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WHERE WINTER MEETS SPRING: PROTECTING WHAT CONNECTS US

March is a month of transition across the watershed. Winter often tries to hold on, while early signs of spring begin to surface in quieter ways, longer days, softening trails, flowing creeks, and the steady return of movement on the land and water. It is a season that reminds us how closely connected everything is, from the rain that falls on our streets to the lakes that shape our communities.

In this issue of Watershed Watch, that sense of connection runs through each story. You will learn more about how stormwater moves through local creeks and why understanding those pathways is essential to protecting water quality and aquatic habitat. We also invite families and residents to step outside during March Break and experience the changing season firsthand on conservation area trails across the watershed.

Looking ahead, planning is already underway for an important fall gathering. Our State of the Lakes Symposium will take place in September, bringing together researchers, partners, and community leaders to focus on the health of our lakes and the challenges and opportunities ahead. While the event is months away, the conversations and collaboration begin now.

This issue also highlights how individual actions can lead to meaningful impact through the Water Fund, which helps turn ideas into on-the-ground projects that protect shorelines, restore habitat, and improve water quality.

As the season shifts, this edition reflects a simple truth. Small actions, thoughtful planning, and shared responsibility all play a role in protecting the watershed we call home.

The Kawartha Conservation Team

P.S. As always, if you have any questions or topics you'd like to see covered in future issues of Watershed Watch Newsletter, email jchambers@kawarthaconservation.com.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME, AND ALL WATER LEADS SOMEWHERE

Why stormwater matters in Lindsay's creeks.

All roads lead to Rome. In much the same way, all water eventually leads to a creek, river, or lake.

Across the Kawartha Conservation watershed, rainwater follows many different paths. Some soaks into the ground, becoming groundwater that slowly feeds streams and wetlands. This natural process supports healthy waterways. Other rainwater moves quickly across the landscape, flowing over roads, rooftops, parking lots, and sidewalks. Once water begins moving this way, it is known as stormwater runoff, and what it carries with it depends entirely on where it travels.

As runoff flows across hard surfaces, it collects whatever lies in its path. That can include trash, oil and fuel residue, road salt, soil, bacteria from pet waste, excess nutrients, and in some cases, human waste. By the time this water reaches a storm drain or flows directly into a creek or river, it often contains a concentrated mix of contaminants that are extremely difficult to remove once they enter the water.

Not all stormwater is harmful. When rainwater passes through natural areas such as forests, wetlands, and vegetated streambanks, those landscapes act as filters. These riparian areas slow water down, allowing pollutants to settle out or be absorbed before the water reaches downstream lakes and rivers. Problems arise when runoff bypasses these natural systems and enters waterways untreated.

As communities across the watershed continue to grow, understanding how stormwater affects local waterways becomes increasingly important. In the City of Kawartha Lakes, growth and intensification bring more hard surfaces, which can increase the volume and speed of runoff during rainfall events.

To better understand these impacts locally, Kawartha Conservation is undertaking a multi-year study of Lindsay's urban creeks and the Scugog River. Running from February to November between 2024 and 2029, the program is focused on establishing current conditions and providing science-based information to support future stormwater planning.

Monitoring includes routine water sampling, streamflow measurements, and assessments of fish communities. This work is being carried out on Jennings Creek, Distillery Creek, Sinister Creek, Albert Street Creek, and Sucker Creek, as well as along the Scugog River within the urban area.

The data collected will help Kawartha Conservation and municipal partners better understand how stormwater moves through these systems and how existing infrastructure is performing. That understanding is essential to protecting water quality, aquatic habitat, and the downstream lakes and rivers that connect communities across the watershed.



Nathan Rajevski, Watershed Resources Technician, collecting stormwater samples.

Did you know?

- Before the construction of the dam, the Scugog River through Lindsay was approximately 18 inches deep and about 30 feet wide.
- Sucker Creek is believed to be named after the White Sucker (*Catostomus commersonii*), a fish species that historically used the creek as a spring spawning area.

MARCH BREAK IS MADE FOR THE TRAILS

March Break does not have to mean staying indoors or heading far from home. Across the Kawartha Conservation watershed, the transition from winter to spring offers a quieter kind of adventure, one that unfolds along forest trails, boardwalks, and lookout points just waiting to be explored.

As snow recedes and daylight stretches a little longer each day, conservation areas become ideal places to get moving, breathe in fresh air, and reconnect with the outdoors.

At Ken Reid Conservation Area, nearly 12 kilometres of interconnected trails invite visitors to choose their own pace. Families can wander the boardwalk through McLaren Marsh, listening for returning birds, while more adventurous walkers can explore wooded loops and open fields that reveal a different view with every turn. With wide trails and varied terrain, Ken Reid is well suited for long walks, casual exploring, and those first signs of spring.

To the south, Durham East Cross Forest offers a more immersive forest experience. Its trail network winds through mixed woodlands and meadows, making every outing feel a little different. Some routes are perfect for a short family walk, while others encourage longer hikes that reward curiosity and attention to detail. Tracks in the snow, birdsong overhead, and the quiet rhythm of footsteps make this a favourite spot for those who enjoy a slower, more reflective outdoor experience.

For visitors looking for a shorter hike with a memorable destination, Windy Ridge Conservation Area delivers. The loop trail gradually climbs to a scenic lookout with sweeping views of wetlands and rolling moraine landscapes. It is an ideal March Break stop for families, photographers, or anyone looking to stretch their legs and take in a big view without committing to a long trek.

Spending time outdoors during March Break is about more than exercise. It is a chance to reset, explore close to home, and experience the changing season firsthand. With trails suited to all ages and interests, Kawartha Conservation's conservation areas offer simple, meaningful ways to enjoy the break.

Sometimes, the best March Break plans start at the trailhead.



Ken Reid Conservation Area



Durham East Cross Forest
Conservation Area



Windy Ridge Conservation Area

SAVE THE DATE - STATE OF THE LAKES SYMPOSIUM

Mark your calendar for Friday, September 18, when Kawartha Conservation hosts its State of the Lakes Symposium.

This one-day symposium will bring together researchers, practitioners, partners, and community leaders to explore the current state of our lakes, share insights, and discuss the challenges and opportunities shaping their future. The event will focus on science, collaboration, and practical approaches to protecting and strengthening lake health across the watershed.

Details on the venue, keynote speakers, and full program will be announced in the coming months.

For now, save the date and plan to join an important conversation about the lakes that connect our communities, support our economy, and define our region.

More information coming soon.



BRING YOUR WATER FUND PROJECT TO LIFE

If you have an idea to improve water quality, protect a shoreline, or restore habitat on your property, the Water Fund can help turn that idea into action.

Kawartha Conservation's Water Fund provides up to \$4,000 to support practical, on-the-ground environmental projects across the watershed. From tree and shrub planting to erosion control and shoreline naturalization, the program is designed to make projects achievable and effective.

“The Water Fund helps remove barriers,” said Julia Derue, Stewardship Technician with Kawartha Conservation. “It gives people the support they need to move from planning to doing.”

In addition to funding, applicants receive guidance from Kawartha Conservation staff to help refine project ideas and ensure best practices are followed. Projects do not need to be large to make a difference, small improvements across many properties add up to healthier lakes and rivers.

The application deadline is April 30, 2026, but early conversations are encouraged. Connecting with staff ahead of time can help strengthen project ideas and make the application process smoother.

Don't wait until the last minute. Reach out to Julia to discuss your project and get support before applying.

Learn more at kawarthaconservation.ca/waterfund.



Example of a completed Water Fund shoreline project.

For more information on how Kawartha Conservation can help.
Conservation Lands: conservationareas@kawarthaconservation.com
General info: geninfo@kawarthaconservation.com
Permitting: permits@kawarthaconservation.com
Planning: planning@kawarthaconservation.com