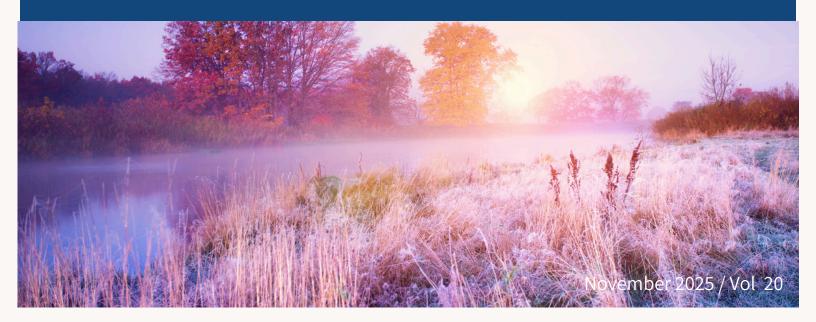


# **Watershed Watch Newsletter**



#### November at Kawartha Conservation: A Season of Reflection, Growth, and Celebration

As November settles in, the crisp air and quiet forests remind us that nature is slowing down, even as our work to protect and restore it continues to grow. This is a season for reflection and gratitude, a time to celebrate the connections between people, place, and the natural world that sustains us.

In this edition of Watershed Watch, we're wrapping up our five-part watershed series, exploring how healthy lands, lakes, and partnerships strengthen our communities and shape the future of conservation across the region. You'll also read about our Tree Planting Program, which is already looking ahead to spring, helping landowners plan new forests, restore shorelines, and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

And, as the holidays approach, we're turning our attention to one of our favourite traditions, Christmas at Ken Reid, returning December 6 with festive lights, wagon rides, and plenty of community spirit.

Whether you're reflecting on the year that's passed or looking forward to what's ahead, we hope this issue inspires you to stay connected to nature, give back to the environment, and celebrate the season with gratitude and joy.

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.

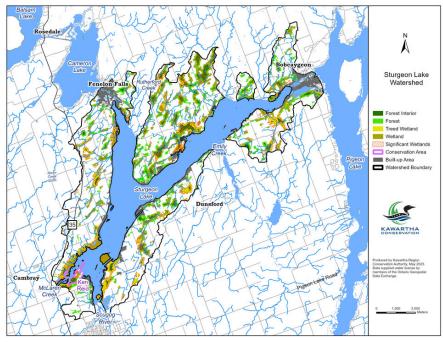
With gratitude for your continued support,

The Kawartha Conservation Team

# THE WATERS WE SHARE: COMPLETING THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE KAWARTHA WATERSHED

The journey that began in the headwaters of the Oak Ridges Moraine now draws to a close along the wide, reflective expanses of Sturgeon and Scugog Lakes. Over the past five months, we've travelled from trout-filled streams and quiet creeks to thriving wetlands and iconic waterbodies, tracing the flow of life through the Kawartha Conservation watershed.

In this final installment of our series, we explore seven essential subwatersheds that help complete the story: Pigeon River, Rutherford Creek, Scugog River, South Lake Scugog, Staples River, Stoney Creek, and Sturgeon Lake. Some are vast, anchoring whole regions. Others are subtle, winding through farms and forests. But each plays a role in shaping the health, history, and future of the lands and communities they nourish.



Sturgeon Lake Watershed

"These final subwatersheds are where everything converges," said Nancy Aspden, Director of Integrated Watershed Management. "They're where water slows down, spreads out, and tells us what's really happening upstream. They're also where we see the greatest potential - for impact, for stewardship, and for resilience."

# **CONVERGENCE AND COMPLEXITY**

At the heart of this month's story lies Sturgeon Lake, a massive, central waterbody fed by more than a dozen tributaries and forming a critical piece of the Trent–Severn Waterway. Spanning 136 km<sup>2</sup> and flowing through communities like Fenelon Falls, Bobcaygeon and Lindsay, it's both a natural treasure and an economic powerhouse.

"Sturgeon Lake acts as a receiving basin," said Aquatic Biologist Brett Tregunno. "It reflects everything that enters it - from the Pigeon and Scugog Rivers to local creeks and stormwater runoff. Our monitoring shows a mix of high-quality inflows and areas of concern, particularly with shoreline development and phosphorus loading."

"Sturgeon is really a tale of two inputs," Tregunno continued. "Relatively clean clear water from Cameron in the northwest basin, as a product of Gull and Burnt, and more murky water from the south basin, a product of Scugog River, and mixed waters of 'in-between' quality in the northeast basin."

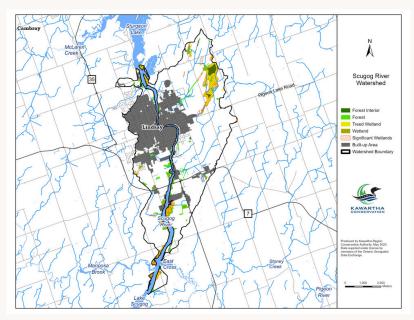
Sturgeon Lake is home to recreational boating, fishing, tourism, and a diverse mix of aquatic life. Yet, it also faces pressure from urbanization, climate change, and invasive species.

That's why, Tregunno noted, long-term monitoring across the lake and its tributaries is key to guiding restoration work and policy.

### THE ARTERIES THAT FEED IT

Among its most prominent tributaries is the Scugog River, which flows north from Lake Scugog through Lindsay before emptying into Sturgeon Lake. Its 301 km² subwatershed is characterized by urban, rural, and agricultural uses - and the impacts are clear.

"Our data shows consistently elevated sediment, salt and phosphorus levels in parts of the Scugog River, especially downstream of urban areas," Tregunno said. "That gives us a roadmap for targeted improvements - things like shoreline buffers, wetland restoration, and improved stormwater management."



Scugog River Watershed

Just east of the Scugog River is the Pigeon River, another large and ecologically rich system. Stretching over 70 km in length and draining nearly 340 km<sup>2</sup>, it is a mix of forested lands, farmland, wetlands, and small communities. The river supports a variety of fish species, including walleye, Brook Trout and smallmouth bass, and is an important corridor for wildlife movement.

"Pigeon River is a conservation priority," Aspden said. "Its wetlands and tributaries offer enormous ecosystem value - from flood storage to groundwater recharge. Protecting Pigeon River Headwaters Conservation Area helps to safeguard those natural services that keep communities and habitat resilient."

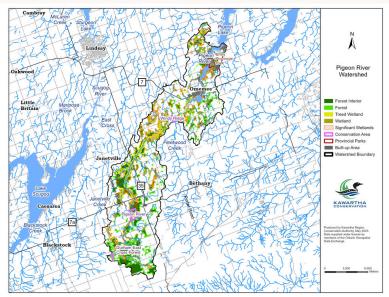
# SMALLER STREAMS, LASTING IMPACT

Flowing into Pigeon Lake are Pigeon River and Nogies Creek, two of the more modest but no less significant subwatersheds in the Kawartha region. Together, they drain nearly 100 km<sup>2</sup> of land, much of it agricultural or low-density residential.

"Pigeon River is a great example of a working landscape," said Tregunno. "It's productive, but it needs care. Nutrient levels in the lower reaches are elevated, and that signals a need for ongoing stewardship and best management practices."

Nogies Creek, meanwhile, flows through more forested and wetland areas, which helps naturally regulate water quality and sediment.

"Even smaller creeks like Fleetwood Creek, which flows into Pigeon, provide essential functions," said Aspden. "They move water, shelter species, and serve as natural infrastructure."

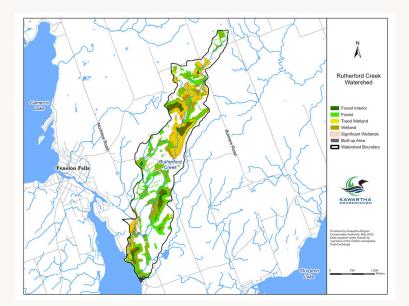


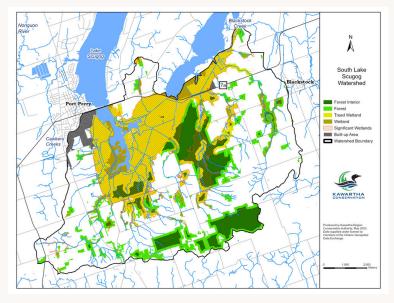
Pigeon River Watershed

# QUIET WATCHERS AT THE EDGE

Rutherford Creek and South Lake Scugog complete the journey. Rutherford, a 17 km<sup>2</sup> subwatershed southeast of Fenelon Falls, contains portions of important wetland and woodlot areas. South Lake Scugog - spanning about 75 km<sup>2</sup> - feeds into the southern end of Lake Scugog, with a landscape shaped by agriculture and rural development.

"These are transition zones," said Tregunno. "They give us insight into how water quality shifts across different land uses, and they help identify where even small changes in practice can yield large environmental benefits."





**Rutherford Creek Watershed** 

South Lake Scugog Watershed

# A WATERSHED IN FULL

As this five-month series concludes, one thing is clear: the Kawartha Conservation watershed is not a collection of isolated lakes and rivers. It's a dynamic, living system - one that breathes, adapts, and depends on thoughtful management and community action.

"The strength of a watershed lies in its connectivity," said Aspden. "Every tributary, every marsh, every creek and lake is part of a shared future. The more we understand that, the better prepared we are to protect what matters most - clean water, healthy ecosystems, and vibrant communities."

### REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

With the full tour complete, Kawartha Conservation will continue sharing monitoring data, stewardship opportunities, and ways the public can get involved - because a healthy watershed is a shared responsibility.

"We've walked the shoreline, we've waded the creeks, and we've listened to the science," said Tregunno. "Now, the next chapter belongs to all of us."

# IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT PLANTING TREES

As the days grow shorter and the first signs of winter settle across the Kawarthas, the busy spring and summer planting season begins to feel far away. But for Kawartha Conservation's Stewardship team, the conversation about trees is a year-round one.

"What we're doing is more than planting trees," said Danielle Marcoux-Hunter, Coordinator of Stewardship.
"We're investing in long-term resilience, for the land, for water quality, for wildlife, and for future generations."

Each year, the Tree Planting Program helps landowners turn open fields into forests, protect fragile waterways with riparian buffers, and establish windbreaks to reduce soil erosion and drifting snow. To make these projects possible, Kawartha Conservation covers up to 85 percent of the planting costs and provides expertise in design, site preparation, and aftercare.

"People are often surprised at how accessible the program is," Marcoux-Hunter explained. "If you have space for at least 500 trees, or about a thousand metres of buffer or windrow, we can work with you to create a plan that makes sense for your property and your goals."

While the planting season is largely wrapped up by November, this is the time when staff begin working with landowners on planning projects for next year. Site visits, project design, and funding arrangements all happen well in advance of spring. "The biggest barrier is often awareness and capacity," said Marcoux-Hunter. "By starting the conversation in the fall and winter, landowners are ready to move forward when conditions are right."

In addition to large-scale planting, the program continues to support the recovery of endangered native species such as butternut trees, which face threats from disease. "Re-establishing healthy butternut populations is very challenging," Marcoux-Hunter noted. "But every project contributes to preserving biodiversity and strengthening our ecosystems."

For Marcoux-Hunter, the message is clear: trees are more than just a seasonal focus.

"They're quiet, patient, they ask for trust. When they take root, they deliver benefits that echo for generations."

For anyone interested in learning more about the Tree Planting Program, or wondering how a project might work on their property next spring, contact Danielle Marcoux-Hunter at Kawartha Conservation by phone or email, 705-328-2271 ext. 242 or

dmarcouxhunter@kawarthaconservation.com.



A 2025 large scale tree planting site within the City of Kawartha Lakes.

## CHRISTMAS AT KEN REID RETURNS DECEMBER 6

The sights and sounds of the holiday season will once again fill the trails and forests of Ken Reid Conservation Area on Saturday, December 6, as Christmas at Ken Reid returns for another year of family fun, festive spirit, and community connection.

This free, family-friendly celebration transforms the park into a winter wonderland, complete with visits with Santa, horse-drawn wagon rides, a Christmas scavenger hunt, Kids' Craft Corner, story walks, and live music throughout the day. Whether you're sipping cocoa by the fire or exploring the trails, the event offers something special for everyone.



The Grinch out for a storybook walk with families that attended 2024 Christmas at Ken Reid.

This year's celebration is made possible through the support of Experience Ontario 2025 and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, along with a growing list of generous community sponsors, including Ari Zider, Jason Richard Real Estate, Nicole Naylor Revel Realty, Matty G Digital, Patton Tree Co., Double R Plumbing, Nix Tire & Auto Repair, Post Church Envelopes, Tina Doyle RE/MAX, Riz Digital, Colin Coppins Electric, Bill's Quality Pest Control, and Pro-Wildlife Services Ltd.

"Christmas at Ken Reid has truly become a community tradition," says Carolyn Snider, Community Engagement Technician. "Each year, we see families returning, children laughing, and neighbours connecting. It's a beautiful reminder of how special our community is, and how, together, we can make the season a little brighter for everyone."

More than 10 local vendors will be on-site offering handcrafted gifts, festive décor, and seasonal treats, creating the perfect setting to shop local while enjoying the holiday spirit. Vendor spaces are limited, and interested artisans are encouraged to apply soon.

Kawartha Conservation continues to welcome sponsors, partners, and donors who would like to help this beloved event grow. Every contribution helps keep Christmas at Ken Reid free, accessible, and memorable for families across the region.

So mark your calendar, bundle up, and join us rain, snow, or shine on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at Ken Reid Conservation Area — where nature meets holiday magic.

Learn more about the event, sponsorship opportunities, or vendor applications at <a href="www.kawarthaconservation.com/festivals">www.kawarthaconservation.com/festivals</a>.