

# Ausable Bayfield Watershed Report Card 2013



## Where are we?



## What is a watershed?



A watershed is an area of land drained by a river or stream. Streams flow into rivers, which eventually flow into the lake. A watershed is connected. Actions within a watershed affect the quality of water downstream.

## Why measure?

Measuring helps us better understand our watershed. We can focus our work where it is needed and track progress. We measured:



Groundwater  
Quality



Surface Water  
Quality



Forest  
Conditions



Wetland  
Conditions

## What is a watershed report card?

Ontario's conservation authorities have developed watershed report cards that are prepared every five years. These report cards use consistent standards across Ontario to report environmental information to you.

### Grading

<b>A</b>	Excellent
<b>B</b>	Good
<b>C</b>	Fair
<b>D</b>	Poor
<b>F</b>	Very Poor



Ausable Bayfield Conservation has prepared this report card as a summary of the state of your forests, wetlands, and water resources.

We are one of 36 conservation authorities under Conservation Ontario's umbrella.



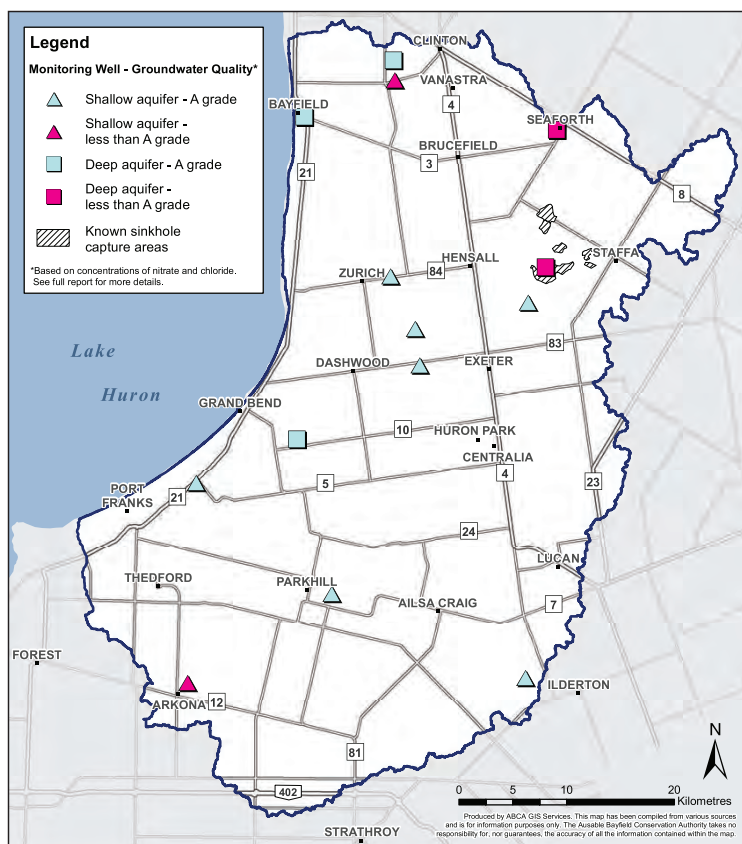


## Groundwater Quality

Concentrations of nitrate and chloride were measured at 14 Ontario Ministry of the Environment monitoring wells. (Learn about groundwater at [sourcewaterinfo.on.ca](http://sourcewaterinfo.on.ca))

### What did we find?

- Nitrate and chloride concentrations are better than the drinking water guidelines in most wells (A grade).
- Concentrations of nitrate and chloride approach or exceed the drinking water guidelines at some wells, resulting in a poorer grade (less than A grade).
- The quality of your well water may vary from that of the monitoring wells. In some instances, the location of wells was chosen to monitor local issues.

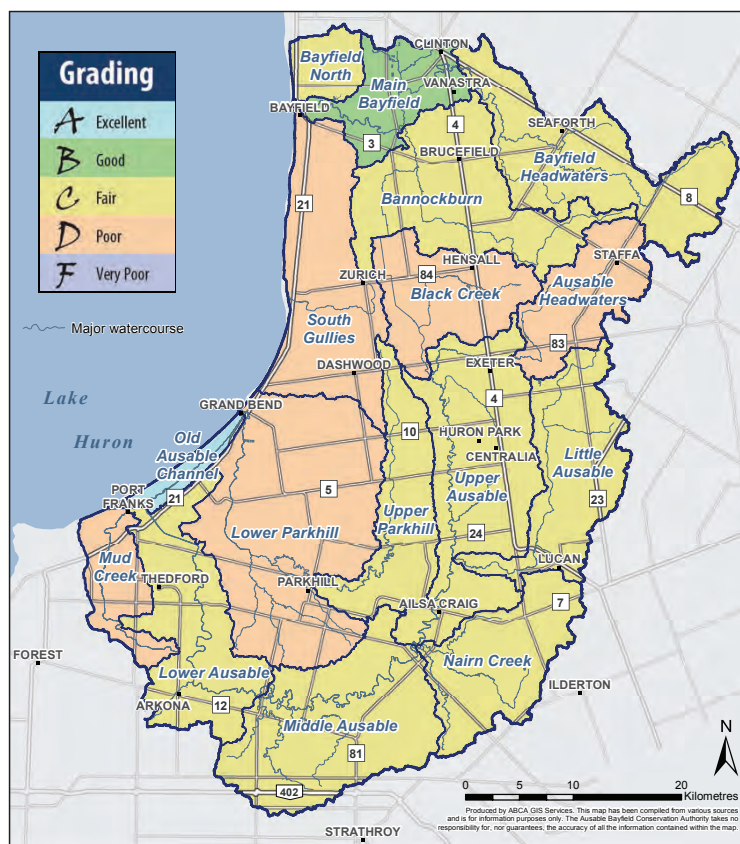


## Surface Water Quality

Concentrations of phosphorus and *Escherichia coli* (bacteria) were measured at Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Ausable Bayfield Conservation stations. Benthic invertebrates (small aquatic animals living in the sediment) were also identified. The type and number of these animals are measures of water quality.

### What did we find?

- Grades range from A to D, with mostly C grades.
- Most watersheds remain steady – since the last reporting period – however, there have been improvements within the Bannockburn and Main Bayfield watersheds. (Visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) to compare 2007 and 2013 report cards).





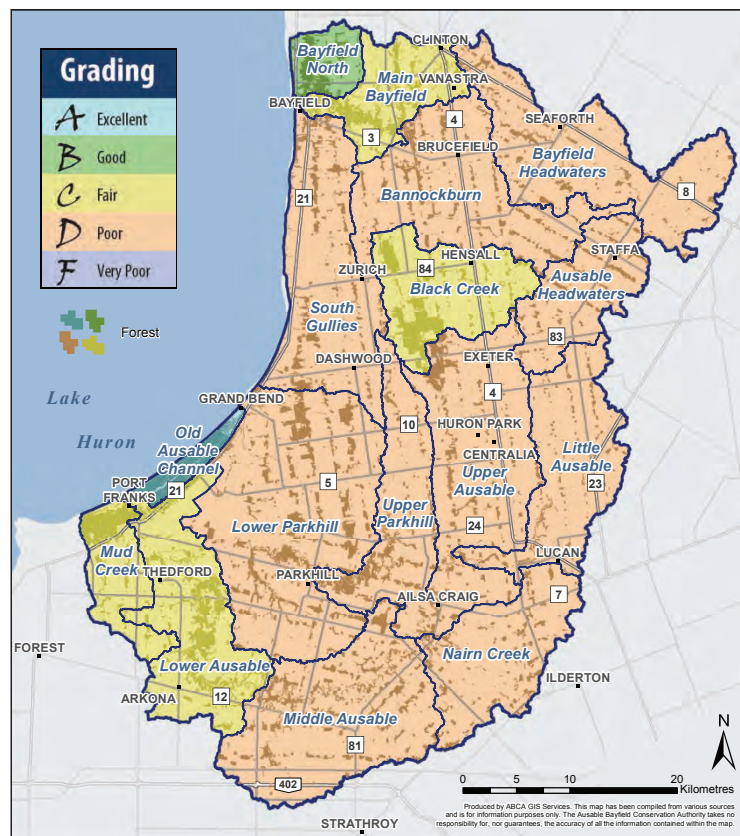
## Forest Conditions

The percentages of forest cover, forest interior, and streamside cover were measured with Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

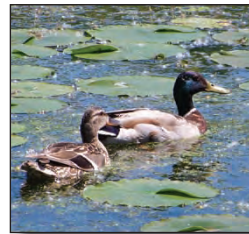
### What did we find?

- Grades range from A to D, with mostly D grades.
- Forests grow slowly, but environmental benefits begin as soon as trees are planted. Changes in forest cover will be noticed in five years or more.

For more details about the information found in these maps, visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) or contact us. You can find our contact information on the back panel.



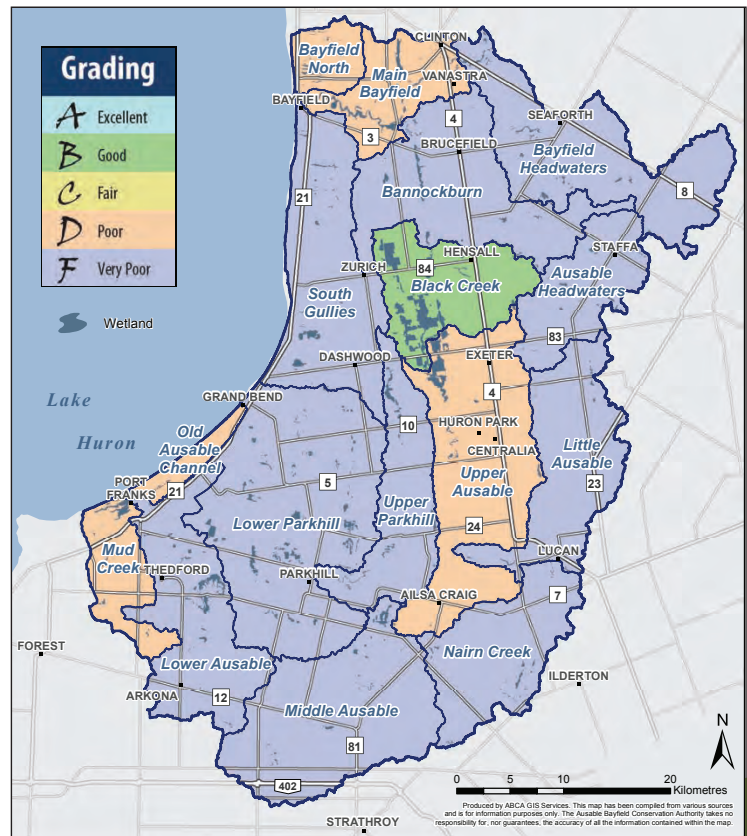
## Wetland Cover



The percentage of wetland cover was measured with Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

### What did we find?

- Grades range from B to F, with mostly F grades.
- Only 2.4 per cent of the Ausable Bayfield area is covered by wetlands.
- More wetlands are needed in strategic locations across local watersheds.



## What is our watershed's key issue?

### Non-point source pollution:

- Comes from many sources
- Occurs when rain or snowmelt runs off fields, streets, or backyards
- Carries soil particles and pollutants to water bodies and groundwater

### What actions could you take to reduce non-point source pollution?

- Conserve and connect existing woodlands.
- Create natural landscapes to filter stormwater.
- Control soil erosion through the use of grassed waterways, berms, cover crops, and crop residue.
- Apply nutrients at rates and times that optimize crop uptake.
- Dispose of chemicals properly through household hazardous waste days or drop-off locations.

*See the back panel for more actions to reduce non-point source pollution.*



### What local actions have been taken?

- Community-based watershed plans and strategies near Bayfield, Grand Bend, and Port Franks have highlighted actions for local agencies and individuals.

*Please see:*

- [www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=bayfield-north](http://www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=bayfield-north)
- [www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=old-ausable-channel](http://www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=old-ausable-channel)
- [www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=port-franks](http://www.abca.on.ca/page.php?page=port-franks)
- Community plans are required for more local watersheds.

## How can we enhance the watershed?

### What can you do?

- Plant native trees and shrubs.
- Inspect and pump out your septic system every three to five years.
- Create wetlands to maintain water balance during wet and dry periods.
- Reduce the amount of household chemicals you use and store – such as antifreeze, paint, lawn chemicals, detergents, and cleaners.
- Ensure manure storage facilities are adequate.

*See previous panel for more ideas.*



### What can your community do?

- Support ongoing improvements to municipal infrastructure.
- Direct development away from areas of environmental significance.
- Support local initiatives to monitor water quality and quantity.

### What can agencies do?

- Protect wetlands.
- Green their operations.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of environmental programs.

*Do you have questions not answered by this summary document?  
Visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) for the full report or contact us for more information:*

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