

Lake Huron/Georgian Bay Watershed: A Canadian Framework for Community Action

This project was provided partial funding through the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay Framework for Community Action to increase the capacity of local organizations, engage the community, and turn local interests and concern into environmental action consistent with 'Framework' principles – see www.lakehuroncommunityaction.ca

Project Synopsis

PROJECT TITLE: Nottawasaga Watershed Improvement Program 2016 – 2017

RECIPIENT: Nottawasaga Improvement Program Steering Committee and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) (<http://www.nvca.on.ca/>)

RECIPIENT'S MISSION: *Working together to lead, promote, support and inspire innovative watershed management.*



PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The project seeks to improve the health of the Lower Nottawasaga River and southern Georgian Bay through engaging with local communities in water quality improvement projects in the Wasaga Beach and Collingwood area tributary systems.

PROJECT PARTNERS:

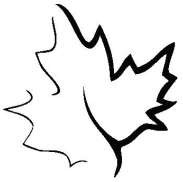
Nottawasaga Improvement Program Steering Committee, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), and local landowners, schools, agricultural associations, environmental organizations, municipalities and private businesses.

PROJECT LENGTH: 12 months

PROJECT SUMMARY: In 2016-17, NVCA continued ongoing community action program efforts through coordinating 8 stream-side tree planting and live staking projects and 2 stream habitat restoration projects. Through these events, community volunteers, environmental interest groups and local high school students planted 2,135 tree seedlings along watershed tributaries. Volunteers also harvested 2500 dormant live willow and dogwood cuttings in order to transplant them to the banks of Black Ash and Coates Creeks, and the Pine and Mad Rivers.

In an effort to restore normal river flows in Mad River, NVCA installed two earthen plugs which allowed the rehabilitation of northern pike habitat as well the improvement of a migratory route used by Georgian Bay rainbow trout and Chinook salmon. The earthen plugs will also reduce erosion and associated phosphorus release originating from the 2nd Line Municipal Drain.

Partners in these efforts included volunteers from numerous groups around the watershed including: Collingwood Collegiate Institute, Jean Vanier Catholic High School, Stayner Collegiate Institute, Clearview Meadows, Blue Mountain Watershed Trust, Georgian Triangle Anglers, RJ Burnside and Associates, 1st Creemore Scouts, Nottawasaga Futures, Town of Collingwood and the Townships of Clearview, Essa and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.



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ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Planted 2,135 tree seedlings and transplanted 1935 live stakes along stream corridors
- Installed 2 earthen plugs at the northern breach location to enhance flow to 12km of the Mad River
- Constructed a 200 m long access route and delivered restoration materials to the southern breach location in preparation for installing 2 earthen plugs in 2017
- Engaged local students in enhancing 20m of aquatic habitat within Black Ash Creek
- Coordinated a tour of stream restoration sites with the Nottawasaga Improvement Program Committee
- Hosted 2 Nottawasaga Improvement Program Steering Committee meetings
- Hosted a canoe float to highlight the role of healthy habitats in improving water quality (hosted in collaboration with the Wasaga Beach Healthy Communities Network and Free Spirit Tours)

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to deliver the program's current work plan
- Continue to identify and design future strategic projects
- Secure new program funding to ensure the program can continue its restoration, education and engagement efforts

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Don't be afraid to try new approaches. Students enjoyed adding native sod mats to rock rip in order to enhance riparian habitat in a recently constructed bank stabilization project
- Ensure that you have built in sufficient project development time to guarantee a smooth implementation
- Remember that with large scale restoration projects the time and costs associated with site preparation (e.g. creation of access route, stockpiling of materials, installation of sediment control) are often far greater than the project construction itself (e.g plug installation)

POTENTIAL FOLLOW-UP PROJECTS:

- Decommission Black Ash Creek's Petun Dam, where the stagnant head pond behind the dam currently impacts downstream water quality and trout habitat
- Enhance stream habitat, establish riffle morphology and restore floodplain characteristics in Lamont Creek
- Restore 100 m of urban trout stream habitat at the Black Ash Creek floodway in the Town of Collingwood
- Engage landowners in implementing a fish barrier mitigation project in Black Ash Creek