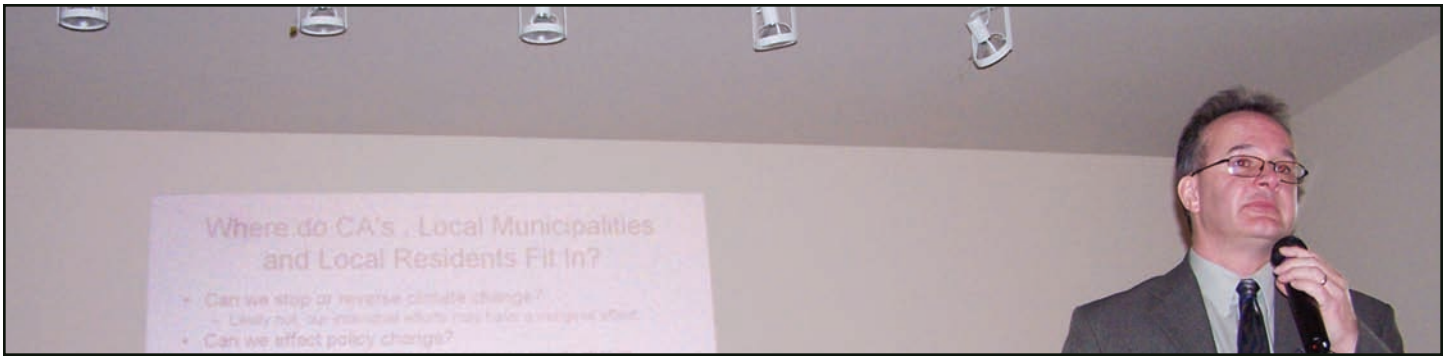


Dwight Boyd, Senior Water Resources Engineer with the Grand River Conservation Authority, took the time to visit the Ausable Bayfield watershed to speak on perhaps the pressing issue of our times: Climate Change.

Building watershed resiliency key, speaker tells ABCA

Building on existing Conservation Authority programs one of best ways to adapt to change

Climate change would have profound effects even if all harmful practices were stopped today, according to a speaker at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority annual awards dinner on March 15, 2007. That's why it's vital to prepare for change by using existing programs to make watersheds more resilient, said keynote speaker Dwight Boyd, Senior Water Resources Engineer with the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Climate change impacts may be disheartening but Boyd offered positive ways local people and organizations can better prepare the local landscape for projected change.

"We can respond to climate change," Boyd told a crowd of 60 people at Ironwood Golf Club, across from Morrison Dam Conservation Area, near Exeter. "Working together and focusing our collective efforts, with local landowners, agencies, partners and volunteers, we can make watersheds and the local landscape more resilient."

Our local actions may provide minimal immediate impact to slow down climate change, Boyd said, and most policy changes to limit climate change have to come at the international, national and provincial levels. However, local landowners, municipalities and Conservation Authorities can help mitigate against some of the expected consequences of climate change. "Tried-and-true conservation practices give us something we can rally around, something on which we can build programs," he said

Climate change impacts may include warmer climate

CLIMATE CHANGE

and overnight temperatures, more extreme events, severe rainfall events, ice storms, rapid melts, more frequent and prolonged droughts, shifts of storms into spring and fall seasons and possibly more snow in some areas (in close proximity to the Great Lakes) or less in others.

Potential consequences of climate change include increased flooding, bank erosion and soil erosion, lower water tables, less baseflow, reduced fisheries, wetland and marsh habitat, degraded water quality, poorer air quality and changed vegetation and agricultural crops.

Landowners can use existing government and Conservation Authority programs to create riparian buffer strips and use minimum tillage practices, Boyd said. By using existing programs they can create a green filter, make watercourses more resilient to erosion, promote self-healing after a weather event, improve soil structure and help reduce soil erosion, particularly from severe weather events. This helps keep soil on the landscape and out of watercourses, he said.

Other strategies to adapt to climate change include wetlands enhancement and restoration, reforestation, implementing good risk management policies, floodplain management, subwatershed planning and storm water management.

Boyd is a member of the Ontario Climate Change Advisory Committee. He pointed out the irony that he is an engineer but that many of the successful means to adapt to climate change will come from non-engineered solutions such as buffer strips.

Public of Old Ausable Channel area move project forward

Moving from planning to implementation phase

Landowners can protect rare aquatic species, prevent the spread of non-native plant species and enhance water quality in the Old Ausable Channel (OAC) by modifying landscaping practices on their property, 50 interested residents of the Grand Bend area were told at a public meeting on Saturday, March 24, 2007.

Five speakers at the Grand Bend Royal Canadian Legion hall shared ways property owners can reduce or eliminate pesticides, plant native grasses and plants, have septic systems inspected and otherwise protect the unique ecostystem of the Old Ausable River Channel.

The speakers included Kari Killins, Aquatic Biologist with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA); Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator; Ian Jean, ABCA Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist; Old Ausable Channel Long–Term Management Plan Steering Committee Co–Chair Tom Purdy and Ray Letheren, of Friends of the Bayfield River.

Local property owners have identified water quality and education as the two top priorities for plans to protect the channel, Killins said.

Killins updated the crowd on the progress of the OAC Long–Term Management Plan including the development of a technical research literature review and compilation of existing data and research, a clean–up day, workshops and education outreach materials, and creation of a steering committee that has met five times and is continuing to meet.

Gaps in knowledge about water quality along the channel were identified as part of the planning process and water quality monitoring has been introduced at two sites to fill in some of the information gaps, she said.

Jean said residents have an important role in preventing the spread of invasive non-native plants and the transportation of insect pests through the relocation of firewood.

"One important thing we can do is not moving firewood around," he said.

Residents are encouraged to keep buffers in their yard, have septic systems inspected, plant native species around woodlots and find alternatives to lawn chemicals.

Jean said landowners should work with suppliers who can ensure nursery plants originate from the seeds of native species. Gardeners who want to introduce plants with bright colours should consider wild geraniums and wild violets and not non-native species that could crowd out existing plants and threaten ecosystem diversity.

It takes "hard work and perseverance" to eradicate invasive species, said Jean, and "it's much easier to prevent their introduction in the first place than to remove them after they're established."

Letheren said dozens of pesticides can be detected in groundwater sources and residents can reduce potentially harmful chemicals by replacing conventional lawns with alternative grasses or native plants. "It will make your channel a better place for fish species and for people," he said.

Volunteer Tom Purdy gave the crowd a challenge, saying "if we do our jobs right our grandchildren will be able to (enjoy the wildlife we enjoy today)."

The meeting was followed by a Lake Huron Coastline Stewardship Guide workshop.

Volunteer Barb Ferris was thanked for her volunteer efforts developing and maintaining the visually–attractive and content–rich Old Ausable Channel website.

For more information on efforts to protect the Old Ausable Channel visit **oldausablechannel.ca** or **abca.on.ca** or phone **519-235-2610** or **1-888-286-2610**.

OLD AUSABLE RIVER CHANNEL

ABCA employee graduates as Young Conservation Professional

Edited remarks by Tom Prout, representing Conservation Managers at Latornell Symposium

Hope for the Future

General Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Tom Prout was selected to present remarks of congratulations, on behalf of environmental managers, to graduates of the 2007 Young Conservation Professionals (YCP) program on Friday, Nov. 16 in Alliston at the 14th Annual A. D. Latornell Conservation Symposium. ABCA Aquatic Biologist Kari Killins was a graduate of the 2007 YCP program. The following are excerpts from the remarks made by Tom:

I am very pleased to be here and to be a part of today's recognition of young professionals in the field of conservation. These individuals have a passion for making a difference in our environment.

As a young person starting a career I had the pleasure and privilege of knowing Art Latornell. Art was a mentor for me, not the only mentor but a very important one. Over the years I got to know Art well, I developed a deep appreciation for his interest in not just helping young people, but letting young people develop their knowledge and professional careers. To the organizers and supporters of the Young Conservation Professionals (YCP) program, and to the past, present and future participants – the Young Conservation Professionals – I want you to know that Art would be pleased.

I would like everyone here to take a look at the A.D. Latornell logo which you can find around the room – if you are not familiar with the symbolism on the left side of the tree trunk are our Young Conservationists, symbolized by youth, and on the right is a mentor. We know who the YCP are and I challenge the managers in the room to take up the role of the mentor.

To the managers in the room, I want you to think about the young staff in your organization who want a challenge and who want to stretch their comfort zone. These individuals would make perfect candidates for the YCP Program. You can let these individuals develop their career interests and open doors for them by sponsoring them as a YCP. At the same time you will also be helping your organization grow and maintain a high level of quality staff.

As managers you need to develop a workplace environment in which employees trust their supervisors and feel that they contribute to worthwhile goals of the organization. Your work place needs to accommodate mistakes, as mistakes are made by all of us, and mistakes help us learn.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority staff member Kari Killins (front, second from left) was one of the graduates of the Young Conservation Professionals program, honoured at the A. D. Latornell Symposium. Conservationist Justin Trudeau (back, far left) spoke at the event.

Tom Prout, ABCA General Manager and Secretary Treasurer, represented environmental managers in 2007 when he congratulated graduates of the Young Conservaton Professionals program at the A. D. Latornell Symposium.

I have the honour of representing the managers in the room and extending to the 2007 YCP graduates our collective congratulations. Congratulations for a job well done, for taking the initiative to be a YCP, for your interest in making our world a better place to live and for your role as leaders in conservation.

Congratulations on being a great example of teamwork. You have combined your talents for a common goal and today you share the rewards of a job well done.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, jointly with partners, organized a tree planting workshop called *Planting Trees in a Climate of Change* in 2007. Winter snowstorms forced two cancellations, and speakers and nursery donors were forced to stay the night, but eventually the event was held and about 70 people attended. The workshop was a chance for landowners to learn about how they can maximize their chances of success when planting and the ways tree planting can help prepare properties for resiliency in face of the projected impacts of climate change. Clockwise from bottom left, speakers included Lois Sinclair (OSCIA); Steve Bowers (Huron Stewardship Council); Ron Thayer and Ken Maronets (Perth Stewardship Network).

ABCA shows landowners how they can adapt to change

'Tree Planting in a Climate of Change'

Two different winter storms forced the cancellation of the *'Tree Planting in a Climate of Change'* workshop in Exeter but the 'third time was the charm' as sunny skies shone on Monday, March 26, 2007 and 70 people attended the event at the Masonic Hall in Exeter.

"I was very encouraged by the enthusiasm of the participants and thank them for coming out," said Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

Speakers at the event included Jean; Brian Swaile, Trees Ontario Foundation; Ron Thayer, Forestry Consultant; Steve Bowers, Coordinator of the Huron Stewardship Council; Ken Maronets, Coordinator of the Perth Stewardship Network; and Lois Sinclair, Huron County representative with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA).

The speakers shared information and answered questions about planting buffer strips along watercourses, planting to increase the size of forests and planting windbreaks along field edges. Landowners learned about funding programs to help cover the cost of their planting project and about the importance of site preparation to maximize the chances for success. They also learned proper care and handling of stock and selection of native species most suited to their individual site.

TREE PLANTING WORKSHOP

The Huron Stewardship Council and the Perth Stewardship Network joined with the ABCA to host the workshop. Six private nurseries provided door prizes which were appreciated by those who attended.

The information session was funded in part through Greencover Canada (GC), a program of the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), a Federal–Provincial–Territorial initiative. The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association administers Greencover Canada on behalf of Agriculture and Agri–Food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

For more information on tree planting programs please phone Ian Jean at the ABCA at **519-235-2610** or **1-888-286-2610** or e-mail **ijean@abca.on.ca**

Jim Ginn named new Chair of Water Response Team

Conserving water resource

Central Huron farmer and municipal councillor Jim Ginn was named Chair of the Ausable Bayfield Water Response Team (WRT) in 2007.

"This team has an important role to play making people aware of low–water conditions and the way individuals and organizations can preserve the water supply upon which we rely," said Ginn.

Conservation of water resources is a good idea at any time but local people, businesses and municipalities were asked to pay special attention to low–water advisories during the dry summer of 2007.

WRT Chair Jim Ginn.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority added a dynamic new low–water advisory alert tool on its website in 2007 at **abca.on.ca**

Three levels of low–water advisories can be issued: Level 1; Level 2 and Level 3. Level 1 involves a request for a 10 per cent voluntary reduction in water use, Level 2 calls for an additional 10 per cent voluntary reduction in use (for a total of 20 per cent) and Level 3 may involve mandatory water use restrictions.

The Water Response Team was formed on a watershed basis to develop actions suited to local needs regarding current low–water conditions. The team uses a combination of water data, provincial and local legislation, communication techniques and local tools to advocate for water conservation.

Voting members on the local WRT include representatives from municipalities, aggregate producers, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, golf course owners, vegetable growers and food processors and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Non-voting members include representatives from Ontario Ministries of Environment; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and Natural Resources. Staff from the ABCA provide technical support for the program using information from the existing precipitation, water level and groundwater monitoring networks.

In cases of extreme drought, the WRT ensures that key local and provincial decision–makers participate actively in the process to see that water allocation decisions are understood, supported and enforced.

LOW WATER RESPONSE

The Ausable Bayfield Water Response Team was originally formed in 2001. The WRT formation was made possible by the Ontario Low Water Response Plan, which was created following extremely dry weather in 1999. The plan is intended to ensure provincial preparedness, to assist in coordination and to support local response in the event of a drought.

The Ausable Bayfield Water Response Team reviews watershed conditions on a monthly basis. It is possible that a low–water advisory could be in effect at a time when the ground is wet and rivers appear to be flowing above normal. However, the WRT still feels that Low Water indicators need to be looked at based on no shorter than monthly information.

"A good example of why this approach is needed can be seen with a heavy rainfall occurring in a very dry period," Scott said. "For a couple of days, the ground may be wet and stream flows elevated, but then everything dries up and we return to the original conditions. For reporting low water conditions, we don't want to be jumping in and out of advisories on a daily or weekly basis."

This approach is supported by the indicators that are used to determine watershed conditions – monthly precipitation, three-month precipitation and monthly flows.

For a factsheet with water conservation tips visit mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/water/p774.html; ene.gov.on.ca/cons/3780-e.pdf; ene.gov.on.ca/cons/3781-e.pdf; www.gov.on.ca/omafra.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority staff will continue to monitor rainfall and streamflow data and keep the public informed of any changes in watershed conditions.

Television crew visits Rock Glen Conservation Area

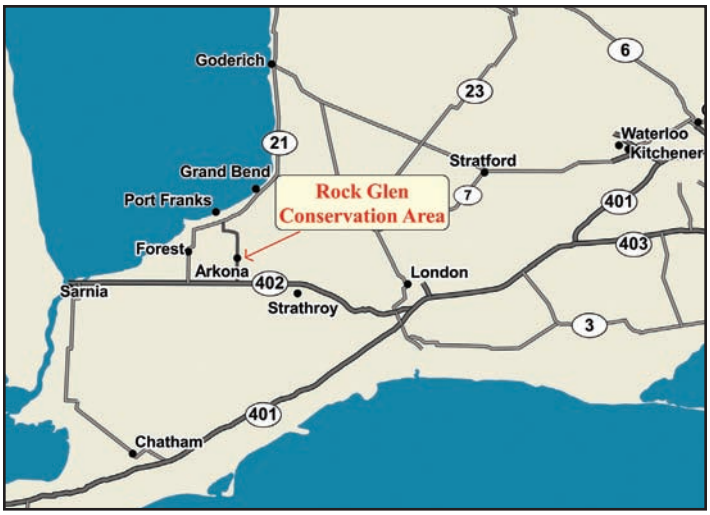
By Tim Cumming, ABCA Communications Specialist

Chinese-Canadian crew prepares news feature on falls, museum

A television crew from Fairchild Television visited Rock Glen Falls at Rock Glen Conservation Area near Arkona on May 4, 2007.

The Fairchild Media Group prepared a feature news item on the area, including the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre and its globally significant collection of fossils and indigenous artifacts.

Camera operator Obi Lo aims his lens up, way up, towards the top of majestic Rock Glen Falls at Rock Glen CA near Arkona.



The news team interviewed Arkona businessperson and secretary of the Arkona and Area Business Association, Judy McLellan, and Julie Hicks, Conservation Education Specialist with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

Inside the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre, McLellan answered questions about the collection of fossils and indigenous artifacts there that draws geologists from around the world. Interviewing her was Arlene Tang, script supervisor with Fairchild Television. Camera operator Obi Lo videotaped the interview with the help of assistant Amy Leung.

McLellan recalled the collection of fossils donated by Ted Baxter and applauded the work of the Arkona Lions Club. She also mentioned the accessible trails, and the important balance of conservation of the significant site with enjoyment of this worldwide attraction. Visitors come to the museum and Rock Glen Falls from the United States, Germany, the Netherlands and from many other locations around the Globe.

The Fairchild Television feature news item was prepared in Cantonese and Mandarin, and it was expected to be broadcast in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver and perhaps even in Hong Kong.

Rural landowners protect water quality through projects

A Diverse Watershed

Farmers and rural landowners in Ausable River and Parkhill Creek watersheds are improving water quality and protecting wildlife habitat through voluntary projects on their properties.

Stewardship projects to improve water quality have been identified in the Ausable River Recovery Strategy for species at risk. We need to protect this highly diverse aquatic community that has historically supported more than 83 fish species, 24 species of freshwater mussels and more than 21 reptile species.

This variety of aquatic life makes the Ausable River one of the richest watersheds of its size in Canada. Several of the species found in the Ausable River have been listed as special concern, threatened or endangered at the provincial, national and/or global levels. Protecting and improving the river will help the long-term survival of aquatic species – especially those at risk – and help watershed residents use and enjoy the river.

Freshwater mussels are disappearing across North America. The fact we have them in the Ausable River Watershed reflects the positive stewardship actions taken by landowners. That's one of many reasons it's so important stewardship efforts continue and increase.

These programs to support your watershed stewardship efforts are coordinated by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority in partnership with the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and the Ausable River Canada–Ontario Agreement for Lake Huron.

Grants may cover up to 100 per cent of direct costs incurred by landowners. The following stewardship projects may be eligible for funding, sometimes up to 100 per cent:

- Fences, crossings and watering devices to eliminate cattle access to watercourses.
- Planting trees, shrubs and grasses in floodplains and valley lands.
- Planting trees, shrubs and grasses to establish buffer strips along watercourses.

A Record of Success

There have been 78 on–the–ground stewardship projects funded in Ausable River and Parkhill Creek watersheds since 2003, through the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, improving 5,450 hectares of land. This includes 44 tree planting projects, 14 livestock fencing projects and 20 manure or conservation tillage equipment modifications.

One of the many watershed stewards in this area is Bill Thirlwall, of the Denfield area. Bill and his wife Sylvia farm together and own Bonnie Brook Farm. The land was settled by Bill's great grandfather and the family homestead was built in 1839.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Middlesex Stewardship Committee member Bill Thirlwall has been planting trees for 25 years. He is one of many landowners doing protective projects.

"I plant trees every year," Bill said. In 2006, Bill retired and reforested 15 acres of sheep pasture situated in the floodplain and valleylands of Lenders Creek, part of the Nairn subwatershed of the Ausable River.

The ABCA planted more than 8,000 tree seedlings to naturalize the site. Half a kilometre of watercourse is now protected by a treed buffer on both sides, with buffer width ranging from 40 metres to 100 metres. This project, combined with earlier projects on adjoining properties, completed the buffering of both sides of Lenders Creek between McEwen Drive and Greystead Drive in Lobo Township.

The project received funding from the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the Ausable River Canada–Ontario Agreement (COA) for Lake Huron; and Ontario Power Generation.

Bill, who is a member of the Middlesex Stewardship Committee, contributed considerable time and effort to prepare the site and continues to do work related to ongoing site maintenance. "Continuing to plant trees is really important, I think," Bill said. He has praise for the funding programs available to help landowners initiate new stewardship projects. "It's really been a help," he said. "They're a wonderful thing."

You can make a difference

The Ausable River Recovery Strategy has identified 20 different categories of Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) you can consider to help protect and improve habitat for aquatic species at risk.

You can leave local legacy through many different ways

Have you thought of making a donation to a local environmental project that will benefit generations to come? "It can be a small donation, or a big donation, it's all important," said Judith Parker, Secretary of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation.

Canada's tax incentives for charitable donations are designed to make it easier for you to support your local environmental project. It may be helpful to find out the advantages of some forms of donations, according to local financial advisors.

As a result of the 2006 federal budget, there are increased tax benefits of donating securities and mutual funds to charity. When you're doing your tax and estate planning it's helpful to know how to maximize the positive benefits of your donation. For financial information related to donations contact your local financial advisor.

For information on how you can 'leave a local legacy' contact the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority at **519–235–2610** or **1–888–286–2610** or e–mail **info@abca.on.ca**

Families create lasting local legacy through donations

Willert-Ross Tract established

Two area families left a local legacy in 2007 through generous donations to preserve a forested property in the ecologically–important Hay Swamp. A donation from the family of Reit and Fred Willert, of Grand Bend, and a bequest from the late Georgina Catherine Ross, made the preservation of the significant site possible. "Without their contributions we wouldn't have been able to protect this important local wetland," said Tom Prout, General Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

The 25–acre parcel of property (Lot 9, Concession 7 of the former Hay Township) was purchased on March 30, 2007 and will now be known as the Willert–Ross Tract. Members of the Willert family were present for a short ceremony on May 26, 2007 at the site, located on the Parr Line, west of Exeter, in the Municipality of Bluewater.

Donations from the Willert and Ross families combined to raise more than half of the cost of the site. The purchase of this significant natural area was also made possible by the property's previous owners, who agreed to retain the property until donated funds were available to purchase the site for future generations. Provincial grants for land acquisition have not been in place in recent years and that makes private donations crucial for the preservation of existing lands of environmental significance.

"The Hay Swamp complex is only half of its original size so it's important to conserve what remains," said Kate Monk, ABCA Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor.

The Willert–Ross Tract is a completely forested property that has forested ABCA conservation lands on three sides and is accessible by foot. The property is an excellent example of a mid-aged Sugar Maple Deciduous Forest, she said.

"As part of the larger forested complex within Hay Swamp, this section is supporting a regionally-significant natural area and nearby provincially-significant wetlands." The important interior forest habitat supports bird species which require large tracts of forest.

The Willert–Ross Tract contains two important and distinct forest communities including an 11–acre Lowland Hardwood Forest and wetland, and a 14–acre Upland Hardwood Forest, on land that has never been ploughed.

PRESERVING WETLANDS FOR FUTURE

Swamps are forested wetlands, the most common type of wetland in the Ausable Bayfield watershed. A swamp can help allow rain water to remain relatively clean as it travels to the aquifer.

"More than 40 per cent of the world's species are found in the freshwater wetlands that cover only one per cent of the Earth's surface," according to Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator. "Wetlands in Canada provide food, water, breeding, nesting and resting areas for 600 species of wildlife, plants and organisms."

The habitat provided by local wetlands provides people with opportunities such as bird-watching. An increase in extreme weather conditions such as flooding and drought, forecasted with climate change, may emphasize the need for a system of functional wetlands across our countryside that can balance water storage and release.

The important functions of a wetland include: habitat for plants and wildlife, water storage, improved water quality from the wetland's natural filtration functions, removal of some suspended sediment and pollutants, regulation of groundwater recharge, maintenance of soil moisture and potential reduction of downstream flooding, soil erosion and surface drain maintenance.