

October 2025 / Vol 19

A Season of Change

October always feels like a season of change. The mornings are cooler, the trees are brushed with colour, and our conservation areas come alive with the sights and sounds of autumn. It's the perfect time to take a walk through the towering pines, crunch leaves underfoot, and pause to appreciate the beauty of the watershed we share.

In this month's Watershed Watch, we continue our journey through the region with Part 4 of our watershed profiles, offering a closer look at the creeks and rivers that shape our landscapes and communities. We're also highlighting the many ways you can enjoy our conservation areas this fall - whether it's a brisk hike, a family outing, or simply a quiet moment in nature.

You'll also learn more about the ALUS program, an initiative that's helping farmers across the Kawarthas, Peterborough, and Northumberland restore wetlands, plant pollinator habitats, and create greener, more resilient farmland. It's an inspiring example of how conservation and agriculture can work hand in hand.

As we move deeper into the season, I hope this edition inspires you to explore, reflect, and connect with the places and people who make our watershed so special.

As always, if you have questions, ideas, or suggestions for topics you'd like to see featured in Watershed Watch, please don't hesitate to reach out to John Chambers by email at jchambers@kawarthaconservation.com. Your input helps shape the stories we tell and ensures they remain meaningful and relevant to our community.

With gratitude for your continued support,

The Kawartha Conservation Team



Sponsorship Reminder!

Christmas at Ken Reid is fast approaching, and we're inviting local businesses to be part of this magical community event! Sponsorships help us bring festive activities to life for the hundreds of families who join us each year. Don't miss your chance to get involved!

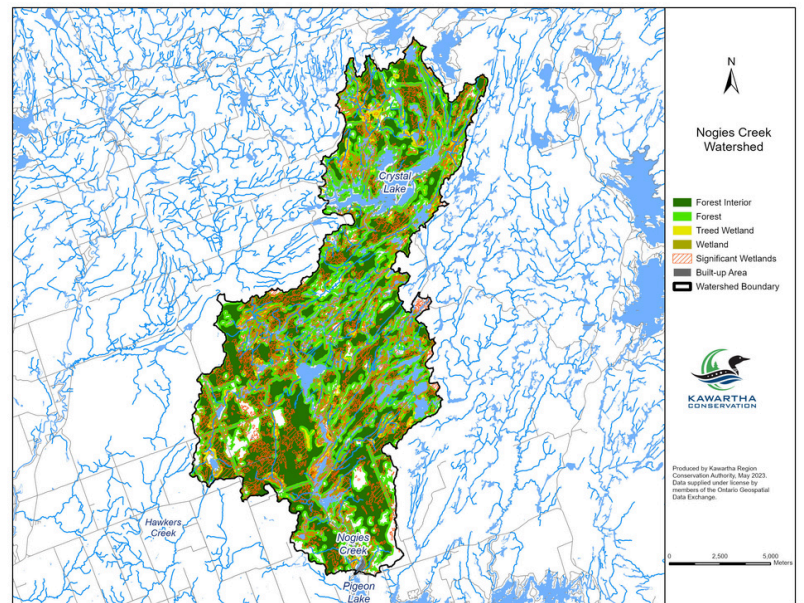
[SPONSORSHIP FORM](#)

WHERE THE WATER REMEMBERS: EXPLORING THE WILD, WINDING PATHS OF THE KAWARTHA WATERSHED

The autumn sun cuts lower across the horizon now. Trees blaze in orange and crimson, and the water slows, reflecting the sky in crisp, copper tones. In this season of transition, we turn to some of the watershed's most storied and ecologically rich systems - places where water weaves through marshes, limestone gorges, and wetlands older than memory.

This month, our watershed series brings us to five vital yet often overlooked waterways: McLaren's Creek, Nogies Creek, Nonquon River, Pearn's Creek, and Pigeon Lake. These are systems defined by contrast - fast and slow, urban and wild, fragile and resilient. They are also some of the clearest reflections of how conservation, community, and climate intersect in this land.

"We tend to think about lakes and rivers as destinations," said Nancy Aspden, Director of Integrated Watershed Management at Kawartha Conservation. "But what we're really looking at is a living history of the land. These subwatersheds show us how water travels, what it encounters, and how it sustains everything it touches - farms, fish, families, and future generations."



Nogies Creek Watershed

ANCESTRAL WATERS, MODERN CHALLENGES

At the northern edge of the watershed, Crystal Lake is a coldwater lake, and acts as the headwaters of Nogies Creek. Crystal Lake supports coldwater fish, which are extremely rare in the Kawartha Conservation watershed. From there, Nogies Creek carves a remarkable path through granite bedrock and dense forest and is recognized as a Provincially Significant Wetland. Native mussels and wetland birds find refuge in its waters.

"From a biological standpoint, Nogies Creek is incredibly valuable," said Aquatic Biologist Brett Tregunno. "But its ecological sensitivity means it's highly vulnerable to change - from shoreline alteration to rising water temperatures."

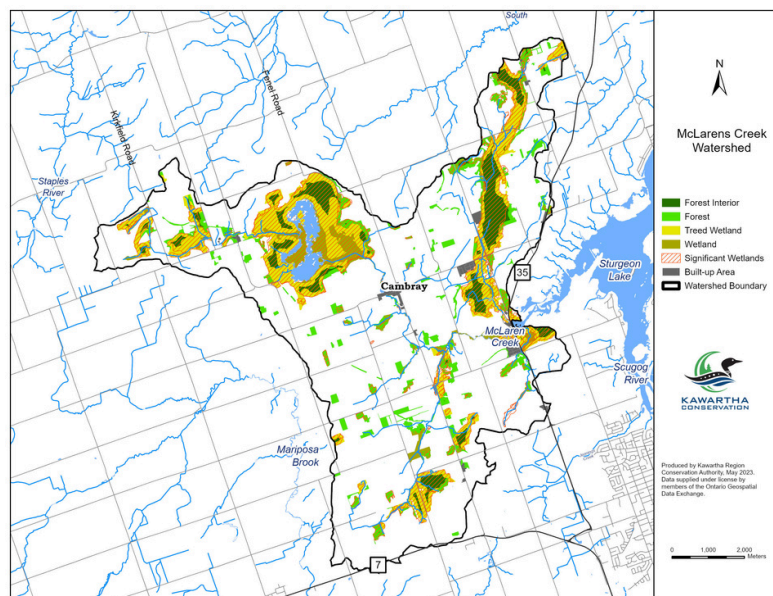
To protect it, Kawartha Conservation monitors water quality, and water flow, using the data to guide local stewardship and habitat protection efforts.

WHERE WETLANDS RULE

By contrast, McLaren's Creek to the south winds through some of the most extensive and ecologically important wetlands in the region. Home to McLaren's Marsh, which acts as a massive sponge, regulating floods, filtering nutrients, and storing carbon.

“Wetlands like this are natural infrastructure,” said Aspden. “They do the hard work - holding stormwater, purifying it, recharging groundwater - without us even noticing most of the time.”

Despite being largely undeveloped, McLaren's Creek is not immune to threats. Even small shifts in land use upstream can alter water levels or introduce pollutants downstream. That's why it remains a monitoring priority.

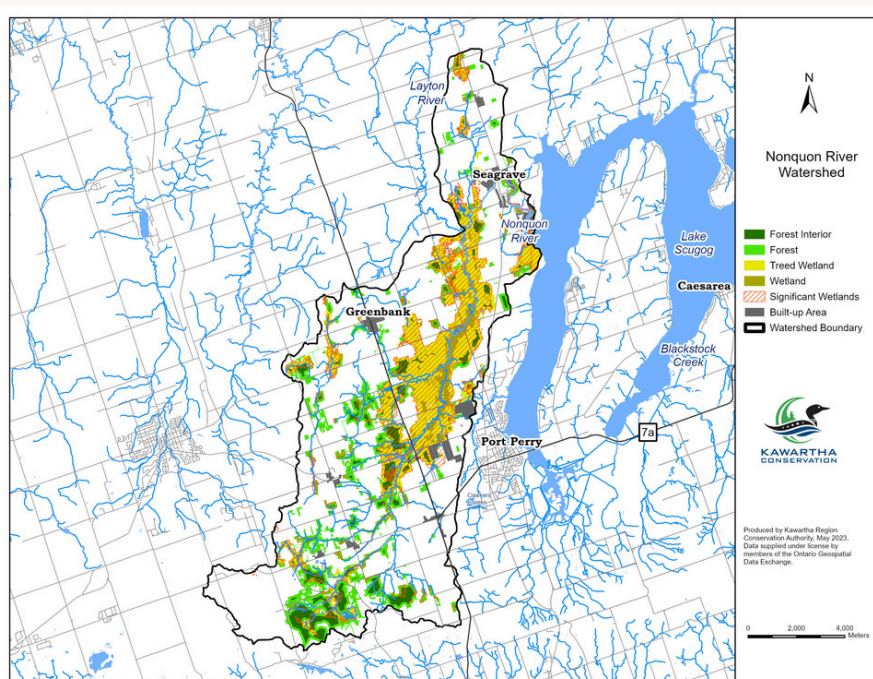


McLarens Creek Watershed

URBAN MEETS RURAL

To the southwest, Nonquon River forms one of the largest subwatersheds in the region, stretching nearly 300 km² and draining into Lake Scugog. It cuts through Seagrave and Greenbank balancing rural landscapes with growing development.

Its wetlands and woodlands are vital for species at risk, and parts of the Nonquon River system are provincially designated as sensitive aquatic habitat.



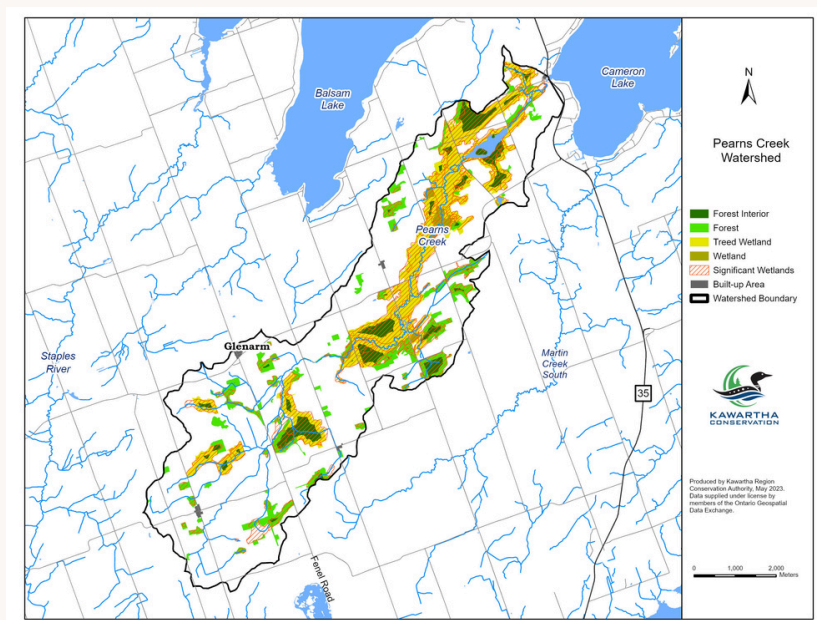
Nonquon River Watershed

A CREEK WITH CULTURAL CURRENTS

Pearns Creek, nestled within a 47 km² subwatershed near Glenarm and Hartley is a smaller watercourse but one that reflects centuries of human interaction with the land. Flowing into Cameron Lake it supports wetland areas, agricultural drainage, and wildlife corridors in equal measure.

“Pearns Creek may not be widely known, but it’s deeply important,” said Aspden. “It connects Indigenous cultural history, farming heritage, and the ongoing effort to protect biodiversity.”

Monitoring in Pearn Creek focuses on nutrient levels to assess for nutrient loading inputs into Cameron Lake.



Pearn Creek Watershed

THE PULSE OF PIGEON LAKE

Finally, Pigeon Lake, part of the Trent–Severn Waterway, is one of the region’s largest and most iconic waterbodies. Stretching nearly 30 km long, it draws thousands of boaters and anglers each summer and serves as a vital link in the tourism economy.

But it’s also a lake under pressure.

“Pigeon Lake receives water from many tributaries - each carrying nutrients, sediments, or pollutants,” said Tregunno. “It’s essentially a collector, and how we manage the surrounding subwatersheds has a direct impact on its long-term health.”

HOLDING THE LINE ON THE LAND

Whether nestled in forest, winding through farmland, or rippling past homes and docks, these five subwatersheds reflect a fundamental truth: all water is connected. And the choices we make - on roadsides, in gardens, on trails, or at the shoreline - reverberate downstream.

“These systems are resilient,” said Aspden. “But only if we pay attention, listen to what the data tells us, and act with the future in mind.”

COMING IN NOVEMBER

We conclude our five-part watershed series with a final look at the subwatersheds that complete the Kawartha Conservation map - and the partnerships and people helping to protect them.

CRISP AIR, COLOURFUL TRAILS: FALL IS THE PERFECT TIME TO EXPLORE LOCAL CONSERVATION AREAS

As the heat of summer gives way to cool mornings and the fiery glow of autumn leaves, Kawartha Conservation's network of conservation areas comes alive with new sights, sounds, and experiences. For residents and visitors alike, fall is one of the best times of year to head outdoors and enjoy a hike.

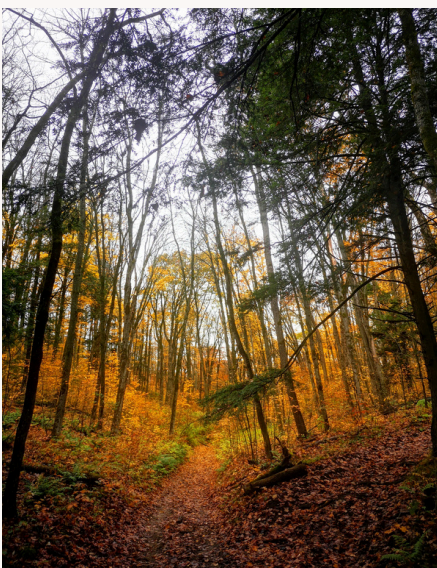
From the towering pines of Ken Reid Conservation Area near Lindsay to the sweeping vistas of Windy Ridge and the peaceful trails at Durham East Cross Forest, each property offers a unique glimpse of the season's beauty. The crunch of leaves underfoot, the smell of wood smoke on the breeze, and the sight of migrating birds overhead create a sensory experience that is both grounding and rejuvenating.

Beyond the scenery, time spent in nature carries lasting benefits. Studies consistently show that hiking and walking outdoors reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve mental health. Autumn, with its crisp air and cooler temperatures, makes these outings even more enjoyable, encouraging longer walks and deeper connections with the landscape.

“Spending even an hour on the trails can reset your perspective,” said Melissa Creasy-Alexander, Coordinator, Conservation Lands. “It’s about more than exercise, it’s about mental clarity, relaxation, and the joy of connecting with the natural world.”

Families will find plenty to explore at Pigeon River Headwaters Conservation Area, where wetlands glow with golden reeds, while nature enthusiasts can seek out wildlife in the quieter corners of Fleetwood Creek Natural Area. Whether it's a solo outing for reflection or an afternoon with loved ones, the region's conservation areas provide space to recharge.

As the days grow shorter, autumn offers only a brief window to enjoy the kaleidoscope of colours and crisp energy of the season. Kawartha Conservation encourages everyone to lace up their hiking boots, grab a warm jacket, and explore the natural beauty waiting just beyond their doorstep.



ALUS KPN: WHERE AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION GROW TOGETHER

On a quiet stretch of farmland in the Kawarthas, a narrow strip of grassland now hums with bees, birds, and butterflies. What was once a low-yield corner of a field has been transformed into a pollinator haven, part of a growing movement where farmers are restoring nature while still working the land.

That transformation is the hallmark of ALUS Kawarthas, Peterborough, Northumberland (ALUS KPN), a program that helps farmers reimagine marginal acres as ecological assets. Instead of struggling with unproductive soil or eroded streambanks, landowners are planting trees, creating wetlands, and building buffers that protect water, soil, and wildlife.

“This program is about recognizing farmers as environmental stewards,” explains Joshua Noiseux, ALUS KPN Coordinator. “They are already working hard to care for their land, and ALUS provides both the resources and incentives to make these projects sustainable for the long term.”



Agriculture Stewardship Technician, Joshua Noiseux

The process is farmer-driven from start to finish. Producers submit an expression of interest, then work directly with ALUS staff to design projects that fit both their operation and the local landscape. Once in place, farmers receive annual payments for maintaining these new features, acknowledging the broader public benefits - like cleaner water, healthier soil, and carbon storage - that flow from their efforts.

For many farmers, ALUS makes business sense. Marginal corners of fields often cost more to farm than they return. Converting them into grassed waterways, riparian buffers, or wildlife habitat reduces input costs while improving resilience to floods, droughts, and erosion.



Native pollinator meadow project

Noiseux points out that the program is not about replacing agriculture, but about complementing it.

“We know that farming is the backbone of our rural communities. ALUS is designed to work alongside food production, not in competition with it. It gives farmers options for how they want their land to contribute to both their livelihoods and the environment,” he explains.

The program also thrives on local decision-making. A Partnership Advisory Committee of farmers and community members helps guide priorities, ensuring projects reflect the region’s unique needs.

And the results extend well beyond farm boundaries.

“When a farmer plants trees along a stream or restores a wetland, the benefits ripple out across the community,” says Noiseux. “We’re talking about cleaner water, healthier soil, more wildlife habitat. It’s good for the farmer, but it’s also good for everyone downstream.”

Looking ahead, Noiseux sees ALUS KPN as a way to build resilience for the future.

“We’re facing pressures from climate change, extreme weather, and biodiversity loss. Programs like ALUS are part of the solution. They give farmers the tools to adapt while creating healthier, more sustainable landscapes for generations to come.”

In fields across the Kawarthas, Peterborough, and Northumberland, the ALUS approach is proving that farming and conservation aren’t opposing forces - they’re natural partners.

To learn more about ALUS, contact Joshua Noiseux by email at jnoiseux@kawarthaconservation.com or by phone at 705-328-2271 ext 227.



Previous wetland project completed through ALUS

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