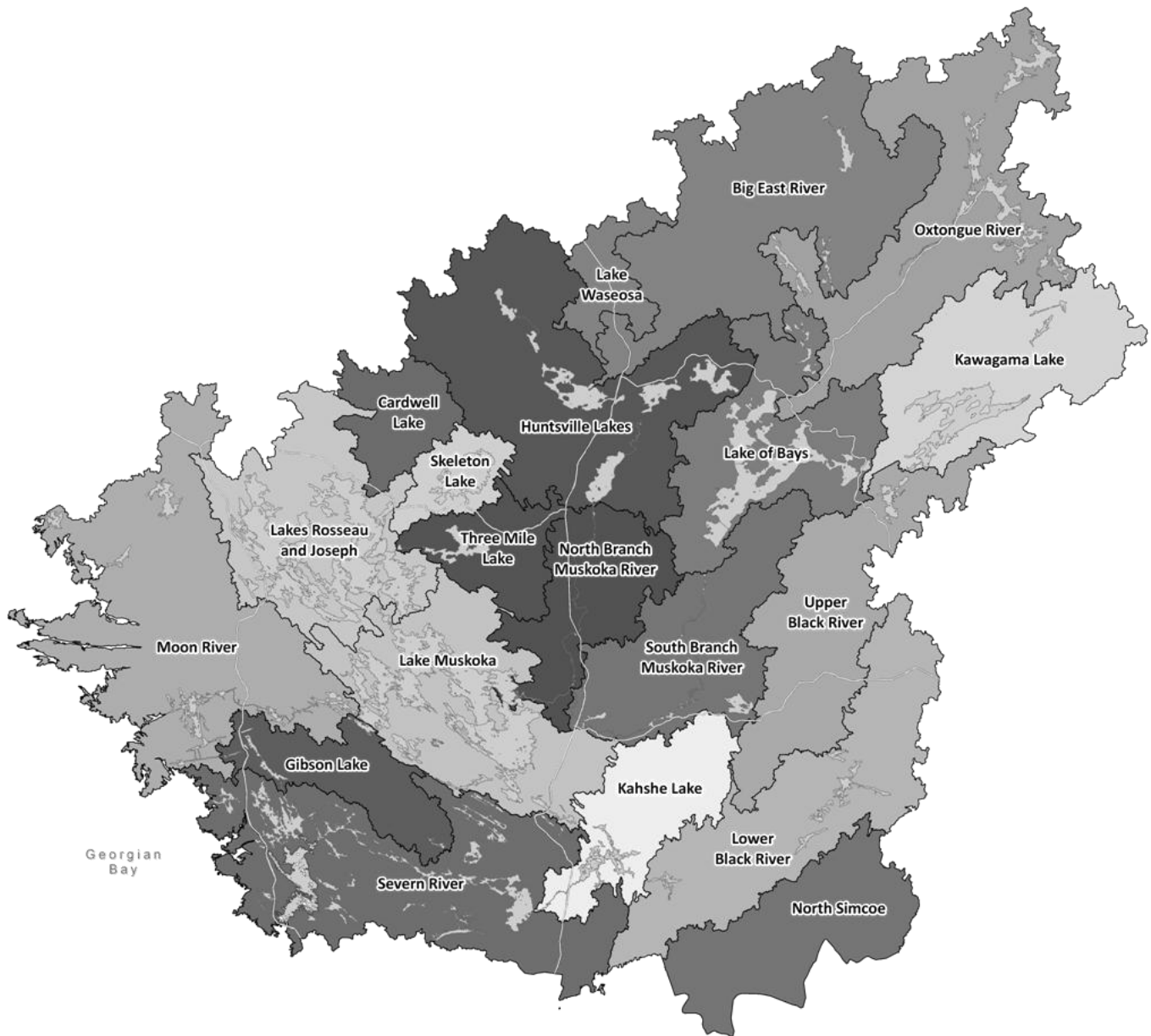




Muskoka
WATERSHED COUNCIL

10 Years of Championing Watershed Health



Summary

Over the past decade, the Muskoka Watershed Council has accomplished measurable success and strong public support in pursuit of its mission – *to champion watershed health*. MWC has proven to be an effective model that achieves objectives by blending modest municipal resources with community-based volunteer expertise. When establishing MWC in 2001, The District Municipality of Muskoka and the Muskoka Heritage Foundation recognized three key principles:

- A strong and independent voice is required to champion watershed health.
- The combined action of individuals or organizations will accomplish more than the action of one individual or organization.
- Proactive approaches increase individual and community environmental stewardship.

The strength of the MWC model is its ability to work with the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, an environmental non-profit organization with interests border-to-border in Muskoka, and with those local municipalities outside of the District of Muskoka that are part of the watershed, to attract both volunteers and funding typically not available to municipalities. With these resources, MWC has undertaken research to support the development and publication of a series of Report Cards on watershed health, stewardship and educational materials, primarily funded by over \$400,000 from non-municipal sources.

Healthy watersheds and large natural areas are the foundation of Muskoka's economy. An important MWC goal over the next decade is to increase Muskoka's profile as a leader in environmental stewardship through development of a process that establishes a monetary value for the goods and services provided by the current high-quality health of Muskoka's lake rivers and large natural areas.

Introduction

As more and more people come to Muskoka as visitors or to live as permanent or seasonal residents, care must be taken to conserve the features that have drawn people to the area over the past century. In the late 1990s the Muskoka Heritage Foundation identified the need to engage a broader cross-section of the population to address watershed issues. Without a Conservation Authority there was no watershed-based organization with a mandate for stewardship and education.

Over the last ten years MWC has developed strong working relationships with all watershed municipalities, many lake ratepayer associations, businesses from across the watershed, and a cross-section of the general public. MWC serves as an umbrella organization that develops materials, assists in securing third-party funding for community-based programs and supports the local efforts of lake associations and other community groups. MWC works in collaboration with community partners and by itself does not have sufficient human or financial resources to undertake significant grassroots program delivery.

Benefit from MWC

The natural environment is the foundation of a sustainable Muskoka. Our lakes and natural areas provide our drinking water, sustain plants and animals, moderate climate and clean our air. They are the essential elements of the scenic beauty that attracts visitors, provides the foundation of our tourism industry and underlies much of our recreation. The lakes, rivers and large natural areas, and their ecosystems are the base of our economy. They are critical to retaining watershed health and water quality. They are fundamental to the quality of life that Muskoka residents value.

The Muskoka Watershed Council brings together local governments, businesses, lake-based ratepayer associations, provincial experts, and the general public to work cooperatively on environmental issues. With the ongoing support of both the District of Muskoka and the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, MWC has been able to:

- Capture the time and perspective of a broad range of community volunteers to sit on the Council and committees, and provide input to its many projects.
- Draw upon the expertise of a wide variety of scientists and other volunteer experts in order to develop sound technical programs and implement a watershed report card program.
- Engage the community in discussion about watershed issues.
- Promote education and stewardship of the watersheds of Muskoka.

In addition, MWC has secured significant funding for watershed programs that benefit all organizations and the watershed at large. A summary of major funded projects includes:

3rd Party Funding		
2001 FedNor	Intern	\$ 50,000.00
2004 Ontario Trillium Foundation	Land Inventory	\$ 49,000.00
2007/08 Ontario Trillium Foundation	Aquatic Inventory	\$ 113,825.00
2008 Ontario Trillium Foundation	CBSM Workshop	\$ 15,000.00
2009 Ontario Trillium Foundation	Stewardship Coordinator	\$ 55,713.00
2005 Federation of Ontario Cottage Association	Doctalk	\$ 17,500.00
2005 - 2010	Best Practices Brochures	\$ 18,000.00
2008 Green Communities	Ecodriver	\$ 1,500.00
2008 - 2011 Green Communities	Well Aware	\$ 56,215.00
2011 Municipalities	Stewardship Booklets	\$ 4,500.00
2011 MLA	Stewardship Booklets	\$ 1,500.00
2011 LOBA	Stewardship Booklets	\$ 1,500.00
2011 Cottage Life	Stewardship Booklets	\$ 2,500.00
2004 - 2011 MNR	Various Project Support	\$ 23,800.00
Subtotal		\$ 410,553.00

Projects are undertaken in conjunction with watershed partners. For example, the best practices brochures often meet a need identified by the Area Municipalities and copies are provided to them for distribution with development applications or are made available at their front counter.

Several of the funded programs rely on third-party grants that are not available to municipalities. For example, the Well Aware program that provides technical advice to property owners on their private wells is funded by a program run by Green Communities Canada.

The recently produced Stewardship Booklets were a collaborative effort of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, Muskoka Watershed Council, MLA, LOBA, and Cottage Life. These booklets will form an important part of the stewardship program for these major lake associations as well as be available for use by smaller associations.

Role of Muskoka Watershed Council

The key objective of the Muskoka Watershed Council is to engage the community in stewardship, provide sound resource material, and report on the health of the watersheds through a variety of mechanisms, including periodic Report Cards on Watershed Health.

Major Activities include:

- Workshops
- National Summits and Regional Conferences
- Best Practices Series
- Position Papers
- Watershed Report Card
- Development of Stewardship Material
- Technical programs

A more detailed listing of MWC activities and products is provided in Appendix A.

Mission

To champion watershed health

Goal

To improve air quality, and sustain and enhance the water and terrestrial ecosystems of the watersheds of Muskoka for the environmental, health, economic, spiritual and intrinsic values they provide.

Objectives

1. Evaluate the Watersheds

Develop and implement science-based programs to research, assess, monitor and evaluate the health of Muskoka's watersheds.

Strategies:

1. Undertake research to better evaluate, understand, benchmark and monitor watershed health;
2. Develop collaborative research relationships with governments, agencies, business, industry, NGOs and associations with shared interests in watershed health, including water quality and quantity, habitat protection, air quality, climate change and land use planning; and
3. Identify watershed health degradation, impairment and poor program delivery, along with watershed health improvement, quality and good program delivery.

2. Advocate for the Watersheds

Advocate for sound air, land and water use planning and management practices and policies that sustain and improve the health of Muskoka's watersheds.

Strategies:

1. Develop timely and informed position papers on watershed health.
2. Advocate for environmentally sustainable urban, rural and waterfront development design standards and best practices that enhance the traditional small town, rural, waterfront and wilderness character of the watersheds.
3. Advocate for sustainable use of natural resources including soils, forests, aggregates, bedrock, water and air.
4. Advocate for behaviour change that supports healthy watersheds.
5. Advocate for the development of plans and programs to rehabilitate degraded areas.
6. Provide comments to municipal governments on matters related to watershed health policy.

3. Communicate and Educate

Develop and implement public information and education programs that promote understanding of the impact of human actions on the watersheds and encourage lifestyle choices that are compatible with healthy and functioning watersheds.

Strategies:

1. Develop and publish the Watershed Report Card every four years;
2. Enhance and promote access to the MWC resource library on watershed health and management.
3. Publish science-based position papers and best practice information.
4. Utilize state-of-the-art methods and techniques to communicate and educate, including publications, electronic media and face-to-face contact.
5. Regularly meet with the Councils of the watersheds' municipal governments.

4. Promote and Demonstrate

Promote and facilitate demonstration activities and best practices that support an environmentally sustainable economy and a healthy community structure.

Strategies:

1. Promote environmentally responsible behaviour by individuals, government, business and industry by demonstrating lifestyle and best management practices that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of watershed communities.
2. Seek out external funding sources to support watershed partner collaboration in demonstrating best practices.
3. Participate in and strongly support various national and international environmentally sustaining behaviour awareness initiatives such as Earth Day and Earth Hour.
4. Develop and promote our own Muskoka-based, environmentally sustaining behaviour awareness initiative.



Muskoka
WATERSHED COUNCIL

**APPENDIX A
MUSKOKA WATERSHED COUNCIL
Programs and Products**

Activity	Details
Lecture Series	2008 Gord Miller (ECO) - Reconciling our Priorities Prof. David Pearson (Laurentian) - Climate Change DESC - 30 Years of Muskoka Data Review
	2009 Prof. Paul Eagles (Waterloo) - Ecotourism Dr. Andrew Paterson (DESC) - Algae in our Lakes Dr. Keith Somers (DESC) - Muskoka Water Quality Data
	2011 Eric Miller (York) - Ecosystem Services Valuation DESC - Biological Indicators of Water Quality Linda Mortsch (EC) - Adaptation to Climate Change
Summits, Conferences and Workshops	2002 Health Watersheds Seminar (150 attendance) 2008 Community-based Social Marketing (150 attendance) 2010 Freshwater Summit (320 attendance) 2011 Muskoka Stewardship Conference (100 attendance)
Stewardship Material	
a. Best Practices Brochures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giant Hogweed in Muskoka - Request of DMM 2. Watch Your Wake - How you can be Wake Wise on the water 3. Low Impact Development Features on Your Property 4. Caring for Wetlands on Your Property 5. Make your Home the Solution to Stormwater Pollution 6. Caring for your Woodlot in the Muskoka-Haliburton-Parry Sound Region 7. Healthy Lawns & Gardens <i>Naturally</i> 8. Caring for your Septic System in Muskoka 9. Caring for your Septic System in Haliburton 10. Protect Your Waterfront Investment - Muskoka 11. Protect Your Waterfront Investment - Haliburton
b. Stewardship Booklets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Living with Beavers 2. Species at Risk 3. Softening a Hardened Shoreline 4. Trail Building
c. Technical Bulletins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean and Green 13 2. Algae in Muskoka 3. Dark Sky Lighting 4. Wastewater Treatment Systems 5. Bacteria Monitoring Protocol
d. Healthy Living Fact Sheets	Lawns & Gardens <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Healthy Lawn Tips 2. Common Lawn Problems 3. Knowing the Conditions in Your Lawn & Garden 4. Aerating Your Lawn 5. Proper Watering Practices 6. Pest Control Strategies for Your Lawn & Garden 7. Composting: Black Gold (Brochure)

Activity	Details
	In the House <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pests in the Home Along the Shoreline <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shoreline Vegetation in Muskoka 2. A Healthy Waterfront 3. Your Littoral Zone 4. Your Shoreline 5. Your Buffer Area 6. Recreating a Healthy Waterfront
Watershed Report Cards	2003 Indicators of Watershed Health 2004 The Watersheds of Muskoka 2007 Strengthening Nature 2010 Partnering With Nature
Position Papers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large Natural Areas - A Literature Review 2. Low Impact Development - Stormwater Management in the Muskoka Watershed 3. Aquatic Invasive Species 4. Monitoring of Municipal Salt Management Plans in the District of Muskoka 5. Muskoka Visioning Program - MWC Submission 6. Climate Change and Adaptation in Muskoka 7. Stewardship 8. Atmospheric Deposition Background Paper 9. Power Generation Position Paper 10. Forest Health Program Position Paper 11. Wetland Policy Paper 12. Bulk Water Removal Position Paper 13. Economic Development Position Paper 14. Stormwater Management Position Paper 15. Aggregate Resources Position Paper 16. Memo re: Ontario's Cosmetic Pesticides Ban 17. Pesticides Background Paper 18. Ontario Living Legacy Program and the Disposition of Crown Lands
Technical Projects and Programs	2004 Muskoka Watershed Inventory (Terrestrial) 2004 Huntsville Stormwater Project 2004 Bracebridge Stormwater Project 2007 Muskoka Watershed Inventory (Aquatic) 2008 – 2011 Muskoka Well Aware Program 2009 Muskoka Envirocredits 2009 Bala Wetland Evaluation
Upcoming Events and Projects	Update to Muskoka Watershed Inventory Ecosystem Services Valuation Project 2012 Muskoka Summit on the Environment 2012 Muskoka Stewardship Conference