

2018–2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

# PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY





# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



As Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) Board of Directors, I am honoured to share our 2018–2021 Strategic Plan. The identified Areas of Focus are the result of the most ambitious and robust public consultation process the NPCA has ever undertaken. After hosting four Town Halls and three stakeholder-specific meetings, attending five events throughout our watershed, engaging our NPCA Advisory Committee, and using numerous communication platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email, surveys, YouTube, telephone, Bang the Table, Mentimeter and face-to-face conversations, we've been able to reach approximately 76,300 individuals that all care passionately about the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

Long before we embarked on our Strategic Planning process, the NPCA Board of Directors made a commitment to engage the residents of our watershed in a different way, and to transition from a talking organization to a listening organization. We committed to evolving a leading and learning organization that could adapt, and that would strive towards excellence by implementing new technologies. We also committed to building new partnerships that would support a healthy watershed, all while simultaneously conserving and enhancing our 41 Conservation Areas. Witnessing first-hand partnerships evolve and leadership emerge continues to reaffirm our belief that efforts in conservation are a shared responsibility. No one person or organization can do it alone, but together we can ensure the quality of our watershed for generations to come.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to meet with over 165 groups, partners, and communities throughout the Niagara region, the City of Hamilton, and Haldimand County. Listening to feedback on how the NPCA can play a positive role in their respective sectors has been critical in moving the NPCA forward. Balancing the needs of all those sectors that are impacted by the work we do has at times been challenging, and has not been without conflict. However, as long as we continue to respectfully and conscientiously work together with our partners, and we do so exclusively within the language of the Conservation Authorities Act, we can feel confident we are moving in the right direction.

To the many voices we've now heard from, your comments and ideas will now help shape our focus, our direction, and our future. Thank you for your efforts, your continued support, and for embracing our shared responsibility of ensuring the health and resiliency of our magnificent watershed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

Sandy Annunziata  
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Board Chair

# THE NPCA STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

In 2012, the NPCA Board of Directors began the process of creating its first-ever Strategic Plan.

The 2014–2017 Strategic Planning process was also the first to consult with the public, stakeholders, landowners, municipal partners and park users.

The 2014–2017 Strategic Plan envisioned a fundamental change to how the NPCA and its staff conducted its business, interacted with the public, managed its finances and organized itself.

## STAGE 1

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### **Strategic Plan Process Begins**

(January–March 2018)

- Review previous Strategic Plan outcomes
- Board of Directors defines organizational priorities (Areas of Focus)
- Sub-committee refines draft Areas of Focus package and mission statement
- Board of Directors endorses draft Areas of Focus package and mission for public feedback

## STAGE 2

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### **Public Consultation Period**

(April–May 2018)

- NPCA reaches over 76,300 people to collect feedback on the draft Areas of Focus
  - Public input closed May 11, 2018
  - Public feedback is provided to the sub-committee, and the Board Of Directors
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After the successful implementation of the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, the NPCA Board of Directors began the process anew in the Spring of 2017 for the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

The process began with a Board-driven workshop to identify Areas of Focus that, in consultation with staff, would allow the NPCA to focus on its core mandate, deliver professional services, and enhance the visitor experience to its facilities.

After seven Areas of Focus were identified by the Board of Directors, the organization undertook the largest public consultation process in its history, with Town Hall meetings, online engagement, social media campaigns, and targeted stakeholder meetings.

The consultation confirmed that the NPCA was on the right track with its Areas of Focus, and helped refine the Plan content. This Strategic Planning 2018–2021 document is the result.

## STAGE 3

### **Strategic Plan Process**

( May–June 2018)

- Board of Directors reviews public consultation feedback
- Sub-committee refines final Areas of Focus and implementation methods based on public consultation findings
- Sub-committee presents Board Of Directors with the proposed final Areas of Focus

## STAGE 4

### **NPCA Board of Directors review and endorse the Areas of Focus and the Strategic Plan 2018–2021**

(June 2018)





# NPCA MANDATE AND MISSION

## **NPCA Mandate**

### **As prescribed by the Conservation Authorities Act:**

To establish and undertake programs and services, on a watershed basis, to further the conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources; and

### **As prescribed by Provincial Regulations:**

To protect people and property by regulating, and risk-mitigating development through reviewing and commenting on applications, issuing permits, and ensuring policy compliance within the appropriate legislative and regulatory framework.

## **Mission**

To implement our Conservation Authorities Act mandate by remaining a responsive, innovative, accountable and financially sustainable organization.

Our success in meeting our mission is dependent upon working in collaboration with our partners in conservation. Ensuring the future viability of the Niagara Peninsula watershed is a shared responsibility.

# NPCA MANDATE STATEMENT

## **Niagara Peninsula Watershed**

A watershed is a geologically defined geographic area of land that catches rain and snow, and drains or seeps into a marsh, stream, river, lake or groundwater.

The Niagara Peninsula watershed includes lands that are predominantly drained by the Welland River into the Niagara River, as well as those lands drained by creeks and streams into Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

Our complex watershed covers the Niagara region and parts of Hamilton and Haldimand. It is made up of homes, farms, cottages, forests, small towns, and large cities. Everyone shares the responsibility to conserve within the watershed.

What does our mandate mean, and how do we implement programs and services to execute our mission?

## **Conservation**

NPCA practices conservation on all 41 of its Conservation Areas. NPCA manages and maintains its properties in order to provide diverse recreational and educational opportunities with the purpose of keeping the properties healthy for future generations.

*Examples of our conservation programming include:  
Grooming our properties to encourage healthy ecosystems,  
planting native plants and trees to improve our water  
quality and overall land health, offering camp grounds and  
educational-based day camps.*

## Restoration

NPCA improves or redevelops natural landscapes and habitats at its Conservation Areas so that they remain safe for humans, wildlife, and plant communities. Ecological destruction is usually the consequence of pollution, deforestation, salination or natural disasters.

*Examples of our restoration projects include: Designing agricultural buffers, enhancing slope stability, and the planting of native trees and plants.*

## Development

NPCA works within the framework that the Provincial government sets to provide comment on the suitability of proposed changes or improvements to existing resources, and may recommend conditions based on Ontario Regulation 155/06: Development, Interference with Wetlands, and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses.

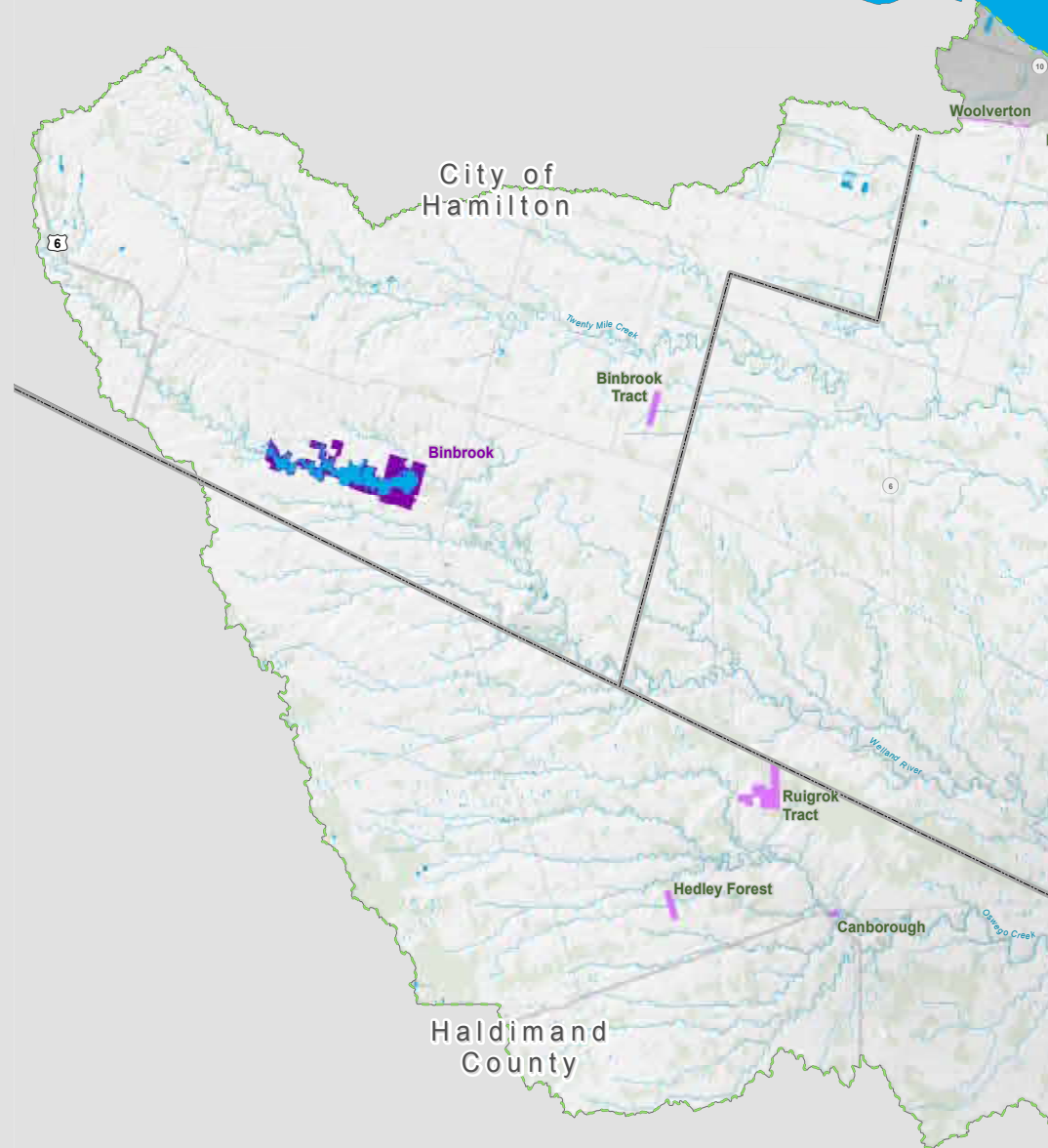
*Examples of projects on which NPCA provides comments, recommendations or permits include: New dwellings and alterations to existing dwellings, pathway, and construction compliance when work takes place on properties that contain, for examples, a shoreline.*

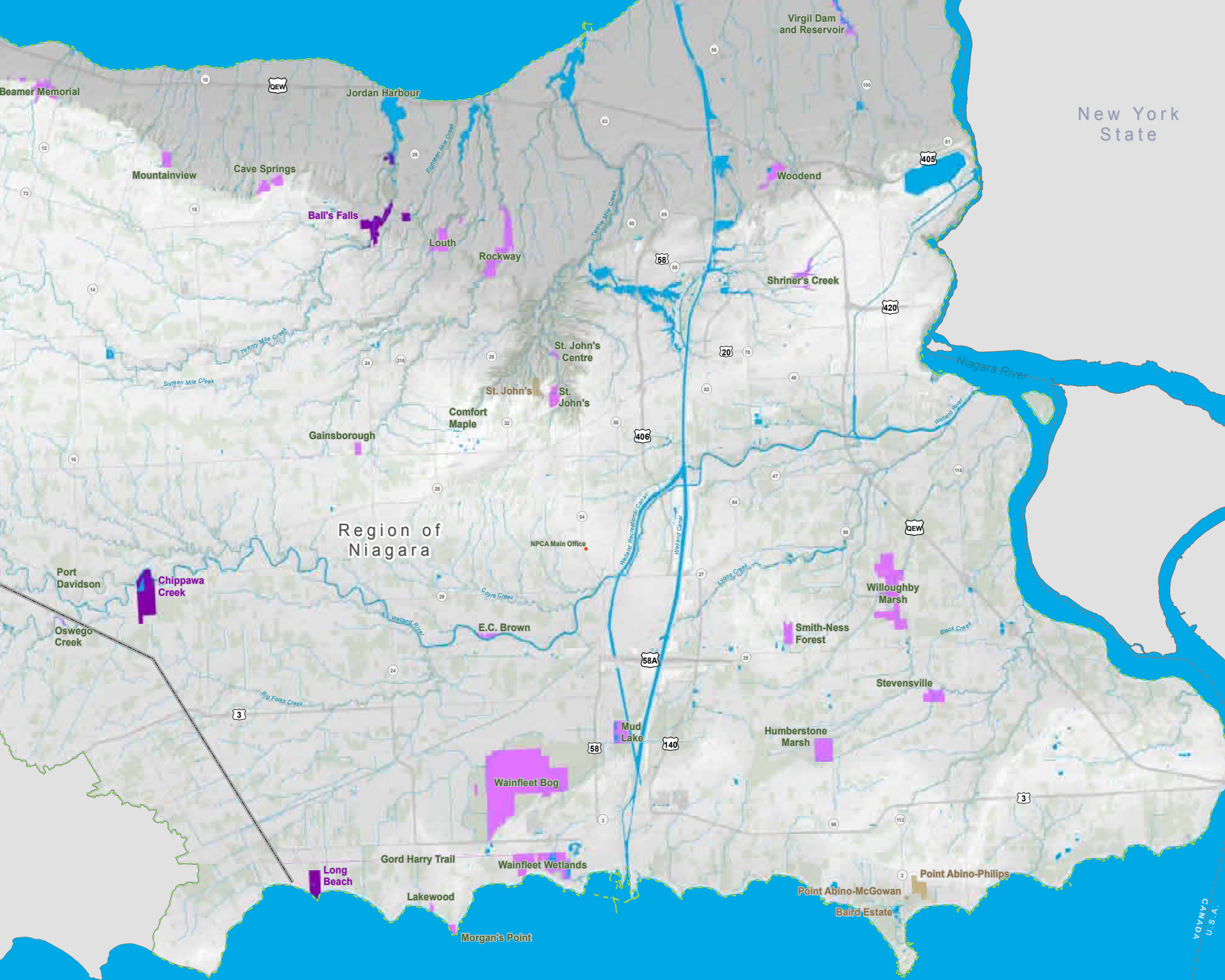
## Management of Natural Resources

Natural resource management deals with managing the way in which people and natural landscapes interact. It connects land use planning, water management, biodiversity, conservation, and the future sustainability of industries like agriculture. NPCA relies on a scientific and technical understanding of resources and ecology, and the life-supporting capacity of those resources.

*Examples of how NPCA manages natural resources include: hunting permits, building permits, and floodplain mapping.*

# NPCA WATERSHED MAP





New York  
State

Region of  
Niagara

YOMYD  
U.S.A.

## AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS



Evidence-Based Watershed  
Resource Management



Rebuild the Canopy  
Plant 1 Million Trees & 3 Million Native Plants



Forging Corridors & Creating Parks  
100-Year Land Plan for the Watershed



Sustainable Asset Management & Meeting  
Public Demand for Park Services





Photo: Binbrook Conservation Area



## EVIDENCE-BASED WATERSHED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### **Using Science & Data-Driven Problem Solving to:**

- Support the protection and rehabilitation of aquatic habitats
- Support initiatives that lead to improved water quality
- Support continued Source Water Protection responsibilities

### **NPCA WILL:**

- Develop a detailed long-term Water Resource Management Plan with clear goals, objectives, resources, measurables, and timelines.
- Develop, resource, and implement a ten year technology and data integration strategy that will optimize the use of technology, and better serve the various stakeholders of the Niagara Peninsula watershed.
- Build community coalitions on specific watercourses, with the NPCA as the organizing lead and coordinator, with a focus on water quality improvement solutions.
  - Establish 100 new formal partnerships.
  - Grow our volunteer list from 700 to 3,500+, and establish an Annual Watershed Awards program to recognize the most significant efforts.
  - Work in collaboration with other government bodies to develop science-based solutions to help mitigate climate change impacts, and report progress to the Board of Directors on an annual basis.





Photo: Effingham Water Monitoring Station





Photo: Long Beach Conservation Area





## REBUILD THE CANOPY PLANT 1 MILLION TREES & 3 MILLION NATIVE PLANTS

### **Planting Trees and Native Plants allows us to:**

- Achieve enhanced watershed restoration impacts
- Mitigate climate change impacts through natural means

### **NPCA WILL:**

- Develop a detailed operational “Rebuild the Canopy” plan that recognizes efforts to enhance the natural features of the watershed as a shared responsibility.
- The operational plan will envision NPCA staff working in consultation with subject matter experts, Trees Co-op partners, and a community coalition.
- The operational plan will be a multi-term project expected to last beyond the next two terms of the NPCA Board of Directors, and span across the three watershed municipal councils.
- The operational plan will address project governance, staff and volunteer resources, funding sources, science-based criteria, and define roles of key stakeholders.
- The operational plan will include targets and methods to measure success.



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## FORGING CORRIDORS & CREATING PARKS 100-YEAR LAND PLAN FOR THE WATERSHED

### **Forging Corridors and Creating Parks allows us to:**

- Conserve, restore and protect more land in the watershed
- Increase the amount of lands that are conserved in trust for future generations
- Expand recreational opportunities

### **NPCA WILL:**

- Develop a detailed 100-year, financially sustainable land acquisition plan, in consultation and in partnership with stakeholders.
- Ensure the land acquisition policy is suitable to meet the needs and initiatives of the NPCA and is implemented in consultation with community partners and subject matter experts.
- Design a network of 3-4 Central Parks (between 150 and 350 hectares each).
  - The network will connect across the watershed.
  - The network will support and be supported by the “Rebuild the Canopy” plan.
  - The network will be designed in partnership with local and regional municipalities, public and private landowners, as well as with existing land trusts and conservancies.
  - The network will also serve as wildlife migration corridors by enhancing and restoring wildlife habitats.





Photo: Ball's Falls Conservation Area





Photo: Chippawa Creek Conservation Area





## SUSTAINABLE ASSET MANAGEMENT & MEETING PUBLIC DEMAND FOR PARK SERVICES

### Investing in Our Properties allows us to:

- Ensure our services meet the needs of our visitors
- Improve our Conservation Areas experience
- Create self-sufficient and sustainable funding models

### NPCA WILL:

- Execute and implement Master Plan-mandated park improvements, **incorporating the Strategic Asset Management Plan** and the 10-year capital budget.
  - Deliver required lifecycle-driven maintenance/capital re-investments for existing NPCA parks/facilities/campsites.
  - Design and execute a financial strategy to leverage existing debt financing capacity and reduce the current lifecycle funding deficit.
- Enhance the recreational experience at NPCA's flagship properties by:
  - Finding new camping and recreational opportunities at existing NPCA park facilities.
  - Adding additional camping spaces at existing campgrounds, specifically: 50 additional camping spaces at Chippawa Creek Conservation Area and 50 additional camping spaces at Long Beach Conservation Area.
  - Developing a time frame and targets for each phase of creating the new campsites.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS

- primary focus
- in progress
- forthcoming
- complete

AREA OF FOCUS	2018				2019				2020				2021			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Evidence-Based Watershed Resource Management																
Rebuild the Canopy Plant 1 Million Trees & 3 Million Native Plants																
Forging Corridors & Creating Parks 100-Year Land Plan for the Watershed																
Sustainable Asset Management & Meeting Public Demand for Park Services																



#DISCOVER**NPCA**







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