

Watershed Watch Newsletter



Finding Calm, Connection and Community This December

December always seems to arrive in a rush. The days get shorter, the to do lists somehow get longer, and many of us find ourselves moving from one commitment to the next before we've had a moment to pause. Yet this time of year also offers some of the best reasons to slow down, look around, and reconnect with the people and places that matter most.

Across our watershed, winter settles in with a quiet kind of beauty. Trails take on a softer tone, branches gather a dusting of frost, and familiar spaces feel just a little more peaceful. It is the perfect reminder that even in a busy season, nature has its own way of encouraging us to stop and breathe.

This month's newsletter highlights a number of opportunities to do just that. Christmas at Ken Reid returns as a festive community gathering that blends holiday spirit with the outdoors. Later in the month, the Illuminated Forest offers an entirely different experience, inviting visitors to enjoy an evening walk along softly lit trails that glow against the December dark. Both events speak to the power of simple moments shared with family, friends and neighbours.

December is also the start of our annual Seedling Sale, a welcome chance for residents to plan ahead for spring planting and contribute to a greener, healthier watershed. And while the province continues its consultation process on proposed regional conservation authority boundaries, the work of supporting our local communities continues every day.

As you move through the next few weeks, we hope you find time to enjoy the season in ways that feel meaningful, whether that is attending a community event, heading out for a quiet walk, or simply taking a moment to appreciate the stillness that winter brings.

From all of us at Kawartha Conservation, thank you for your continued support and engagement. We wish you a safe, peaceful and enjoyable December.

With gratitude,

The Kawartha Conservation Team

PROVINCIAL PROPOSAL ON REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY BOUNDARIES NOW OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Province of Ontario has released a proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO 025-1257) that outlines a plan to consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into seven new regional conservation authorities. The posting includes draft boundaries, criteria for consolidation, and background information to help residents understand what is being considered. Public comments are being accepted until **11:59 p.m. on December 22, 2025.**

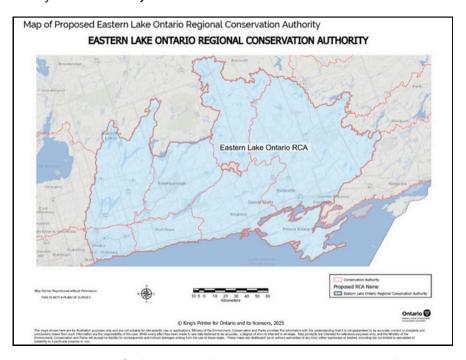
For Kawartha Conservation, the proposal would place our organization within a new Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority. This region would include seven existing conservation authorities: Kawartha, Central Lake Ontario, Otonabee Region, Ganaraska Region, Lower Trent, Crowe Valley, and Quinte.

If implemented as posted, this new regional authority would span a large and diverse stretch of eastern Ontario. More than 45 municipalities sit within the proposed boundary, stretching from Durham Region and the City of Kawartha Lakes in the west to Prince Edward County and the Bay of Quinte in the east. The region includes a mix of rural and urban communities, varied watershed features, and a wide range of environmental and planning needs.

While the province undertakes consultations on consolidation, our work here at Kawartha Conservation continues without interruption. Flood forecasting and warning, watershed science, permitting, stewardship programs, source water protection, and community education remain central to our daily operations. Our staff continue to support local municipalities, landowners, partner organizations, and the broader watershed community.

Residents, municipalities, and local partners are encouraged to review the proposal and consider submitting feedback. The full posting, including maps and supporting materials, is available through the Environmental Registry of Ontario at: https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-1257

Comments must be submitted by **December 22, 2025.**



Proposed boundaries for the Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority - <u>Supplemental Document</u>

CHRISTMAS AT KEN REID: WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON MEETS THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

Each December, as frost settles gently on the pines and the air takes on that unmistakable stillness of winter, Ken Reid Conservation Area transforms into something truly special. For one day only - Saturday, December 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - the park becomes the setting for Christmas at Ken Reid, a celebration that blends the magic of the holidays with the peace and beauty of the outdoors.

Families arrive bundled in scarves and mittens, laughter mingling with the jingling of harness bells as horse and wagon rides from Hyde Park Farms roll along the road at Ken Reid. Children race to the Walkabout Farm pony petting zoo, while others stand in awe watching the art of wood carving unfold. Nearby, balloon animals take shape, music drifts through the air from Gerald Van Halteren and Keith Kirkpatrick, and the unmistakable scent of fresh pine and cold air fills the day.

Everywhere you look, there's something happening. The vendor market offers handmade gifts and local treats, while the City of Kawartha Lakes Library hosts story time and introduces visitors to its Library of Things. Even the Grinch makes an appearance this year, leading families through a special story walk that winds through the trails. For those seeking a quieter space, Autism Resources Kawartha (ARK) provides a calming area for visitors who need a sensory break.



"It's one of those events that truly captures what the season is all about," said Carolyn Snider, Community Engagement Technician with Kawartha Conservation. "There's something for everyone - families, couples, children, grandparents. It's a day to connect, to enjoy simple traditions, and to celebrate the outdoors together."

Admission is free, which is part of what makes the event so special. It's open to everyone - no tickets, no gates, just an open invitation to experience the joy of community in one of the region's most beautiful natural settings.

But keeping Christmas at Ken Reid free and accessible each year is made possible through the generosity of local business sponsors and those who attend. Donations to Kawartha Conservation help cover the costs of hosting the event and support future community programs that bring people closer to nature.

"When people give, they're not just helping us put on an event," said Snider. "They're helping create experiences and memories that families will cherish for years. That's something we're really proud of."

As the afternoon draws to a close and the last wagon ride heads down the trail, there's a sense that something meaningful has happened. It's not grand or extravagant, but simple and genuine - exactly what the season should be.

While admission to the event is free, parking and transportation options have been updated for 2025 to make attendance smoother and more accessible. On-site parking is limited and costs \$20 per vehicle, which must be purchased in advance through the Kawartha Conservation website. Those wishing to reserve a parking pass can visit the Christmas at Ken Reid event page on the organization's calendar. To make the event even more accessible, free buses will run throughout the day from several convenient locations, including the rear parking lot at Canadian Tire, IE Weldon Secondary School, and other community hubs. A full list of pickup locations and schedules is available at www.kawarthaconservation.com/festivals.

Christmas at Ken Reid takes place Saturday, December 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free, and onsite parking Donations are gratefully accepted to support future community programs and events. Learn more or make a contribution at www.kawarthaconservation.com/donate.





Important Parking Information

On-site parking at Christmas at Ken Reid is limited to 100 spaces, which must be pre-purchased in advance for \$20.00 per car (HST included). No day-of onsite parking will be available within Ken Reid Conservation Area. Tickets are non-refundable and sold on a first-come, first-served basis through the event website.

For all other attendees, we've made it easy and stress-free to get to the event! Enjoy our convenient off-site parking options with free shuttle buses running all day from multiple pick-up locations in Lindsay.

To purchase a parking pass for Christmas at Ken Reid or to see the bus schedules, visit www.kawarthaconservation.com/festivals.

A SEASON OF LIGHT AND COMMUNITY AT KEN REID CONSERVATION AREA

As the days grow shorter and the nights stretch a little longer, a familiar glow begins to return to the forest at Ken Reid Conservation Area. From December 12 through December 28, the front trails will once again transform into the Illuminated Forest - a quiet, white-light pathway inviting visitors to slow down, breathe in the crisp air, and share a peaceful walk among the trees.

For many families across the Kawarthas, the Illuminated Forest has become a simple seasonal tradition. There are no admission fees, no lines, and no elaborate displays - just the soft shimmer of light across snow, the crunch of boots on the trail, and the sense of connection that comes from spending time outdoors together.

"The Illuminated Forest has become a meaningful way for people to reconnect with nature during the winter," said Carolyn Snider, Community Engagement Technician with Kawartha Conservation. "It's quiet, it's beautiful, and it gives people a chance to pause and enjoy something simple. That's what makes it special."

This year, a new partnership between Kawartha Conservation and the City of Kawartha Lakes will make the experience even more accessible. Free public transit from Lindsay will be available on December 12 and 13, and again on December 19 and 20, allowing residents to enjoy the Illuminated Forest without the need to drive or pay for parking.

Each evening, lights will guide visitors along the front trails, leading them through a landscape that glows softly against the darkness. Families stroll side by side, children run ahead to catch snowflakes, and for a moment, the noise of everyday life seems to fade into the background.



Section of the Illuminated Forest trail.

Kawartha Conservation continues to offer this event at no cost to ensure it remains accessible for everyone in the community. However, as the organization works to maintain the lights and the trails year after year, donations are always appreciated. Contributions help ensure that the Illuminated Forest can continue to bring joy, reflection, and togetherness to visitors each winter.

Whether it's your first visit or a long-standing family tradition, the Illuminated Forest at Ken Reid Conservation Area offers a chance to experience the season at its best - calm, bright, and filled with quiet wonder.

The Illuminated Forest runs from Friday, December 12 through Sunday, December 28. Admission is free. Parking is \$4 per vehicle or free for those arriving by transit. To make a donation and help keep this community event free, visit www.kawarthaconservation.com/donate.

SEEDLING SALE OPENS DECEMBER 1

Kawartha Conservation's annual Seedling Sale opens December 1, offering watershed residents an early chance to prepare for spring planting. The program features a range of native bareroot seedlings, sold in bundles of 25 and priced between \$50 and \$100 depending on species. Each species is selected for its suitability to local soils, climate and long term growth.

The lineup includes favourites like White Pine, White Spruce and Red Oak, along with specialty species such as Highbush Cranberry, Serviceberry and Balsam Fir. These options are especially popular for property naturalization, wildlife habitat and shoreline stabilization.

"The Seedling Sale is a great way for people to take on meaningful planting projects without breaking the bank," said Danielle Marcoux Hunter, Coordinator, Stewardship. "For many landowners it becomes a yearly step toward a healthier, greener property."

She added that even small projects contribute to watershed health. "When dozens of residents plant native trees and shrubs each spring, the cumulative impact is significant. It improves habitat, supports pollinators and helps build more resilient landscapes."

The sale runs from December 1 until March 4, 2026, with seedlings available for pickup at the end of April. Early orders are encouraged as quantities are limited.

To explore species and place an order, visit www.kawarthaconservation.com/seedlingsale.

