human Resources department provided ongoing updates to our COVID-19 protocols and implemented

a vaccination policy to ensure we continued to operate safely. The NPCA is poised to continue investing in our staff growth and development and working to provide a balanced approach in both the work that we do and the environment in which we do it.

The NPCA Board of Directors had a busy year in 2021 with no less than 34 meetings of the Board and its Committees. This year saw notable governance and administrative changes due to the amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*. A significant highlight is the creation and approval of the 2021-2031 NPCA Strategic Plan, as the Strategic Planning Committee participated in providing oversight and strategic direction. The completion of the Strategic Plan launched the process of organizational alignment to address critical priorities. In addition, the Board retained the services of three Integrity Commissioners (Hamilton, Haldimand, and Niagara) to provide investigative and advisory services and ensure that the Board adhered to the Code of Conduct governing its members.

BY THE NUMBERS

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 68 job openings filled
- 30 youth employment opportunities
- 23 staff development and training opportunities offered
- 0 hours of lost time due to injuries
- Board expenses decreased by 10%

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Joshua Diamond - Water Quality Specialist

Joshua Diamond has worked in the Water Resources Department since 2001. Joshua has an undergraduate degree, a Master of Science in biology from Brock University, and a post-graduate certificate in ecosystem restoration from Niagara College. He is a member of the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists. Joshua coordinates and reports on the NPCA's water quality monitoring program, which monitors both surface water and groundwater resources found within the NPCA watershed.

What's your go-to productivity trick? I like to have Miles Davis's "Kind of Blue" playing as background music when working on data analysis and annual water quality reports.



Rob Kuret - Ball's Falls Superintendent

Rob Kuret started at the NPCA as a summer student in 1985 at Chippawa Creek Conservation Area. He is now the Park Superintendent at Ball's Falls and oversees all aspects of maintenance operations. Over the years, Rob has planted thousands of trees throughout the Niagara Region, worked as an interpretive guide at the former sugar bush, and loves showing kids the wonders of nature and sparking their interest in conservation.

What led you to this career? A love of the outdoors. When I was a summer student at Chippawa and saw a sunset over Dils Lake, I knew this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.



Steve Gillis - Restoration Specialist

Steve Gillis has been with the NPCA since 2005. He is currently a restoration specialist, where he works with both private and public landowners to implement a variety of restoration projects through the Restoration Grant Program. Steve is involved in program development, project management, and fieldwork to ensure project success.

What led you to this career? I had a job ad for a Wildlife Biologist clipped from a newspaper in my room when I was eight. Working in the biology/ecology field started with a love of wild spaces and species. I now maintain and restore these areas so my daughters and future generations can enjoy them.



Tami McGowan - Accounts Coordinator

Tami McGowan is set to retire in 2022 after working with the NPCA for over 30 years. She is currently an Accounts Coordinator responsible for all the daily accounting transactions for the organization. In a nutshell, she processes all of the financial transactions and then balances all of this with the banks at the end of the month. Tami relies on her sense of humour, time management, and organizational skills to get through the volume of her work.

What is next after retirement? I look forward to putting around the house finishing small jobs that I haven't had the time to do. I want to travel and do some volunteer work.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The NPCA is committed to ensuring a financially stable and sustainable organization and continued service delivery through innovative business models, diverse funding sources, and best practices. We inspire leaders at every level of the organization to partake in organizational growth through innovative and transformational decision-making. The NPCA promotes achieving corporate objectives in a socially environmentally responsible way, which has a pivotal role in delivering on the organization's finances.

Having the proper organization, people, and processes is paramount to ensuring that the NPCA manages its capital projects effectively from a finance, risk, and project management perspective. In 2021, the NPCA completed more than three million dollars in capital projects. These projects involved improving, replacing, and maintaining NPCA lands, roads, and buildings. Corporate services staff are in the final phase of an asset management and capital planning process to identify current and future capital needs and develop strategies and projects to address them. In addition, the department has implemented three financial software modules to establish, enhance and automate asset management, budgeting, and financial reporting.

The NPCA received funding from all three levels of government. This funding supported the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP), source water protection initiatives, floodplain mapping, restoration projects, tree plantings, and other projects. The NPCA received 60.6 per cent funding from our municipal partners, 4.9 per cent from different levels of government, and 34.5 per cent from self-generated revenue (e.g., admission and user fees, etc.).

DONATION HIGHLIGHT



NPCA BOARD CHAIR BRENDA JOHNSON

Chair donated honorarium to conservation efforts in the Niagara Peninsula watershed

In her second year serving as Chair of the NPCA Board of Directors, Brenda Johnson donated her honorarium to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (NPCF) and Glanbrook Conservation Committee (GCC). This donation marks Chair Johnson's second honorarium and the fourth time she has contributed financially to conservation efforts while serving on the Board of Directors. Chair Johnson's donation will help fund programs that contribute to environmental research and education, improve water quality, increase greenspaces, and restore wetlands and wildlife habitats. "We must all lead by example and remember that every donation, no matter how big or small, will help improve the watershed we call home," said Chair Johnson.

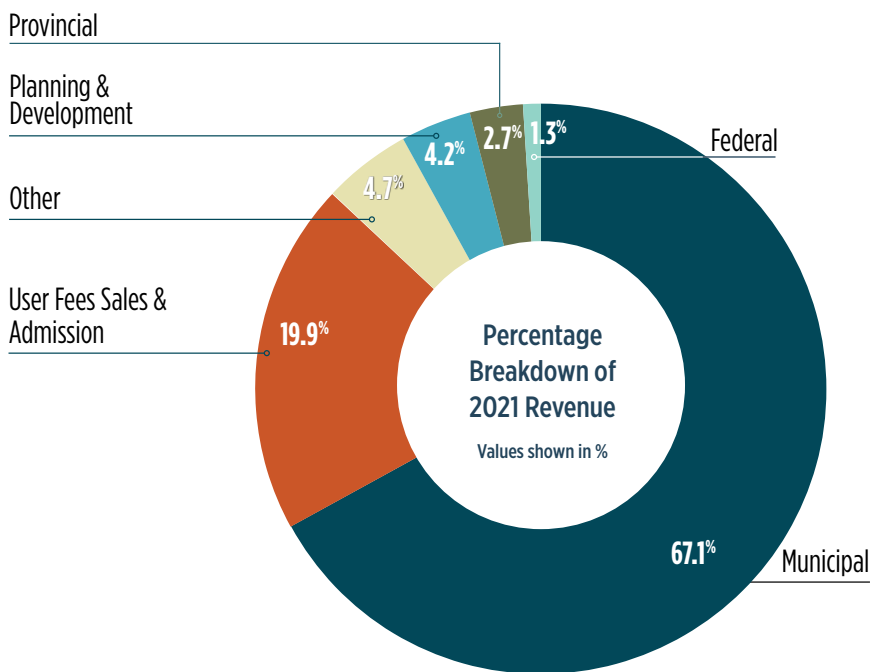
BY THE NUMBERS FINANCE

- 39 procurement initiatives, and 70 purchase orders issued
- Managed 110 staff on the payroll
- 1,972 accounts payable cheques issued
- Completed \$3.7 million in capital projects
- Sales and admissions up 80.3% (\$1.14 million) from 2020
- Launched new financial management and reporting software

NPCA Financials

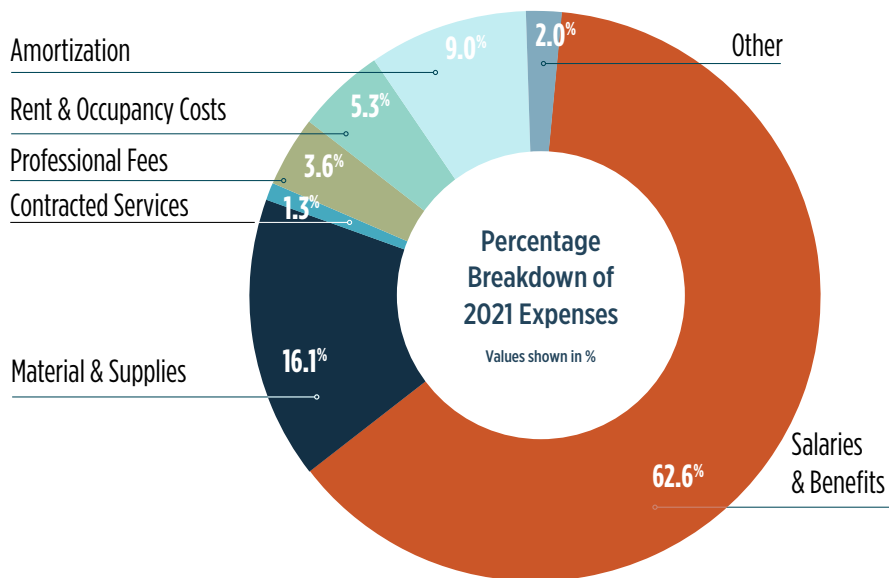
2021 Revenues

NPCA’s operating revenues originated in two streams—government and self-generated. The municipal levy represents 67 per cent of the total funding envelope. NPCA generated revenues, including fee for service activity, user fees and admissions, contributed 19.9 percent or \$2.56 million to gross revenues.



2021 Expenses

Breakdown by expense required to support operations. In keeping with historical trends, labour costs and materials and supplies represent the largest share of operating expenses (78.7 per cent).





NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

In 2021, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation built upon its tremendous success from 2020. We ended the year by partnering with the NPCA to host our first Ball's Fall Holiday Trail. It was truly a magical experience.

We continued to learn that people are craving the outdoors. This yearning blends well with our Foundation's mission to raise funds toward environmental endeavors that include increasing greenspace, improving water quality, restoring habitat, conducting environmental research, and providing education.

This past year brought many opportunities. First, we continued our Director's Donation Challenge, where the Boards of the Foundation, NPCA, Public Advisory Committee, and staff directors contributed to this fundraiser. A special thanks to NPCA Chair Brenda Johnson for generously donating her honorarium. I thank everyone for their participation. Second, the Foundation was excited to launch the Gallery Project Capital Campaign at Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation in 2021. This campaign represents an exciting journey to expand the gallery by offering an educational experience that will provide engaged, tactile, and experiential learning for people of all ages.

In addition, the Foundation continued selling Comfort Maple Pens, accepting donations for benches and boardwalks at conservation areas, and supporting 15 individuals with scholarships as they pursue their careers in environmental education.

We also had some sad farewells this year. We wish our Executive Coordinator, Andrea Crosby-DiCenso, well as she accepted a position with Women's Place of South Niagara. We also thank members Mary Sergenese and Gayle Wood for their years of service with the Foundation.

We thank our many donors, sponsors, and volunteers for their exceptional support during the year and look forward to a bright future.

2021 NPCF Board of Directors

**Tom
Insinna**
Chair

**Robert
Foster**
Vice-Chair

**D. Gayle
Wood**
Secretary-Treasurer

**Donna
Cridland**
Director

**Mike
Balsom**
Director

**Dominic "Mickey"
DiFrusco**
Director



Tom Insinna - Board Chair

DOMINIC "MICKEY" DIFRUSCIO



Mr. Dominic DiFruscio, Mickey, as he was known by his friends and colleagues, had a lifelong love of nature as an avid hunter and fisherman. He began his tenure with the NPCA Board of Directors in 1993 and attended countless community events and public meetings as an ambassador for conservation work.

Mickey always led by example, ready to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty to grow his famous milkweed plants in his home greenhouse every year. He donated these plants, the host plant for the iconic and majestic Monarch Butterfly, to restoration projects undertaken by NPCA throughout the watershed.

In 2017, the NPCA Board of Directors approved the Mickey DiFruscio and Family Legacy Pollinator Project, which aimed to see the installations of two pollinator gardens each year in Mickey's honour. All Mickey DiFruscio

and Family Legacy Pollinator Gardens contain only native species of plants that serve as either host or nectar sources for native pollinator species.

There are currently eight Mickey Gardens in eight different municipalities, with a total of 12,000 wildflowers and 1,600 square metres of gardens created in his name. These were installed with the support of hundreds of volunteers and local community groups, and two more gardens are planned for 2022.



IN MEMORIAM 1927-2022

Long live the Monarch Butterfly







NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

  
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