



Kawartha region watershed gets mixed grades in report card

(Lindsay, January 19, 2009) The Kawartha region watershed has received an overall B average in a new watershed report card released today. Kawartha Region Conservation Authority (KRCA) has based the grade on the quality of water in our lakes and rivers, plus forest cover and wetland cover, which also received grades.

"The grades are a result of the data we collected through our monitoring programs, and show the current health of our watershed," says Dave Pridham, KRCA Manager of Environmental and Technical Services. "By assessing and monitoring the watershed for changes that are taking place, we can protect and restore natural features by designing programs and services that are suited to the local conditions."

Lakes across the watershed, including Balsam Lake, Cameron Lake, Sturgeon Lake, Pigeon Lake and Lake Scugog, each received a C, while grades for rivers ranged from A to D. Rivers that received the lowest grades were located in the south-western part of the watershed, and included Mariposa Brook, Layton River, Nonquon River and Blackstock Creek. Lakes and rivers lost marks for containing higher levels of nutrients, including phosphorus and nitrogen, and metals such as cadmium, lead, zinc, aluminum, cobalt and iron.

Forest and wetland cover were also graded because they improve water quality by reducing erosion and filtering water that passes through them. They also play an essential role in the recharge of aquifers and provide important habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife. Overall, the watershed received a B for its amount of forest cover and an A for wetland cover. The amount of forest cover is high in the northern and south-eastern parts of the watershed. The amount of wetland cover is high in the north around Crystal Lake and Nogies Creek, also in the southwest, including areas around Lake Scugog, and in areas surrounding McLaren's Creek and Martin Creek South.

"The people of Kawartha Lakes can be proud of the grades our environmental efforts received, and as a community and as individuals, we must continue to look at ways to improve the areas that received lower grades," says City of Kawartha Lakes Mayor Ric McGee. "Kawartha Conservation's environmental monitoring provides valuable information that we can use to enhance and protect our environment."

"The Township of Scugog places great value on a healthy environment and the benefits it provides," says Mayor Marilyn Pearce. "The report card highlights natural features we are protecting through our Official Plan and the importance of environmental initiatives like the Lake Scugog Environmental Management Plan and East Cross Forest project."

"The overall state of our watershed is good," says KRCA Chair Jim McMillen. "Over the years, Kawartha Conservation has made excellent progress through its environmental monitoring, restoration and protection initiatives, and will continue to strive for environmental health in all areas of our watershed."

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“This report card is a reminder to everyone. A healthy watershed is important for many of the things we value in the Kawarthas: healthy lakes and rivers and the tourism industry that relies on them; good drinking water; and a thriving agricultural industry,” adds Pridham. “What you do on your property can impact water quality, even if you live nowhere near a lake or a river. Faulty septic beds, unmaintained wells, improper manure storage, excessive fertilizer and pesticide use, as well as filling in wetlands, clearing woodland and other naturally vegetated areas can stress our water resources.”

In the report card, KRCA outlines actions landowners can take to protect and improve the health of our watershed, and programs and services that can help. The report card is available online at www.kawarthaconservation.com/reportcard . It will also be included in the issues of the Port Perry Star on Jan. 22 and Kawartha Lakes This Week on Jan. 23 that are distributed within the watershed.

***Kawartha Conservation** is a watershed based, non-profit environmental organization that provides conservation, restoration and responsible management of water, land and natural habitats through programs and services that balance human, environmental and economic needs. It is governed by the six municipalities that overlap the natural boundaries of the Kawartha Conservation watershed, which include the City of Kawartha Lakes; Township of Scugog; Township of Brock; Municipality of Clarington; Galway-Cavendish & Harvey; and Cavan Monaghan. www.kawarthaconservation.com*