

NPCA's Watershed Restoration Program Guidelines

Section 1- Program Overview

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) is taking action to restore and improve water quality, wildlife habitat, and forest cover across the Niagara Peninsula watershed through several restoration focused programs and services including tree planting, wetland restoration, riparian buffer and creek restoration, natural shoreline enhancement, and agricultural stewardship.

The NPCA's Watershed Restoration Program has two overarching goals to help align with the vision and goals of the NPCA's 10-year Strategic Plan and guide its initiatives, as follows:

- ***Restore and enhance natural habitat, biodiversity, water resources, and forest cover towards a healthy and climate resilient watershed; and***
- ***Engage and enable communities in improving health and resilience of the watershed.***

These guidelines provide information on funding opportunities, eligibility requirements, and the project evaluation process. If you have questions, contact the NPCA for further information at 905-788-3135 or by email at restoration@npca.ca.

Section 2. Overall Project Guidelines

To qualify for funding the following general guidelines must be met, please see individual funding programs for specific requirements:

1. Projects must be within the NPCA watershed (see Figure 1).
2. Projects must demonstrate improvement to local water quality, habitat, and/or forest cover.
3. Projects that will result in the most significant benefits to water quality and habitat will be prioritized for funding.
4. Except where otherwise stated, the NPCA offers cost share programs, and the landowner must contribute financially to the project.
5. Eligible landowners must enter into a Conservation Agreement with the NPCA prior to any work taking place; an additional agreement with partner agencies may be required.
6. The NPCA must review and approve all projects before project commencement.
7. Projects that are ordered or are for compensation are not eligible for funding.

8. Project plant material (trees, shrubs, wildflowers) shall be native to Southern Ontario; non-native or invasive species are not eligible for funding.

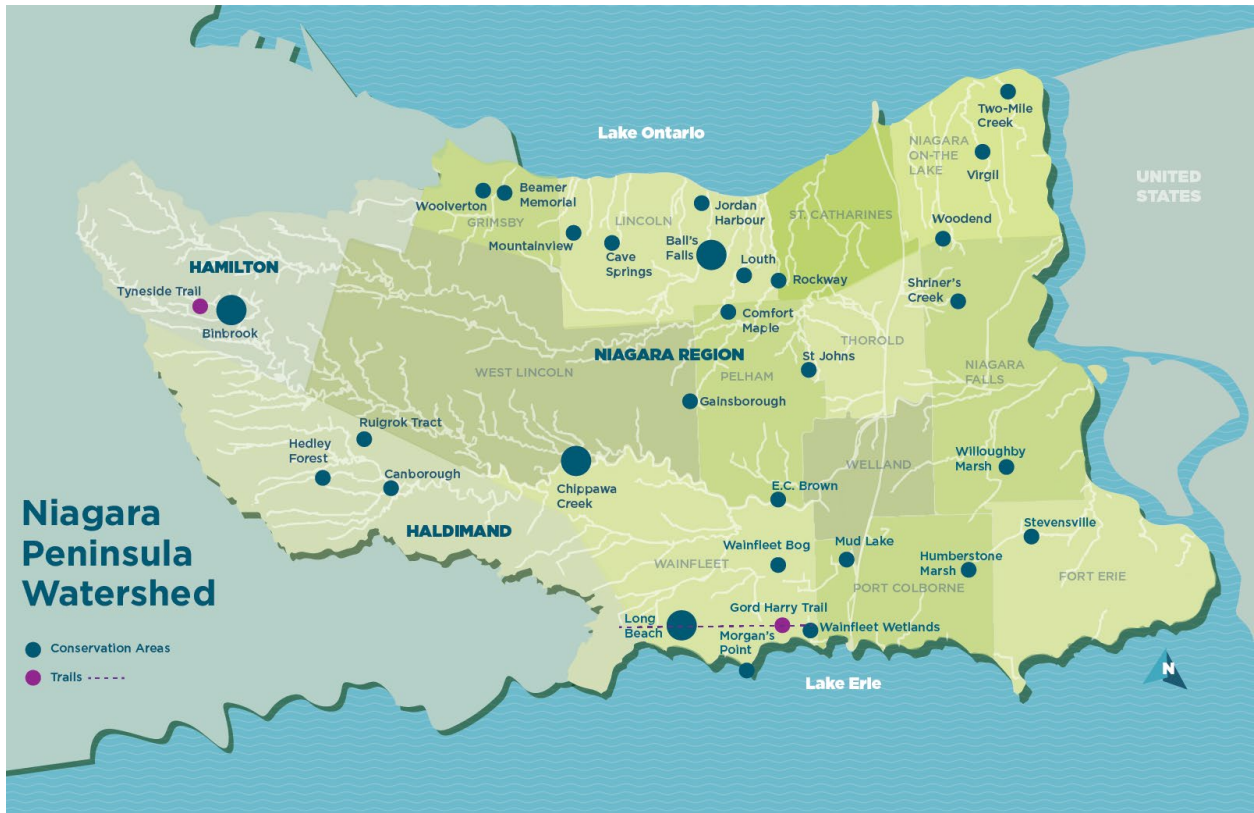


Figure 1. NPCA Watershed Boundary

Section 3. Program Areas

3.1 Trees for All

Program Description- A bareroot tree planting program for mid-to large-scale projects aimed at establishing new forest cover and expanding and connecting our existing forests through corridors.

Eligibility- The Trees for All program works with landowners with a minimum available planting space of 0.4 hectares (approximately 1 acre).

The legal owner of the land must be willing to sign a conservation agreement with the NPCA and/or it's partner agencies to maintain and steward the project over 15 years.

Project Funding

The Trees for All program work with a variety of funders to offer tree planting to eligible landowners at a rate of \$1/tree. This cost is inclusive of the plant material and installation; additional costs may be the responsibility of the landowner.

Funding is based on municipal participation, please contact the NPCA at restoration@npca.ca, or, 905-788-3135 for the most up-to-date information.

Projects that meet evaluation criteria are subject to funding availability and may be considered in the future.

Project Evaluation

Eligible projects will be evaluated based on several factors

- The projects overall contribution to the existing natural heritage system (including forests, wetlands, streams etc.) This will include the overall size of the project and its location.
- The landowner's ability to contribute to the project through land stewardship, including site preparation (mowing, brush clearing, tilling, spraying etc.) and ongoing maintenance (mowing, weeding, watering etc.)
- Available funding.

Eligible projects will be scored, with the highest scoring projects selected for planting the following spring. Funding is contingent on available budget and other eligible applications.

Project Timelines



Projects will be evaluated on a rolling basis, however typically it takes several months to develop a project with external funders and to secure tree stock. This most likely means that projects will be completed the following year.

Site Evaluation- NPCA staff may use desktop analysis, phone call/email, and potentially a site visit to initially screen projects to ensure they meet program requirements. Staff will work with the landowner to develop a project sketch that will be used to help evaluate the project for funding.

Project Planning- Projects selected for funding will have NPCA staff work with the landowner to develop detailed project plans and conservation agreements. NPCA staff will procure stock and contractors. Landowners may be asked to help prepare their site for planting.

Project Implementation- Projects are planted in late April through May each year. Following the project planting, staff will conduct initial baseline monitoring (year 1) that will be used to help determine the project's success in following monitoring years.

Project Closing- Upon completion of the project, the NPCA and landowner will reconcile any differences in accounts.

Project Monitoring- The NPCA generally conducts survival assessments and tree health monitoring at years 2, 5, 10 years after the project is complete. Projects in which a landowner has followed the recommended maintenance but fail to reach 60% survival by year 5 may be eligible for additional funding to replant.

3.2 Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP)

3.2.1 Program Description- As part of the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Initiative, the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program, provides funding to support Ontario farmers in making their agricultural lands more productive and resilient.

The NPCA's RALP program is aimed at restoring and enhancing natural features on marginal agricultural lands through the implementation of projects with watershed landowners that increase forest cover, connectivity and biodiversity, reduce nutrient losses, and improve wetland and riparian habitat.

3.2.2 Eligible Project Categories -

- 1) Tree and shrub planting on marginal cropland
- 2) Wetland restoration and enhancement
- 3) Riparian buffer establishment and widening
- 4) Conversion of marginal cropland to permanent native grassland/pollinator habitat

3.2.3 Eligibility- General program eligibility guidelines are detailed below. All projects will also follow Overall NPCA Watershed Restoration Program guidelines.

- Landowners or tenant farmers must have a 4th edition Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) or be working towards completing the EFP process (Producers can be working towards the completion of the 4th edition of EFP by signing up for a workshop).
- Projects must take place on "farmland" as per Municipal Property Assessment Corporation definition of farmland at www.mpac.ca.
- Landowners and tenant farmers must sign a Land-Use Agreement with the NPCA to maintain and steward the project for a minimum of 10 years.
- Some projects may be subject to a Duty to Consult process with Indigenous Communities prior to construction.
- The program works with landowners with a minimum available planting space of **0.4 hectares** (approximately 1 acre) for tree and shrub planting, riparian buffer, grassland/pollinator habitat and intercropping projects
- The program works with landowners with a minimum available space of **0.4 hectares** (approximately 1 acre) for wetland restoration projects. Minimum excavation area is **0.2 hectares** (0.5 acres); minimum wetland enhancement planting area is **0.2 hectares** (0.5 acres)

Project Funding

The NPCA's RALP is a cost-share program, where the NPCA, and its partners, will cover up to **90%** of eligible project costs, with the landowner covering **10%** of eligible project costs.

Projects that meet evaluation criteria are subject to funding availability and may be considered in future years of the program.

Project Evaluation

Eligible projects will be evaluated based on several factors

- The projects overall contribution to the existing natural heritage system (including forests, wetlands, streams etc.). This will include the overall size of the project and its location.
- The landowner's ability to contribute to the project through land stewardship, including site preparation (mowing, brush clearing, tilling, spraying etc.) and ongoing maintenance (mowing, weeding, watering etc.)
- Available funding.

Eligible projects will be scored, with the highest scoring projects selected for implementation. Funding is contingent on available funding and other eligible applications.

Project Timelines

Project development may take several weeks to months, depending on project type, seasonal timing and potential permitting requirements.

Site Evaluation- NPCA staff will perform initial screening through desktop analysis and communication with landowners via phone/email. NPCA staff will also conduct site visits with landowners to discuss project goals and assess site conditions to ensure potential projects meet funder requirements. Staff will work with the landowner to develop a draft project plan that will be used to help evaluate the project for funding. For most projects, a work plan will be submitted to NPCA's external funder for approval and determination of a potential Duty to Consult process.

Project Planning- Once approved, NPCA staff will work with the landowner to develop a detailed project plan as well as secure permits and permissions as required. NPCA staff will procure project materials and contractors. Landowners are encouraged to engage in their agricultural stewardship project and assist with site preparation when possible.

Project Implementation- Planting projects are generally planted in late April through May, or September through November each year. Wetland restoration projects are constructed from June through October, with enhancement planting taking place following excavation. Following project implementation, staff will conduct initial baseline monitoring (year 1) that will be used to help determine the project's success in following monitoring years.

Project Closing- Upon completion of the project, the NPCA and landowner will reconcile any differences in accounts.

Project Monitoring- The NPCA may conduct survival assessments, tree health and qualitative monitoring at 2, 5, and 10 years after the project is complete.