



# MECP Great Lakes Program – Lake Huron and Georgian Bay

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Lake Huron-Georgian Bay  
Community Action Summit

October 27, 2020

# Outline

This presentation will cover both Great Lakes-wide and Lake Huron basin-specific projects.

## Great Lakes Program Commitments

- Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan
- Ontario's Great Lakes Protection Act
- Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy
- Great Lakes Guardians' Council
- Great Lakes Guide
- Canada-Ontario Agreement
- Great Lakes Local Action Fund

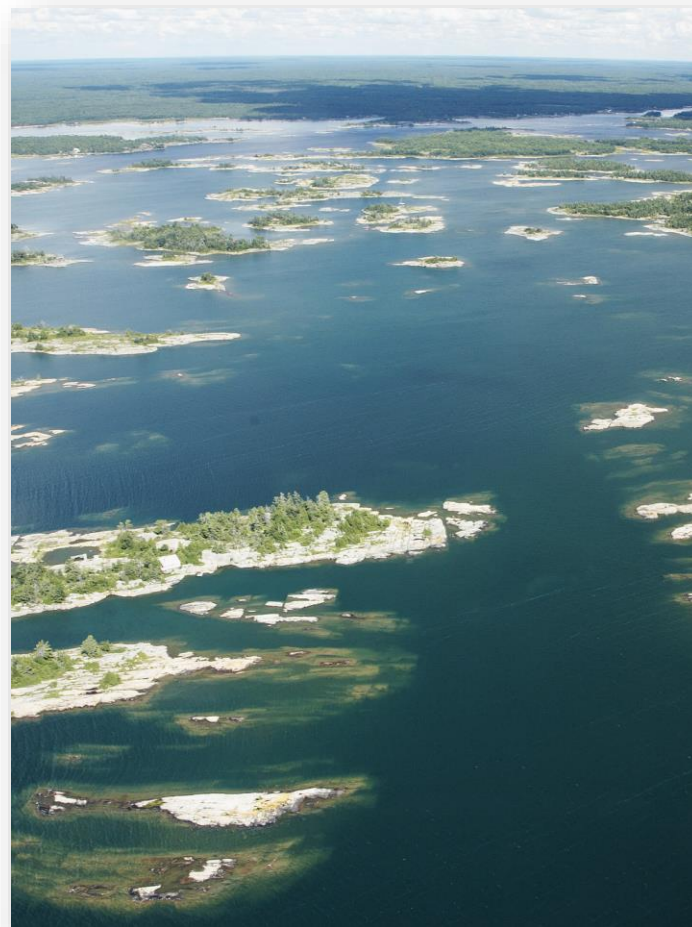
## Great Lakes Program Projects

- MECP Science and Monitoring
- Indigenous TEK projects
- Lake Huron School Summits
- Healthy Lake Huron
- LH-GB Watershed Initiative for Community Action
- Muskoka Watershed Initiative
- Lake Simcoe

# Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan

The Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan proposes new and continued actions to restore and protect the Great Lakes, including:

- Building on previous successes and continuing partnerships and negotiations with the federal government under the Canada-Ontario Agreement.
- Reviewing and updating Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy to continue to protect fish, parks, beaches, coastal wetlands and water by reducing plastic litter, excess nutrients, contaminants along our shorelines and salt entering waterways.



# Ontario's Great Lakes Protection Act

- In 2015, the *Great Lakes Protection Act* was passed. The Act requires the Minister to:
  - Maintain Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy.
  - Undertake a review of the Strategy every 6 years.
  - Report on progress of the Strategy every 3 years.
  - Consult on the Strategy and consider Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge, if offered.
- The Great Lakes Guardians' Council was established under the *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015* and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is required to convene a meeting of the Council at least once per year.







# Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy

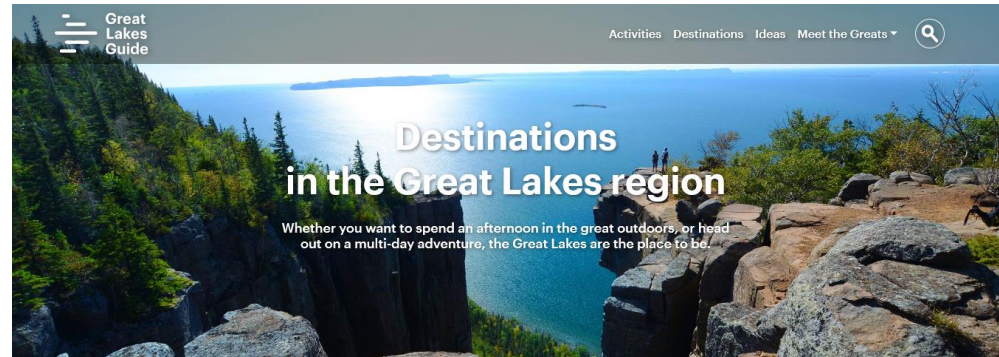
- Ontario's first Great Lakes Strategy was released in 2012 and outlines the province's economic, social and environmental priorities for action in the Great Lakes Basin.
- The current Strategy is organized around 6 goals and incorporates and aligns Great Lakes priorities from across 14 ministries, including focus on sustainable economic opportunities, protecting water, species and spaces and climate change resilience.
- The MECP is leading the report on progress, review and update of Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy.

# Great Lakes Guardians' Council

- The Great Lakes Guardians' Council provides a forum to:
  - Inform Great Lakes priorities for provincial action;
  - Identify potential partnerships and funding measures;
  - Provide input on Great Lakes initiatives, targets, and inter-jurisdictional agreements;
  - Discuss issues affecting the Great Lakes Basin; and
  - Improve collaboration and coordination among Great Lakes partners.
- Gathering at Aundeck-Omni-Kaning First Nation on Manitoulin Island
  - Co-chaired by MECP Minister and Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee of the Anishinabek Nation.
- The last Great Lakes Guardians' Council meeting was held on April 23, 2019.

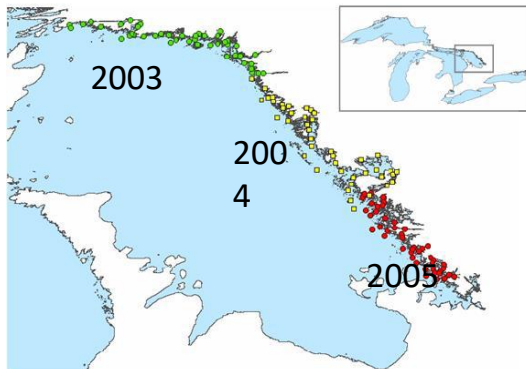
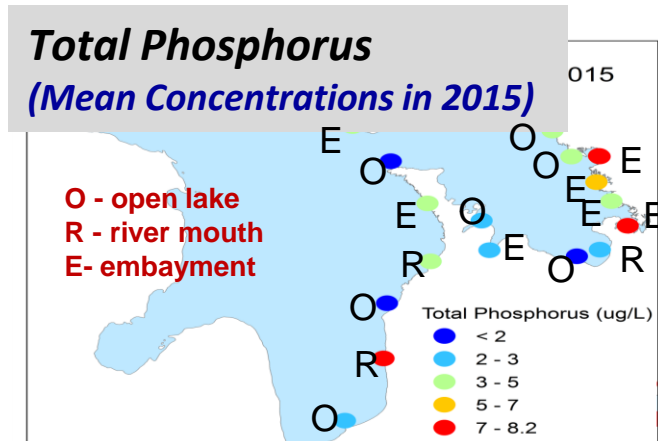


# Great Lakes Guide



- A digital platform accessible at <https://greatlakes.guide/>
- Key outcome of previous work under the Great Lakes Guardians' Council.
- MECP partnered with Swim Drink Fish Canada to develop the Guide, with the objective of connecting Ontarians to the Great Lakes and encouraging web users to learn, explore and take action.
- Concept planning and supporting workshops were guided by Indigenous partners such as Kathleen Padulo (COO) and former Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Guardians' Council and Grand Council Chief Madahbee who were on the founders committee.
- Swim Drink Fish Canada has continued to work with Indigenous communities including advancing Indigenous youth participation and incorporating Indigenous Great Lakes histories, place names, cultures and knowledge within the Great Lakes Guide.
- Supports commitments under Canada-Ontario Agreement and in Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy.

# MECP Science and Monitoring Activities



- MECP conducts periodic monitoring of environmental conditions in the coastal areas of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay as part of a Great Lakes – wide network of index and reference stations. Water and sediment quality and biological sampling is planned for 2021 at 19 stations in Lake Huron – Georgian Bay that were last visited in 2015.
- MECP undertook synoptic survey of water quality in Eastern Georgian Bay conducted in 2003-2005 and follow up work done between 2014 and 2017.
- Total phosphorus concentrations have declined from 2002 to 2015.



# Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge Projects

## **TEK Pilot Projects:**

The Great Lakes Office in MECP has supported Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) pilot projects with five (5) Great Lakes First Nations communities, two of which were located in the Lake Huron basin.

## **Two communities were in Lake Huron basin:**

M'Chigeeng First Nation (\$50,000)

- Exploring Great Lakes-related TEK through an elders workshop, a youth gathering, a technical water science seminar, and some related work on source water protection for the community.

Magnetawan First Nation (\$50,000)

- Exploring TEK related to water quality of the Magnetawan River.



# Engaging Students at Lake Huron Student Conferences and Summit

- Three Lake Huron Student Conferences were held involving approximately 250 grades 11-12 students and their teachers in hands-on learning activities.
  - Port Maitland, with Ausable Bayfield CA
  - Goderich, Pointe Farms Provincial Park, with Maitland Valley CA
  - St. Clair River at Mooretown, with SCRCA CA (with students from SE shores of Lake Huron, Sarnia)
- A team of Lake Huron students joined others from around the Great Lakes Basin to pitch their ideas to decision-makers as Lake Huron representatives.



Benthic sampling



Investigating plastic litter



Students at Basin-wide event in Toronto

# Healthy Lake Huron



- Since 2010 a multi-agency/stakeholder group has worked together to coordinate actions to protect and improve water quality along the southeast shores of Lake Huron from Sarnia to Tobermory. Co-chaired by MECP/OMAFRA.
- Actions focus on reducing soil loss and improving soil health and include the installation of stream buffers, berms, and use of cover crops. Other actions include things like septic system inspections and upgrades, and restricting livestock from streams.
- Outreach and education are another key piece of this initiative.
- For more information, visit <http://healthylakehuron.ca/>



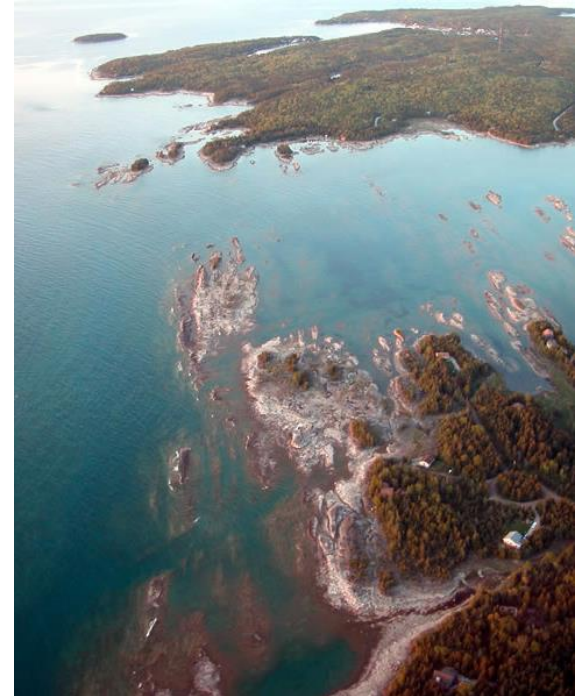
# LH-GB Community Action Initiative In Action





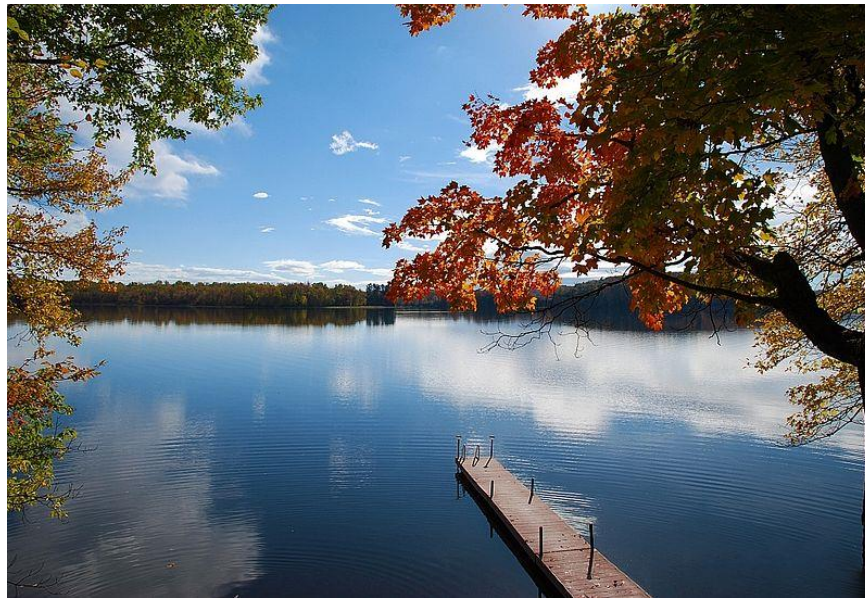
# Canada-Ontario Agreements

- The Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (COA) sets out priorities and coordinates work between Canada and Ontario – and other implementation partners.
- The most recent COA was signed in 2014. It was the 8th COA signed since 1971 and it expired in December 2019. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of COA is coming up in 2021.
- Canada and Ontario have negotiated a draft new COA. Canada and Ontario publicly consulted on the draft COA, including through a 60-day public comment period held from July to September 2019.
- Under the draft new COA Canada and Ontario commit to take action for Lake Huron through initiatives such as the Lake Huron Georgian Bay Initiative for Community Action and the Healthy Lake Huron Clean Water, Clean Beaches Campaign (Southeast Shores).
- The draft new COA states that Canada and Ontario will continue implementing actions required to achieve delisting criteria and restore the beneficial uses that remain impaired in the St. Marys River Area of Concern and Spanish Harbour Area of Concern in Recovery.



# Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative

- In August 2018, the Province announced the Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative (Muskoka Watershed Initiative). This included an investment of \$5M, in order to better identify risks and issues facing the Muskoka Watershed.
- The Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan identifies the Muskoka Watershed Initiative as an action that will help inform effective watershed management in the province.



# Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group

- Currently, there are eight members on the **Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group** (MWAG) appointed by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, consisting of permanent and seasonal residents representing local organizations, municipalities, and the broader watershed community.
- The focus of MWAG is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister regarding priority geographic areas and issues in the watershed, and the types of projects that could be undertaken to protect the environment and support the economic growth of the region.
- The Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group's new interim report was publicly released on October 19, 2020 and can be viewed at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/advisory-group-report-protecting-muskoka-river-watershed>
  - MWAG submitted their advice and recommendations to the Minister in June 2020, in the form of an interim report. MECP staff are currently reviewing the recommendations and determining next steps.
  - The report is informed by community outreach with over sixty distinct entities, including municipal governments, First Nations and Métis representatives, local organizations, waterpower producers, local agricultural industry and members of the general public



# Lake Simcoe Update

- Protecting and restoring Ontario's water resources, including Lake Simcoe and its watershed, is a key part of the Ontario government's [Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan](#).
- Ontario released the [Minister's 10-Year Report on Lake Simcoe](#) in July 2020. The Report outlines improvements in the health of the lake after a decade of actions and programs under the [Lake Simcoe Protection Plan](#) (Plan).
- Guided by the principle of adaptive management, the [Lake Simcoe Protection Act](#) requires the Minister to review the Plan at least every 10 years after the date the plan took effect, to determine whether it should be amended.
- It is expected that the Plan will evolve and improve over time, based on new science and implementation experience.
- The lessons learned from Plan implementation to date, and the new information we have gathered through research and monitoring, will inform the review.
- This fall, Ontario will be inviting partners, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and the public to participate in the first legislated review of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan to see if updates need to be made to continue to protect and restore the lake.



# Great Lakes Local Action Fund

- To further protect and restore the Great Lakes, the Ontario government is investing \$1.67 million in the first round of the Great Lakes Local Action Fund.
- **Up to \$50,000 per** local project that has a positive environmental impact on the Great Lakes, and social and/or economic benefits for communities.
- Eligible groups include community-based organizations, environmental non-profits, conservation authorities, Indigenous communities, small businesses, and municipalities.
- Applications must be received by **November 6, 2:00 pm**.
- Apply online at [www.ontario.ca/GetFunding](http://www.ontario.ca/GetFunding).



# Thank you for your attention!



If you have any questions, please feel free to email Carolyn O'Neill at [Carolyn.O'Neill@ontario.ca](mailto:Carolyn.O'Neill@ontario.ca) or Ted Briggs at [Ted.Briggs@ontario.ca](mailto:Ted.Briggs@ontario.ca).