



Niagara Peninsula
CONSERVATION
nature for all

BUDGET BOOK
2026



Nature for All

Morgan's Point Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

Ontario's 36 conservation authorities operate under the Conservation Authorities Act, administered by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). Originally enacted in 1946, the Act has undergone several amendments to reflect evolving environmental priorities and governance requirements.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) was established in 1959 under the Act. It is mandated to develop and deliver programs and services focused on the conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources within its watershed.

NPCA serves three participating upper-tier municipalities within its jurisdiction: Niagara Region, City of Hamilton, and Haldimand County.

Funding contributions are based on Modified Current Value Assessment (MCVA) data from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and are apportioned according to Ontario Regulation 402/22 under the Conservation Authorities Act. Lower-tier municipalities in Niagara Region work with NPCA through various collaboration initiatives, as appropriate.

NPCA Watershed and Conservation Areas



ABOUT THE NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

NPCA is a community-based natural resource management agency dedicated to protecting, enhancing, and sustaining healthy watersheds. With over 65 years of expertise, NPCA delivers programs and services that focus on flood and hazard management, source water protection, ecosystem restoration, community stewardship, and land management. NPCA manages 43 conservation areas within the Niagara Peninsula watershed, held in public trust for recreation, heritage preservation, conservation, and education.

The NPCA watershed covers 2,424 square kilometres, encompassing the entire Niagara Region, and parts of the City of Hamilton (21%) and Haldimand County (25%). Since time immemorial, this land has been the home of Indigenous peoples - a place for sharing, trading, hunting, gathering, stewardship, and friendship.

The watershed supports a population of approximately 478,966 people and is recognized as a unique natural treasure with distinct cultural, geological, hydrological, and biological aspects not found elsewhere in North America. It is part of the Carolinian life zone, the most biodiverse yet threatened eco-region in Canada, and

includes approximately 30 per cent natural cover, providing critical habitats such as forested woodlots, slough forests, alvars, and coastal wetlands. These habitats support rich biodiversity, including numerous rare plants and animal species.

Uniquely situated between two Great Lakes, with the Niagara River as its shared boundary with the United States, the watershed features notable natural landmarks including the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve, Niagara Falls, the Wainfleet Bog, Ball's Falls, Willoughby Marsh, and the Fonthill Kame.

The micro-climate created by the Niagara Escarpment and region's rich soils support one of Ontario's most productive agricultural areas, including vineyards, tender fruit orchards, livestock farms, and various specialty crops such as greenhouses, flower farms, sod farms, and mushroom operations.

These unique watershed features provide life-sustaining benefits for all and countless opportunities for residents and visitors to discover the area's rich natural and cultural heritage.



NPCA BY THE NUMBERS

- 478,966** Residents
- 242,525** Hectares Watershed Jurisdiction
- 43** Conservation Areas
- 3,167** Hectares NPCA Land Holdings
- 202** Local Waterways
- 2** Great Lakes
- 15** Municipalities (Upper and Lower Tier)
- 5** New Land Acquisitions

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- 355** Permits Issued
- 1,014** Planning Applications Reviewed
- 415** Compliance Incident Reports
- 771** Surface Water Quality Samples Collected
- 52** Groundwater Samples Collected
- 84** Surface Water Monitoring Stations
- 46** Groundwater Wells



CONSERVATION AREAS BY THE NUMBERS

- 160,000** Paid Day-Use Visitors at Four Active Parks
- 12,265** Students Engaged in Outdoor Education
- 25,000+** Guests at Signature Events
- 1,065** NaturePlus Pass Members
- 500,000** Visitors at Passive Conservation Areas



RESTORATION BY THE NUMBERS

- 41,833** Trees Planted
- 5,826** Shrubs Planted
- 22.99** Hectares Reforested
- .73** Hectares of Riparian Habitat Restored
- 5.8** Hectares of Wetland Restored
- 2,020** Wildflowers Planted
- 3** New Pollinator Gardens

<p>1 Healthy and Climate Resilient Watersheds</p> <p><i>Improving nature for the betterment of all life across the watershed.</i></p> 	<p>2 Supporting Sustainable Growth</p> <p><i>Helping to create resilient communities through land-use planning and the use of sustainable technologies to prepare for a changing climate and related environmental challenges.</i></p> 	<p>3 Connecting People to Nature</p> <p><i>Creating equitable access to greenspace for the health and well-being of people.</i></p> 	<p>4 Partner of Choice</p> <p><i>Strengthening our relationships with stakeholders, partners, the watershed community, and Indigenous peoples.</i></p> 	<p>5 Organizational Excellence</p> <p><i>Striving for excellence through high service delivery standards and accountability to the environment and its people.</i></p> 	<p>6 Financial Sustainability</p> <p><i>Ensuring a financially stable and sustainable organization and continued service-delivery through innovative business models, diverse funding sources, and best practices.</i></p> 
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STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2020, the NPCA Board of Directors approved the development of a staff-led process to create a new strategic plan that would guide NPCA for the next ten years while reflecting its mandate as per the Conservation Authorities Act and fulfilling its significant role within the community.

The plan charts the course for future actions and collective outcomes through six overarching strategic priorities, twenty-one specific goals, and measurable actions. The strategic priorities guide our efforts toward a vision of the Niagara Peninsula watershed with robust nature, thriving agriculture, and resilient urban areas vital to the health and well-being of our residents.

The strategic plan lays the groundwork for guiding strategies for further 10-year direction on programs and services:

- [Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy](#)
- [Climate Action Plan - Decarbonization Roadmap](#)
- [Conservation Area Strategy](#)
- [Stewardship Outreach, Education Strategy, and Cultural Heritage Strategy](#) *
- [Government Relations Strategy](#) *
- [Marketing and Ecotourism Strategy](#) *
- [Talent Management Strategy](#) *
- [Digital Transformation Strategy](#) *

The NPCA is committed to undertaking specific goals and actions with its partners and communities to achieve a thriving environment that sustains life for future generations.

* under development



KEY NPCA SERVICES AREAS

Natural Hazard Management

Protecting people and properties from flood, erosion, and other natural hazards.

Watershed Resource Management and Climate Change

Understanding the current conditions, cumulative impacts, and risks to watersheds. Strategies and measures to protect, enhance, and restore watersheds toward creating healthy and climate-resilient watersheds.

Other Watershed-Related Programs

Drinking Water Source Protection, Niagara Remedial Action Plan (RAP), and other projects/programs funded through external funding sources that benefit partners and the watershed.

Conservation Authority Lands and Conservation Areas

Management of over 3,000 hectares of land, including 43 conservation areas essential to watershed management, environmental protection, cultural heritage, and recreation.

Enabling Services

Support to NPCA programs, the Board of Directors, member municipalities, and the public to enable NPCA to operate in an accountable, transparent, efficient, and effective manner.



Twelve Mile Creek Restoration

BUDGETING UNDER THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT

NPCA's 2026 Budgets and Municipal Levies have been developed in accordance with the existing levy guidelines of the Conservation Authorities Act. Conservation Authorities Act regulations define the mandatory programs and services, set requirements for municipal service level agreements, and outline processes for levy and budget developments.

The NPCA is required to prepare annual budgets as part of its fiscal accountability and financial responsibilities. The budget also supports the annual external audit process, as required under Section 38 of the Conservation Authorities Act.

O. Reg 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services - establishes the required components of Conservation Authority programs and services.

O. Reg 687/21: Transition Plans and Agreements for Programs and Services Under Section 21.1.2 of the Act - outlines the need for MOUs with municipalities.

O. Reg 401/22: Determination of Amounts Under Subsection 27.2 (2) of the Act - establishes the criteria for apportionment for Category 1 and Category 2 operating and capital expenses.

O. Reg 402/22: Budget and Apportionment - prescribes the budget development process, meeting timelines, and approval requirements.

Under the Conservation Authorities Act, NPCA's programs and services are classified into three categories. These categories define what NPCA delivers and how each program can be funded.

Category 1 – Mandatory

Programs and services required by the Province under Ontario Regulation 687/21 to protect people, property, and the environment from natural hazards.

Examples of NPCA Programs & Services

- Flood forecasting and warning
- Natural hazard mapping, data collection, & relevant studies
- Enabling services
- Drought/low water response
- Water and erosion control infrastructure
- Public awareness and outreach

Funding Mechanism

Primarily municipal levy
- User fees and/or grants

Category 2 – Municipal

Programs and services provided at the request of a municipality, under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or service agreement.

Examples of NPCA Programs & Services

- Trees for All
- Natural Asset Management

Funding Mechanism

Municipal levy, user fees, and/or grants

Category 3 – Other

Programs and services that NPCA's Board of Directors deems advisable to further the purpose of the Conservation Authorities Act.

Examples of NPCA Programs & Services

- Restoration, Community Engagement and Stewardship
- Integrated Watershed Planning
- Grant Funded Initiatives
- Active Recreation
- Educational Programming

Funding Mechanism

Combination of cost-apportioned levy through MOU's, grants, and/or user fees.



51st Annual Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival



NPCA BUDGET, FUNDING BREAKDOWN & LEVY PROCESS

The NPCA's expenditures focus on reducing flood damage, improving water quality, maintaining a reliable water supply, protecting natural areas and biodiversity, providing environmental education, operating conservation areas and trails, and managing sensitive environmental lands. NPCA also maintains data assets that support these activities and are available for public use, helping to inform planning and community awareness.

Appendix 1 provides a full description of each of the 33 individual programs and services delivered by the NPCA.



The NPCA has three main sources of revenue:

MUNICIPAL LEVY

Apportioned among 3 municipalities based on Modified Current Value Assessment statistics. Represents 52.3 per cent of the total conservation authority budget.

There are three types of levies:

- **Operating Levy:** Supports day-to-day program and service delivery.
- **Capital & Special Projects Levy:** Supports large-scale or infrastructure and asset renewal projects.
- **Land Securement Levy:** Supports strategic land acquisition and leveraging external funding to conserve environmentally significant lands.

AUTHORITY-GENERATED FUNDS

\$5.725M of 2026 revenues are derived from fees for services and other sources, such as user fees, educational programs, and planning and permit fees.

OTHER REVENUES AND GRANT FUNDING

Make up the balance, equating to \$2.01M.



Rockway Conservation Area

NPCA 2026 BUDGET

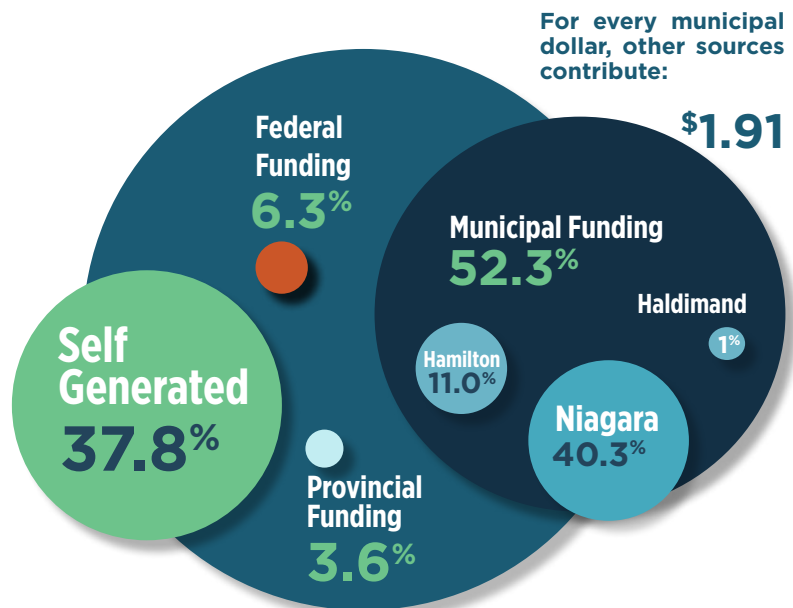
In the development of the 2026 budgets, the following issues were considered:

- **Municipal funding guidelines when available**
- **Cost of living adjustments (COLA) and grid step increases**
- **Inflation (Consumer price index – CPI)**
- **Impact from tariffs**
- **Multi-year contractual obligations**
- **Operating, capital and program pressures**
- **Board approved Fee Policy and full cost accounting**
- **Focus on internal efficiencies**
- **General economic outlook**
- **Impacts on service delivery**
- **Asset management, state of good repair for asset base**
- **User-Pay Principle**

2026 Draft Operating Budgets

NPCA’s overall 2026 operating budget of \$16.238M is supported by \$8.5M municipal levy, \$5.725M in authority-generated revenue, and \$2.013M in grant funding. Overall, the operating volume in this zero-based budget is largely static against 2025, increasing marginally by 0.8% (\$142K).

The 2026 operating budget is effectively a maintenance budget to address critical priorities and achieve required service levels, while keeping within municipal guidelines in a year of fiscal restraint.



SOURCES OF OPERATING REVENUE

	2026 Budget	2025 Budget	Variance
Municipal Funding	8,499,805	7,845,836	653,969
Provincial Funding	577,845	537,574	40,271
Federal Funding	1,021,985	1,562,960	-540,975
Program Revenue	4,346,037	4,693,831	-347,794
Other	1,792,172	1,455,756	336,416
Total - Operating Revenues	16,237,844	16,095,957	141,887

OPERATING EXPENSES

	2026 Budget	2025 Budget	Variance
Salaries and benefits, Employee Related	11,629,798	10,595,982	1,033,816
Governance	34,354	32,764	1,590
Professional Fees, Contractor Services	864,689	1,581,351	-716,662
Materials & Supplies Vehicles & Equipment	807,716	1,082,803	-275,087
Occupancy Costs	790,830	838,989	-48,159
Park Maintenance	691,493	665,734	25,759
Information Management/GIS	708,112	549,111	159,001
Marketing, Advertising, Printing, Signs	118,964	60,158	58,806
Special Events (Festival)	197,212	215,176	-17,964
Flood Forecasting & Water Quality	159,700	155,950	3,750
Miscellaneous	234,976	317,939	-82,963
Total - Operating Expenses	16,237,844	16,095,957	141,887

2026 MUNICIPAL SPECIAL LEVY

The 2026 Draft Capital and Special Projects Budget includes critical conservation area infrastructure projects to meet service level needs, health and safety, and state of good repair priorities. The special levy also includes funding for critical natural hazard management projects, such as floodplain and shoreline hazard mapping.

Since 2019, NPCA has successfully acquired 13 parcels adding approximately 226 ha to our public land holdings. Approximately 73 ha were secured in Niagara Region, 45 ha in the City of Hamilton and 108 ha in Haldimand County. Between 2019-2025, NPCA has successfully leveraged \$4.6M of external funding to cover 52 per cent of the overall acquisition costs. The success of NPCA's land securement program is due to the continued financial support from the participating municipalities through contributions to the land securement reserves, and private donors that enable staff to leverage external funding opportunities.

Capital & Special Projects	2026 Budget	2025 Budget
Facilities	940,999	2,028,787
Equipment	342,764	314,598
Infrastructure (excluding facilities)	241,511	239,323
Data and Technology Assets	319,848	212,016
Land Management Plans	0	83,062
Health and Safety	53,247	51,915
Sub Total	1,898,369	2,929,701

VARIANCE -1,031,332

Investing in Conservation Areas and Enhancing Visitor Experience

The NPCA continues to invest in key infrastructure and visitor amenities across its conservation areas to improve safety, accessibility, and enjoyment for all who visit.

Campground Electrical – Phase 1

Upgrading essential electrical infrastructure, including panels, breakers, pedestals, and meters, to modern standards. This first phase sets out the foundation for future campground expansion, supporting greater capacity, reduced maintenance costs, and improved reliability for campers.

Signage – Phase 1

Replacing outdated signage with refreshed, branded designs across conservation areas. New entrance, wayfinding, and interpretive signage will make navigation easier, enrich the visitor experience, and promote environmental education and stewardship.

Flood and Natural Hazard Data Assets

Another key focus area for NPCA is advancing data assets to strengthen natural hazard and floodplain mapping. By modernizing datasets, improving digital mapping accuracy, and integrating climate and watershed data, NPCA is enhancing its ability to assess risks, inform planning decisions, and support resilient communities. These investments ensure that local partners and residents have access to reliable, science-based information for managing natural hazards.

- Four Mile Creek Floodplain Mapping Update – Phase
- Lake Erie Shoreline Natural Hazard Mapping Update – Phase 1



Kala Property donated to the NPCA

LAND SECUREMENT

In 2025, NPCA completed five land acquisitions, adding 126 hectares of conservation land to its land holdings, representing 70 per cent of NPCA’s 10-year land acquisition goal. In just two years, NPCA surpassed the 180-hectare target outlined in its Land Securement Strategy. While this milestone marks significant progress, staff continue to pursue strategic opportunities to enhance conservation areas, protect ecologically significant lands, and connect people to nature.

Recognizing fiscal restraints across municipalities, the 2026 budget recommends scaling back the Land Securement Special Levy to reflect earlier commitments from Niagara Region (2023) and City of Hamilton (2024), while maintaining Haldimand County’s contribution to leverage external funding opportunities.

Land Securement	2026 Budget	2025 Budget
Niagara	250,000	269,750
Hamilton	148,000	159,734
Haldimand	14,800	14,299
Total	412,800	443,783

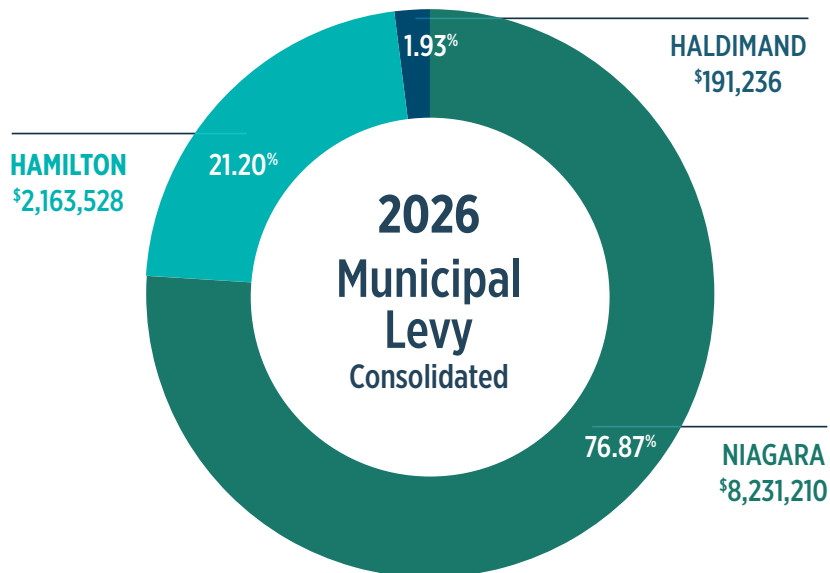
VARIANCE -30,983



Jordan Harbor Conservation Area

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

The levy apportionment ratios are calculated from assessment data provided by MPAC, and further revised based on the Conservation Authority Levies Regulation. Consolidated municipal funding for 2026 is \$10,585,974 (including land securement). Levy apportionment based on Modified Current Value Assessment is:



LEVY SUMMARY 2026

NIAGARA

	2026	2025	Variance	
			Amount	%
General Levy	6,543,932	6,034,060	509,872	8.45%
Special Levy - Capital	1,437,278	1,655,273	-217,995	-13.17%
Special Levy - Land Securement	250,000	269,750	-19,750	-7.32%
TOTAL	8,231,210	7,959,083	272,127	3.42%

HAMILTON

HAMILTON	2026	2025	Variance	
			Amount	%
General Levy	1,792,506	1,661,065	131,441	7.91%
Special Levy - Capital	223,022	254,503	-31,481	-12.37%
Special Levy - Land Securement	148,000	159,734	-11,734	-7.35%
TOTAL	2,163,528	2,075,302	88,226	4.25%

HALDIMAND

	2026	2025	Variance	
			Amount	%
General Levy	163,367	150,711	12,656	8.40%
Special Levy - Capital	13,069	19,924	-6,855	-34.41%
Special Levy - Land Securement	14,800	14,299	501	3.50%
TOTAL	191,236	184,934	6,302	3.41%

CONSOLIDATED

	2026	2025	Variance	
			Amount	%
General Levy	8,499,805	7,845,836	653,969	8.34%
Special Levy - Capital	1,673,369	1,929,700	-256,331	-13.28%
Special Levy - Land Securement	412,800	443,783	-30,983	-6.98%
TOTAL	10,585,974	10,219,319	366,655	3.59%

2026 UNFUNDED PRIORITIES (Outside 2026 Proposed Municipal Levy)

In the last several years, NPCA's ability to undertake both operational special projects and capital investments has been significantly constrained by limited financial resources. Several factors have contributed to this situation:

Infrastructure & Staffing Needs: NPCA must invest in infrastructure upgrades and staffing to continue serving our communities safely and efficiently. An Asset Management Plan and Financing Strategy are currently underway to further define the Asset State-of-Good-Repair gap and associated funding requirements.

Planning & Growth Pressures: Anticipated growth and development within NPCA's jurisdiction will require proactive investment in science and data to support informed decision-making. The completion of NPCA's

10-year Strategic Plan has identified critical gaps and priorities, including climate vulnerability and risk mitigation, that must be addressed.

Conservation Authorities Act Changes: Conservation Authorities Act amendments and associated regulations requires several priorities to be completed; this includes a significant number of investments in updating conservation areas management plans, shoreline and coastal resilience technical updates and flood and erosion hazard mitigation projects.

An assessment of current unfunded pressures was prioritized by staff; these initiatives totaling \$17.379M, classified in seven categories are summarized below.

Classification	Niagara	Hamilton	Haldimand	External	TOTAL
Integrated Watershed Strategies	2,806,077	608,469	55,454	-	3,470,000
Natural Hazard Management	400,000	-	-	-	400,000
Conservation Authority Act Requirements	96,084	26,501	2,415	-	125,000
Corporate Services and Asset Management	1,201,159	331,297	30,194	-	1,562,650
Corporate Administration	38,433	10,601	966	-	50,000
Watershed Planning & Permits	70,198	19,362	1,765	-	91,325
State of Good Repair / Health and Safety	9,598,698	1,810,197	71,105	200,000	11,680,000
	14,210,649	2,806,427	161,899	200,000	17,378,975

These unfunded priorities are not included in the 2026 budget. To address these gaps, NPCA will employ a range of strategies, including exploring external funding sources, collaborating with stakeholders, and engaging with all levels of governments to pursue opportunities beyond the existing budget framework.

Appendix

SERVICE AREA PROFILES

Conservation Areas

The NPCA manages more than 3,000 hectares, including 43 conservation areas that are essential to watershed management, environmental protection, cultural heritage, and provide recreation. Our focus is on improving visitor experiences while supporting environmental stewardship.

Programs & Services

- Recreation, camping, and facility rentals (including weddings and events)
- Nature-based education, day camps, and school programs
- Heritage and cultural programs
- Conservation area management, land care, and enforcement

Enabling Services

Enabling services provide the essential support that allows NPCA to operate efficiently, transparently, and effectively, ensuring programs and services are delivered to municipalities and the public with accountability and impact. A key focus is on leveraging IT and digital transformation to improve workflows, data-driven decision making, and public-facing services.

Core Services:

- Corporate Services & Financial Management - Finance, accounting, procurement, capital budgeting, asset management, and reporting.
- People & Performance - Talent acquisition, training, health and safety, and employee engagement.
- Information & Technology - IT, GIS, digital services, and technology-driven process improvements.
- Business Planning, Public Relations, Communications and Marketing- Brand management, public relations, and community and stakeholder engagement.
- Corporate support, assets and operations - Facilities, vehicles, equipment, and capital projects.
- Corporate Administration & Governance - Board and committee support, policy development, procurement, and risk management.
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Watershed Planning & Development

The NPCA delivers programs and services that protect people, properties, and communities from flooding, erosion, and other natural hazards. Natural hazards include dynamic beach hazard, erosion hazard, flooding hazard, hazardous lands, hazardous sites and low water or drought conditions.

By reducing public risk and supporting resilient communities, these programs contribute to Ontario's long-term prosperity, environmental health and social well-being.

Programs & Services

- Drinking Source Water Protection
- Flood and Erosion Management
- Flood Risk Management
- Water Resources Engineering
- Shoreline Hazard Management
- Environmental Planning and Policy
- Planning, Permitting, and Section 28 Compliance
- Planning Ecology

Watershed Resource Management & Climate Change

The NPCA provides programs and services grounded in science and evidence-based research to understand watershed conditions, assess cumulative impacts, and identify environmental risks. This knowledge informs strategies and actions that protect, restore, and enhance watershed health, supporting resilient ecosystems and communities in the face of climate change.

Programs and Services:

- Integrated Watershed Monitoring and Reporting
- Community Engagement and Ecological Restoration
- Technical Studies to inform Regulatory Mapping Updates
- Natural Asset Management
- Conservation Areas Land Management Planning
- Special Projects (e.g., groundwater monitoring)
- Climate Change Resilience & Coastal Community Planning
- Watershed and Sub-watershed Resource Planning
- Other Watershed Related Programs (e.g., Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, Trees for All)

