

Forest Management

Conservation Halton manages more than 10,000 acres of natural lands to enhance the biodiversity and health of the watershed and provide critical greenspace for rapidly expanding communities. This landbase includes more than 7,500 acres of forested lands, much of which is located in conservation areas and resource management sites. This fact sheet provides details on our forests and the management program for these important natural lands.



Hilton Falls is one of the largest forest tracts in southern Ontario

- Conservation Halton manages its forests on a watershed basis. Watershed based forest management practices are supported by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Scientific research supports this approach which involves protecting core natural areas that are connected to other public and forested sites. This network of watershed forests, also referred to as a natural heritage system, can then be linked to broader features such as the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine and the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. An example of this in Conservation Halton's watershed is the protection and management of the Hilton Falls forest complex.
- The Hilton Falls forest complex is one of the largest tracts of continuous forest along the Niagara Escarpment in southern Ontario. The area provides refuge for a high diversity of plant and animal species requiring large tracts of forest to maintain viable populations. The area, which includes Hilton Falls Conservation Area (1700 acres), several Halton Region forests (956 acres) and other significant sites in Halton Hills has been recognized by Ontario Nature (formerly Federation of Ontario Naturalists) as one of the most significant forests in Ontario.
- The forests of Conservation Halton's watershed provide habitat for a myriad of wildlife species. They also provide ecosystem functions such as cleaning the air, purifying water and storing carbon along with providing places of unparalleled beauty for an increasingly urbanized human population.
- Protecting existing forests and increasing forest cover is an important aspect for sustaining the health of the watershed.
- Conservation Halton's forests are primarily used for conservation and preservation purposes. Relatively small portions of the forest (5%) are used for passive recreation such as hiking and nature appreciation. Active recreation such as camping and skiing generally take place in open areas adjacent to the forest locations.
- Conservation Halton has a long track record of effective forest management. This includes developing partnership programs such as the one with Ontario Power Generation, which has contributed almost one half million dollars for planting trees in the watershed. Ontario conservation authorities manage extensive forests throughout the province. This collective effort maximizes effectiveness, avoids duplication, and enables integration with watershed and province-wide land stewardship programs.

- Since 1960, Conservation Halton has planted more than 2.3 million trees on public and private lands throughout the watershed. The agency's current strategic conservation plan includes the development of a watershed reforestation plan with forest cover targets, restoration objectives and a tree planting strategy that will be coordinated with watershed municipalities and other stakeholders.
- Conservation Halton balances science-based environmental conservation efforts with recreation and education. Public access and recreation opportunities in our forests are designed to meet criteria set forth by the Niagara Escarpment Commission with an environment-first approach to management. For example, Conservation Halton planted 97 acres of trees at the Kelso Conservation Area to offset three acres that were cut to improve the Glen Eden Ski and Snow Board Centre.
- The management of Conservation Halton's forests focuses on the health and diversity of the forest ecosystem with restoration actions undertaken when required. Conservation Halton has staff that includes an Associate Member of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association, forest technicians, ecologists, land use planners, educators, and risk management specialists.
- Conservation Halton has a forest monitoring program to assess the health of forest ecosystems in the watershed. Such baseline data, detailing flora and fauna is critical in assessing the natural heritage features of various forestry tracts including those areas that are sensitive to negative impacts such as invasive species.
- Conservation Halton carries out thinning improvements on approximately 50 acres of forest per year. The Ministry of Natural Resources Silviculture Guide to Managing Southern Ontario Forests is used to assist with the restoration

and improvement of watershed forest health. This includes using conifer plantations to establish mixed deciduous forests by way of natural regeneration. Forest thinning is also carried out to allow for better growing conditions of natural stands.

- Revenue production is not the prime objective for Conservation Halton's forest management program but rather a secondary benefit from periodic planned thinning. Revenues resulting from this go back into the forest management program.
- Our forest management practices complement and comply with forest protection requirements of Ontario's Niagara Escarpment Plan including measures to protect core values of Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). For example, we maintain Hilton Falls as a large, continuous and relatively closed canopy of near mature forest to enhance associated plant and animal habitat.
- Conservation Halton has forest specialists and security personnel who monitor its forests on a regular basis. This day-to-day management includes such needs as repairs to gates, fences and signage, and risk management actions such as the removal of hazardous trees to ensure safe use and enjoyment by the public. Public access is monitored and limited to areas designated for such activities. This minimizes any negative impacts recreation may have on overall forest health.
- Public education is an important aspect of protecting watershed forests. Conservation Halton has education centres at Hilton Falls, Crawford Lake and Mountsberg which provide extensive student and public interpretation programs on the natural heritage features of the watershed. Conservation Halton also offers a community outreach program called "Trees for Watershed Health" where local families and children are engaged in tree planting.

Conservation Halton Natural Champion for a Healthy Watershed



Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores and manages the natural resources in its watershed. Conservation Halton has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors that includes municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science based programs and services.

For more information on Forest Management contact Conservation Halton:

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