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CHANGING SEASONS, PLENTY AHEAD

November brings shorter days, cooler mornings and a different view of the watershed as the last leaves fall. At Kawartha Conservation, it also brings a busy mix of work for the months ahead, from planning spring planting projects to preparing for a favourite holiday tradition.

In this issue of Watershed Watch, we look ahead to Christmas at Ken Reid on Saturday, December 5. With wagon rides, live music, visits with Santa and more, there's plenty to get excited about. We hope you'll make plans to join us for a day outdoors with family and friends.

It's also time to start thinking about what could take root next spring. Our Annual Seedling Sale opens in November, offering trees and shrubs for a range of properties and planting goals. For farmers and agricultural landowners, the ALUS program offers another way to plan ahead, with practical and financial support for environmental projects that fit their operations.

We also share an update on the transition to the Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority, or ELORCA. As preparations continue, our focus remains on the local programs, services and relationships that residents and communities depend on.

The season may be changing, but the work continues. We invite you to explore this month's stories, find an opportunity that interests you and stay connected with what's happening across your watershed.

The Kawartha Conservation Team

A LITTLE CHRISTMAS MAGIC IS COMING TO KEN REID

A visit with Santa, a horse-drawn wagon ride and an afternoon outdoors with family and friends. Christmas at Ken Reid returns Saturday, December 5, 2026, and there's plenty to look forward to. Admission is free.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will be stopping by, along with the Grinch, who may need a little help finding his Christmas spirit. Enjoy live music by Gerald Van Halteren, balloon animals by SuperNova Fireworks, and a chance to see birds of prey with The Eyrie.

Horse and wagon rides will offer another way to enjoy the conservation area, with a midday break for the horses. There will also be crafts and a vendor market to browse as you make your way around the festivities.

Whether Christmas at Ken Reid is already part of your family's holiday traditions or this will be your first visit, we hope you'll join us. It's a chance to bundle up, spend time together and enjoy the season in the forest.

Shuttle service will run throughout the day, with pickup locations still being finalized. Keep an eye on our website for shuttle information, activity schedules and everything you'll need to plan your visit.

Save the date and visit our [Christmas at Ken Reid webpage](#) for event details and updates.



PLAN FOR SPRING WITH KAWARTHA CONSERVATION'S ANNUAL SEEDLING SALE

A little planning this fall can set the stage for new trees and shrubs next spring. Kawartha Conservation's Annual Seedling Sale opens in November, offering property owners an opportunity to choose plants that suit their space and planting goals.

Whether you have acres of land or a small yard, the sale offers a variety of tree and shrub species for those looking to add shade, create privacy, support wildlife or enjoy the natural beauty of trees.

“Planting starts with thinking about what you want to achieve on your property,” says Hunter Girdler, Forestry and Landowner Services Technician at Kawartha Conservation. “Whether your goal is shade, wildlife habitat or privacy, the Seedling Sale gives you options to choose species that suit your space.”

The sale runs until March, giving residents time to explore the available species and plan their orders. Seedlings are offered in bundles of 25 of the same species, with a selection of specialty species also available for those looking to add something different to their landscape.

Property owners choose what to plant and where, allowing them to shape a planting project around their own interests and needs.

“You don't need a large property to make trees and shrubs part of your landscape,” says Girdler. “If you have questions about the available seedlings, we're here to help you explore your options.”

Visit the Seedling Sale link on Kawartha Conservation's website for available species, pricing, ordering information and other details.

For questions about the sale or available seedlings, contact Hunter Girdler at hgirdler@kawarthaconservation.com.



Forestry and Landowner Services Technician, Hunter Girdler and Community Engagement Technician, Carolyn Snider at the 2025 seedling pickup day.

LOCAL ALUS PROGRAM SUPPORTS FARMERS IN GROWING NATURE ALONGSIDE AGRICULTURE

Marginal farmland can produce something valuable beyond a crop: cleaner water, wildlife habitat and a landscape better able to manage heavy rainfall and dry conditions.

Through ALUS Kawarthas Peterborough Northumberland, farmers and agricultural landowners can receive technical and financial support to create environmental projects that deliver those benefits while fitting the needs of their operation.

The voluntary program supports projects on working landscapes and provides annual per-acre payments for the ecosystem services they produce and the ongoing stewardship needed to maintain them.

Delivered locally by Kawartha Conservation, the program recognizes farmers as environmental stewards and partners in addressing local environmental challenges. A Partnership Advisory Committee made up primarily of farmers, alongside community and conservation representatives, helps guide the work.

“Farmers know their land and where the opportunities are,” says Tom Tiisler, Agricultural Stewardship Technician with Kawartha Conservation. “Our role is to work with them on projects that fit their operation, provide practical support and recognize the ongoing stewardship that creates benefits for the whole community.”

Projects can take several forms, depending on the property and the farmer’s goals.

Wetland excavation, restoration and enhancement can help retain water on the landscape and create wildlife habitat. Treed and grass buffers beside rivers, wetlands and other water features can help filter runoff and protect sensitive areas.

Pollinator habitat and wildflower meadows provide food and shelter for beneficial species. Tree planting projects, including windbreaks, shelterbelts and block plantings, offer additional opportunities to establish natural features on agricultural properties.

Grassed waterways and water control measures can help manage runoff and erosion. The program also supports alternative management practices, such as delayed haying, which can help ground-nesting birds complete their nesting season.

“A wet area, a field edge or a patch of marginal land can each offer different possibilities,” Tiisler says. “We can help farmers explore those options and develop a project that makes sense for that particular property.”



Tree planting project that was established in October 2026.

The local program targets projects on marginal agricultural property that provide a direct environmental benefit to agricultural property. For participating farmers, that creates an opportunity to improve less productive or environmentally sensitive areas through projects suited to their farm.

Support includes technical assistance with planning and implementation, along with annual payments for enrolled project acres. Those payments recognize the continued management of environmental projects and the benefits they provide over time.

“Establishing a project is the beginning,” Tiisler says. “Keeping it healthy takes ongoing care, and the annual payments recognize that commitment and the ecosystem services farmers are producing year after year.”

Participation is voluntary, and projects are developed with landowners to reflect the conditions and priorities of their operation.

Many funding sources require an Environmental Farm Plan. The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association offers free workshops to help farmers assess environmental strengths and risks on their properties and develop an action plan. Completing the process includes preparing the plan and submitting it for confidential review.

For farmers interested in ALUS, an initial conversation with program staff can help identify potential projects and clarify eligibility, funding requirements and next steps.

The program brings together agricultural knowledge and conservation expertise to help farmers create, restore and enhance natural spaces, with benefits extending beyond the farm gate.

Farmers and agricultural landowners can learn more and submit an expression of interest at kawarthaconservation.com/landowner-services/alus-kawarthas-peterborough-northumberland/



Tallgrass prairie project implemented in October 2026.

CONNECTED BY WATER, WORKING TOGETHER: THE TRANSITION TO ELORCA

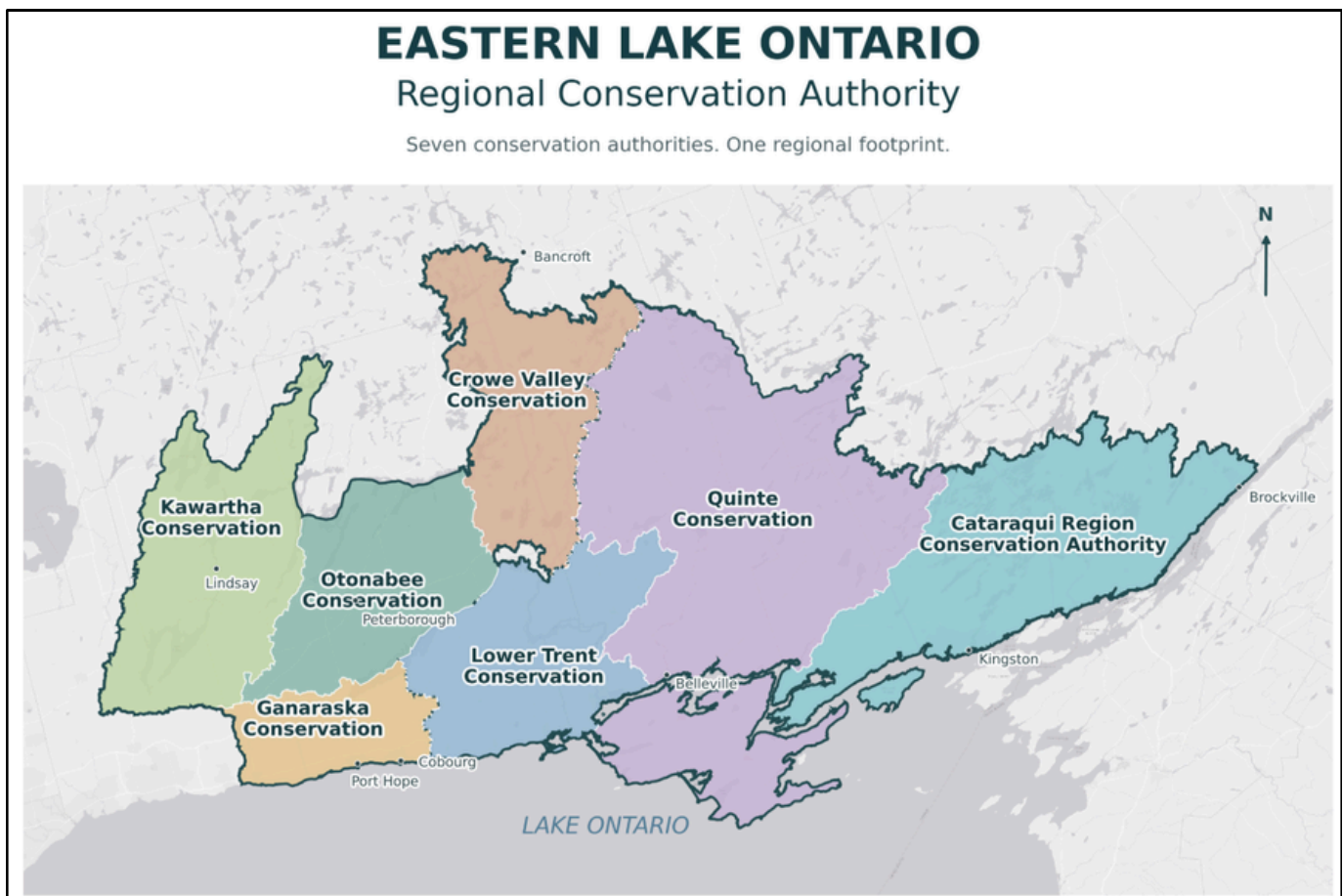
Change is coming to Ontario's conservation authorities. But for the people who rely on Kawartha Conservation, much of the work they see happening every day will continue.

On February 1, 2027, Kawartha Conservation is scheduled to become part of the Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority (ELORCA), joining six other conservation authorities as part of a province-wide consolidation.

The new regional authority will bring together Kawartha Conservation, Otonabee Conservation, Crowe Valley Conservation Authority, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, Lower Trent Conservation, Quinte Conservation, and Cataraqui Conservation.

It's a significant change to how conservation authorities are organized. But it doesn't change why the work matters. Residents will still need information about flooding. Landowners will still need help understanding permits and development requirements. Municipalities will continue to rely on watershed science and technical expertise. And the work of monitoring water quality, restoring natural habitats, supporting landowners, and caring for conservation areas will remain important across the region.

Maintaining these services and providing continuity for the people and communities who depend on them is a key focus as the transition moves forward.



Different Watersheds, Shared Challenges

Take a look at a map of eastern Ontario and one thing becomes clear. Our communities may be separated by municipal boundaries, but the natural environment doesn't follow those lines.

Rivers and streams connect to larger lakes. Wetlands help store water and reduce flooding. Forests, agricultural lands, and natural areas all play a part in keeping watersheds healthy.

And across the region, many communities are dealing with similar challenges.

Heavy rainfall can cause flooding in one watershed while another experiences erosion or rising water levels. Extended dry periods can affect streams, wetlands, agriculture, and local water supplies. Development continues to place pressure on natural systems, while changing weather patterns are making it increasingly important to understand how our watersheds respond.

These aren't challenges unique to Kawartha Lakes. They're being experienced across eastern Ontario.

And that's where bringing together seven conservation authorities creates some interesting possibilities.

Each organization has spent years, in many cases decades, building knowledge about its local watersheds. Staff have studied rivers and lakes, mapped floodplains, monitored environmental conditions, worked with farmers and landowners, and developed programs to address local needs.

There's a tremendous amount of practical knowledge across these organizations.

Bringing that experience together creates opportunities to share what works, learn from one another, and find better ways to tackle common challenges.

A successful shoreline restoration project in one watershed could help inform similar work somewhere else. Research into changing water levels or precipitation patterns could provide useful insights for neighbouring communities. Staff working on flood forecasting, stewardship, or water quality monitoring could benefit from sharing approaches, data, and technical expertise.

Not every watershed is the same, and what works in one place won't necessarily work everywhere. That's why local knowledge remains so important.

But there is real value in having more people, with different experiences and areas of expertise, working through similar challenges together.

Local Knowledge Still Matters

For decades, Kawartha Conservation has worked alongside municipalities, landowners, residents, and community partners to better understand and care for the local environment.

That work has built relationships, trust, and a detailed understanding of the lakes, rivers, wetlands, and landscapes that make this area unique.

Those relationships matter. So does the knowledge that comes from spending years working in a particular watershed, understanding its history, and seeing firsthand how conditions change over time.

The transition to ELORCA provides an opportunity to connect that local experience with the knowledge and resources of a much larger region.

It also means recognizing that a watershed in Kawartha Lakes may face different conditions and priorities than one closer to Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River.

Working together doesn't mean those differences disappear. It means there is an opportunity to learn from them.

Preparing for What's Next

There are still details to work through as the seven conservation authorities prepare for the transition. The Province, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, and the participating organizations continue to work on the arrangements needed to establish the new regional authority.

Throughout this process, Kawartha Conservation will continue providing information to residents, municipalities, landowners, and community partners as decisions are made and details become available.

For now, the focus remains on delivering the programs and services people depend on, while preparing for what comes next. There's something fitting about bringing these organizations together. For all the different communities, landscapes, and watersheds across eastern Ontario, we have a great deal in common.

We share changing weather patterns, growing communities, environmental pressures, and a responsibility to understand and protect the natural systems around us.

And while the transition will change how conservation authorities are organized, the importance of the work remains the same.

Healthy watersheds, safer communities, and a better understanding of the natural environment.

That's work worth continuing. And it's work worth doing together.



For more information on how Kawartha Conservation can help.
Conservation Lands: conservationareas@kawarthaconservation.com
General info: geninfo@kawarthaconservation.com
Permitting: permits@kawarthaconservation.com
Planning: planning@kawarthaconservation.com