



WATERSHED NEWS

AUSABLE BAYFIELD CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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Huron landowners complete hundreds of projects but more can still be done with help of program

Landowners have completed more than 600 projects to protect water quality in Huron County, thanks to the county's Clean Water Project.

Huron County has demonstrated a commitment to protecting and improving water quality through this initiative. Trees have been planted, cattle have been fenced out of watercourses, erosion has been controlled, wells have been decommissioned and many other improvements have been made possible because funding is in place.

Despite the good work, more projects need to be done to continue to improve and protect water quality. The county has committed another \$250,000 to the program this year, according to Kate Monk, Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

Huron County residents can receive up to 50 per cent funding for voluntary projects that are approved



The ABCA's Kate Monk helps landowners use funding programs to support their environmental improvements.

by a review committee that includes community members. Activities eligible for consideration include clean water diversion, wellhead protection, manure storage decommissioning and community projects, in addition to others already mentioned.

More than \$500,000 grants have been

paid towards clean water initiatives over the past three years. Each dollar provided by the county leads to an additional three dollars of work completed through additional contributions by property owners and complementary programs from national, provincial and local sources.

"The combined partnership of landowners, Huron County and other program partners has resulted in almost two millions of dollars worth of practical, on-the-ground work to protect and improve our local water," said Monk. "Every county dollar works like four to protect water quality in Huron."

The Huron County Clean Water Project is delivered by Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities. For information on how the Huron County Clean Water Project can help you protect and enhance water quality visit abca.on.ca or mvca.on.ca or call 519-335-3557, 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

Huron County's Clean Water Project is local success story

The Huron County Clean Water Project is entering its fourth year and has been a local success story.

Since the Huron Clean Water Project's inception in May of 2005 there have been 145 well decommissionings, 141 wellhead protection projects, 120 fragile land retirements, 101 septic reinspections, 56 clean water diversions, 38 erosion control projects and 26 livestock fencing projects. The Clean Water Project has facilitated projects totalling \$1.974 million in total cost, resulting in the planting of tens of thousands of trees, thousands of metres of buffered watercourses, and dozens of acres of block plantings on erosion-prone lands.

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More than 20,000 children, teachers and others have enjoyed the nature experience of Ontario's longest continuously running outdoor residential conservation education opportunity, Sylvan Conservation Program at Camp Sylvan. Part of the unique experience for students is sleeping overnight in covered chuckwagons (see photo above).

Student becomes teacher, returns to Camp Sylvan to create new generation of memories for his class

A teenaged boy stayed overnight in a pioneer-style covered chuckwagon in a frontier-style setting at Camp Sylvan back when he was a Grade 8 student. The experience was so memorable he brought his own students back to that recreated pioneer outpost when he became a teacher.

"I had a good time at Camp Sylvan," remembers Mr. Dusko Cvetkovic, a Grade 6-7 teacher at Caradoc North Public School near Strathroy, Ontario. "It was one of my good memories from public school so I thought I would bring my own students here to share the same positive experience."

The Sylvan Conservation Program outdoor education experience was created in 1964 and is now Ontario's longest continually running overnight program of its kind.

More than 20,000 students, teachers, parents and visitors have taken part in the Camp Sylvan residential conservation education opportunity, which is delivered by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

The camp is owned by Scouts Canada and is located southwest of Parkhill. The 350-acre pristine nature area offers diverse forests, ponds, streams, fields and meadows.

Students attending the Sylvan Conservation Program take active part in an ecology-based outdoor experience where they sleep overnight in chuckwagons and learn how to build covered shelters out of natural sources and to filter water. They play and eat together and they attend educational programs on topics such as water quality, orienteering, forest conditions and the positive roles of trees and survival



Teacher Dusko Cvetkovic, who had gone to Camp Sylvan in Grade 8 and returned as a teacher with his students, oversees shelter building.



Grade 6 student Alexis de Laronde peers out of her covered wagon after staying overnight at Camp Sylvan.

activities.

ABCA Conservation Education Specialist Julie Hicks is a teacher who attended Camp Sylvan in Grade 8 and liked it so much she volunteered there right from high school through university and now runs the program.

"Learning in an outdoor environment gives students the opportunity to make connections with nature and experience lessons first-hand through the use of props, demonstrations, hands-on and interpersonal activities," she said. "These connections encourage lifelong learning and respect for nature and the environment."

Some of Cvetkovic's class visiting Camp Sylvan this year had never gone camping before, he said. Camp Sylvan doesn't just have academic value, he said. "It's the life lessons they learn that are most important."

Some of those life lessons include putting your sleeping bag away and cleaning up the camp - and lots of



students said that was their least favourite part of the Sylvan experience. Students interviewed at Sylvan recently rated the 'Go Wild' survival program as one of their favourite activities.

"The best part was the survival game, you got to run a lot," said Jaiden Clark-McKnight, a Grade 6 student who also took an active interest in a water filtering exercise.

Former ABCA Conservation Education Specialist Matt Redmond, now a teacher, said spending days and nights immersed in the environment provides children with a sense of connection beyond what single-day field trips can



provide. Camp Sylvan's impact on children and adults has been nothing short of incredible, according to Redmond. "For some it has changed the way they look at a snake, bird, tree or stream," he said. "For some it has changed the way they relate to their peers and teachers and for others it has literally been a turning point in their lives."

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In photo at left, Denise Biega, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Supervision Technician, and student leader Rachel Mungar, supervise students. Above, pioneer-style Frontier House at Camp Sylvan.

SYLVAN CONSERVATION @ CAMP SYLVAN

ONTARIO'S LONGEST-RUNNING OVERNIGHT OUTDOOR ED CONSERVATION PROGRAM

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Ontario's longest continually running residential outdoor conservation program is going strong and students still learn about their natural surroundings, sleep overnight in covered wagons and learn the value of hard work.

Rachel Mungar was an 18-year-old Grade 12 student at South Huron District High School last academic year. She served as a Junior Leader at Camp Sylvan. She remembers coming to Camp Sylvan as a Grade 7 student.

"It was fun," she recalled. "We played games and had a good time and got to know some stuff about nature and it was a good chance to get outside."

The teacher who returned with his students wasn't the only adult who remembers Camp Sylvan days. The current General Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the ABCA, Tom Prout, attended the camp as a child many decades ago. In fact, the experience led him to pursue conservation as a career path.

"After one trip to Camp Sylvan my career path was set," Prout remembers. His Grade 8 yearbook even lists him as 'most likely to become manager of the conservation authority.'

Scouting groups and non-profit, youth-oriented groups regularly enjoy camping at various locations at Camp Sylvan on weekends. The Conservation School uses the Frontierland site during the week. (For information on the camp facility you can visit online at: swscouts.on.ca/campbookings1/1sylvan/SylvanCampPage/). The Thomas Tract and Ausable Gorge are located on the west side of Camp Sylvan and this is one of only two designated Natural Heritage sites in Lambton County. The Carolinian forest that is an important natural feature distinctive to this part of Ontario is present at the Sylvan site. Scouts Canada has recently worked with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to plant prairie grass on the



Jaiden Clark-McKnight filters water.



Lauren Bourke tries out shelter she and her classmates built.

Thomas Tract uplands. This will be developed during the next two years with nature trails through the grass.

Many outdoor education programs have been cut or scaled back because of funding constraints but the Sylvan Conservation Program at Camp Sylvan remains strong because teachers who have experienced its benefits make a point of working tirelessly to give the Sylvan experience to their students. Businesses and individuals are encouraged to sponsor a class at Camp Sylvan. For information on how to bring this unique outdoor educational experience to a new generation of young people, contact Julie Hicks at 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

For more information on the Sylvan Conservation Program visit abca.on.ca



Kevin Lutowicz holds tinder for a campfire.

Seniors to enjoy walk-and-talk at renowned fossil site

Active local seniors have the opportunity to experience one of the world's renowned fossil sites and see a scenic area waterfall during a nature walk-and-talk that is third in a four-part series.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is hosting 'From farming to fossils, stories of Rock Glen's history,' the third of four environmental events for seniors. The event takes place on **Tuesday, August 12** from **10:00 a.m. until noon** at Rock Glen Conservation Area, near Arkona, site of the gorgeous Rock Glen Falls and the world-renowned Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre.

"Archaeologists have been travelling to Rock Glen and surrounding area in search of unique fossils for decades," said Julie Hicks, ABCA Conservation Education Specialist.

Local, active seniors have shown their interest in nature activities through



George Stasik, of Exeter, and Dave Robinson, of Thedford, witness majestic Rock Glen Falls near Arkona during one of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's Walk-and-Talk events. Tuesday, August 12 is the date of the third in the four-part series – with an emphasis on fossils, at Rock Glen Conservation Area, an internationally renowned site for fossils.

attendance at the Walk-and-Talk nature series, Hicks said. "The participation in the active seniors' series shows that within the watershed, there are many active retirees interested in learning more about the natural heritage found in our conservation areas," she said.

Anyone is welcome to attend. Interested people can join ABCA staff at the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre at Rock Glen. Participants are encouraged to bring a hat, a bottle of water, and hiking shoes, as they will be taking the stairs down into the Gorge in the Conservation Area. The cost is \$5 per person and beverages will be available afterwards (please bring your own mug).

Rock Glen Conservation Area is located at 8680 Rock Glen Road, Arkona, Ontario, just two kilometres northeast of the village of Arkona (40 minutes west of London and east of Sarnia). The gatehouse number is 519-828-3071.

For more information on the Seniors Walk-and-Talk events, phone Julie or Denise at 519-235-2610 or 1-888-286-2610, e-mail jhicks@abca.on.ca or dbiega@abca.on.ca or visit abca.on.ca

Bayfield North Watersheds community takes active role in providing input to planning process through open houses

Residents of the Bayfield North Watershed are offering input into concerns and management options through a series of public open-house meetings.

Concerns and proposals from residents will become integrated into a larger document to be entitled the *Bayfield North Watersheds Plan*.

The Bayfield North Watersheds Plan Advisory Committee, along with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), have begun their series of open-house presentations at the Bluewater Golf Course. The series began on July 15, and was scheduled to continue until July 30.

The goal of the open houses is to gain feedback from residents. This community-led watershed plan, which is an Environment Canada initiative, aims to protect and enhance the area north of Bayfield. This plan

will include two main components: a characterization of the watersheds for the entire area between Bayfield and Goderich, and a concerns and management options section, which will address watershed issues which have been identified by the community.

"These open houses have provided a great opportunity for watershed residents to provide input into the future of their community," said Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator. Residents are providing direction for a plan which will help to protect and enhance the water quality and forest conditions of their local watershed areas, she said.

Landowners who live north of Bayfield have received mailed invitations to attend open houses specific to their small watershed. In total, five open houses – which include scheduled presentations at the beginning of the

meetings, were scheduled. After these open houses conclude, the Bayfield North Watersheds Plan Advisory Committee will meet to consolidate the information gathered at the open houses. This information will then be presented back to the larger community at a public meeting scheduled for early September.

If you would like more information about this project please visit abca.on.ca or contact Abigail Gutteridge at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) at 519-235-2610 or 1-888-286-2610 or e-mail agutteridge@abca.on.ca

The final presentations were scheduled for:

Saturday, July 19, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, July 22, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 30, 7 p.m.