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The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) acknowledges the original stewards of this land, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe. We recognize the Huron Tract Treaty signed in 1827. We recognize that this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources including plants and animals, in peace. As shared stewards of this land and water, the ABCA is grateful to have the opportunity to work in this territory.

Staff of the ABCA took many of the photos except where credited otherwise.

The Forest Conditions aerial photo on Page 8 is by A. Moore.

The pitcher and water glass photo on Page 25 is by Daniel Holm, The Word & Image Studio.

The colourful cover crop photo on Page 30 is taken at GerardCornelisFarms Inc.



### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Welcome to the Watershed Report Card 2023. We hope this report provides meaningful information for landowners and community groups to help protect and enhance the watersheds of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) area.

Report cards are based on forest conditions, and surface water and groundwater quality, in 16 subwatersheds in the ABCA area. These subwatersheds include three Bayfield River subwatersheds, eight Ausable River subwatersheds, two Parkhill Creek subwatersheds, the Mud Creek subwatershed, and two smaller Lake Huron subwatersheds.

Compared with the previous Watershed Report Cards (2007, 2013, 2018), grades have remained steady for all indicators, and have ranged from A to D.

Water quality has remained steady for most subwatersheds. Grades ranged from A to D, with most of these subwatersheds receiving C grades.

Most subwatersheds received a D grade for forest conditions, indicating 'poor' conditions across much of the ABCA area.

Groundwater quality is generally very good throughout our area but some monitoring wells failed to meet the drinking water standard for nitrate and the guideline for chloride. Therefore, they received a 'less than A grade.'

When it comes to environmental improvement, thinking about your backyard creek, and its contributing watershed, is an important first step. Taking conservation action, as an individual and as a community, helps us to protect our biodiversity and respond to a changing climate.

These report cards help us to understand our local area better and to guide us in the following ways:

- Save natural areas that need protection,
- Seed areas with native plants, and
- Steward our working landscape.

Each subwatershed report card suggests conservation actions. When these actions are implemented together, they will have positive effects for our communities.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Principal Report Contributors: Ian Jean and Tim Cumming

Many individual and community actions noted in the Ausable Bayfield Watershed Report Card 2023 are facilitated by funding from our local member municipalities and the Ontario Ministries of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and Natural Resources and Forestry; and the federal departments of Fisheries and Oceans Canada; and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) would like to acknowledge the support of our partners in the provision of data used in grading the indicators presented in this Watershed Report Card:

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region – GIS mapping

Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) – Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping data

Land Information Ontario (LIO) - GIS mapping data

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Land use and soil information

Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks – Laboratory water quality analysis and GIS mapping data

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry - Species at risk and aerial photography Water Resources Information Program (WRIP) - GIS mapping

We would like to thank Renee Sandelowsky and Kate Monk for their insightful and thorough review of this Watershed Report Card.

Funding for the report cards, from our member municipalities, is gratefully acknowledged.



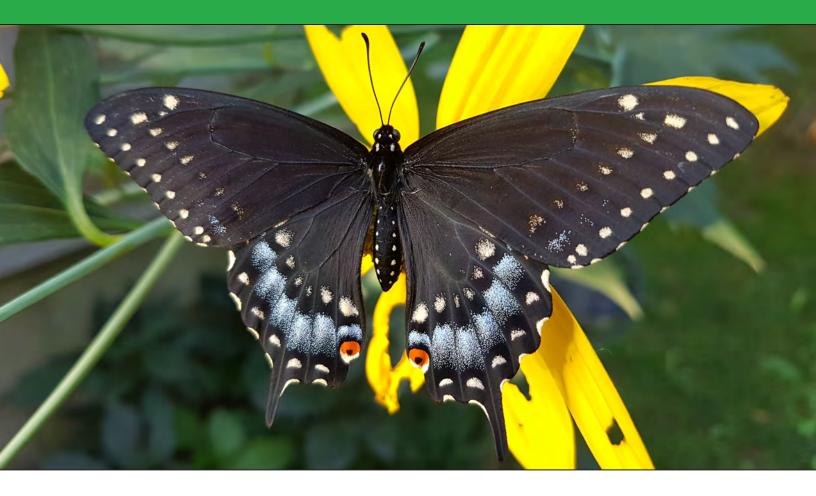
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