

Ausable Bayfield

# Watershed Report Card

2013





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## Executive Summary

Welcome to the Watershed Report Card 2013 for watersheds of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) area. We hope this report, a follow-up to our first watershed report card in 2007, provides meaningful information for landowners and community groups interested in taking action to protect our local environment.

Report cards based on forest conditions, wetland cover, surface water quality, and groundwater quality were completed for 16 watersheds in the ABCA area. These include the Bayfield River (three watersheds), Ausable River (eight watersheds), Parkhill Creek (two watersheds), Mud Creek, and smaller Lake Huron watersheds (two areas). Grades from 2013 were compared between watersheds of the ABCA area and with the Watershed Report Card 2007.

Provincial indicators of forest health and surface water quality were recommended by Conservation Ontario to standardize the reporting process across the province. Forest condition indicators include percentages of forest cover, forest interior, and streamside cover. The percentage of wetland cover, which is separate from the forest conditions category, is a new indicator for this edition of the watershed report card. Surface water quality indicators include total phosphorus, *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), and benthic invertebrates. Groundwater quality was also added as a new category, for which nitrate and chloride were recommended as indicators.

Forest conditions remain limited in the Ausable Bayfield watersheds. Grades ranged from A to D, with most watersheds receiving a D grade. Slight reported increases in forest cover and forest

interior are likely the result of using more detailed mapping for this watershed report card.

Wetland cover in the Ausable Bayfield watersheds is also limited. Grades ranged from B to F, with most watersheds receiving F grades. More wetlands are needed in strategic locations across the watersheds.

Water quality has remained steady for most watersheds. Grades ranged from A to D, with the majority of watersheds receiving C grades. Compared with the Watershed Report Card 2007, in which only one watershed met the recreational guideline for E. coli, eight watersheds now meet this guideline. Furthermore, two watersheds (Bannockburn and Main Bayfield) have had measurable improvement in the concentrations of total phosphorus and E. coli.

Groundwater quality, throughout the Ausable Bayfield watersheds, is generally good. Several wells, however, tend to approach the drinking water standard for nitrate and the guideline for chloride, and therefore received less than an A grade.

Protecting and improving watershed health will require different approaches. These include actions individuals can take on their properties, community actions, and actions by agencies. Each local watershed report card suggests appropriate actions for each of these groups. When these actions are implemented together, they will have positive cumulative effects. We can measure our collective efforts with every new report card and determine the best ways to continue to protect, improve, conserve, and restore the watersheds in partnership with the community.



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### Principal Contributors:

Brynn Upsdell, Rob Carnegie, Tim Cumming, and Christina Baranik

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