

## Forest Cover

The forests of Conservation Halton's watershed provide habitat for a myriad of wild-life 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 of sustaining the health of the watershed.



Community tree plantings help our environment

- Conservation Halton strongly supports the protection and proper management of existing forests as key components of an interconnected natural heritage system.
- Planting new forests on public and private lands will increase forest cover.
- Old growth forests in the watershed need to be protected.
- Science based studies suggest that 30% forest cover is the minimum target to maintain the health of watersheds.
- Forest cover in the watershed should be representative of the full diversity of forest types and ages.
- Conservation Halton supports the development of percentage targets of forest cover for each watershed in its jurisdiction.
- It is important to identify significant woodlots in Municipal Official Plans in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement.
- The development and enforcement of effective municipal and regional tree cutting bylaws will protect forests.
- There is much value in forests for preservation of wildlife habitat, protection of streams and wetlands, air cleansing, carbon reduction (sequestration), aesthetic appeal, recreation, and the ecological integrity of natural landscapes.
- Reforestation is useful for reclaiming unproductive agricultural lands, restoring ecosystems, landscaping urban areas, and establishing wildlife corridors between forest fragments.
- Increasing forest cover in the watershed will help protect the quantity and quality of our water resources as well as help clean the air.

## Summary

Conservation Halton's viewpoint on forest cover promotes the value of protecting and expanding woodlands to enhance the biodiversity of the watershed and provide critical greenspace for rapidly expanding communities.

- There should be a co-ordinated approach to reforestation in the watershed. This must be done in an ecological manner based on sound science with established targets that address priorities such as size, shape, forest interior, corridors, biodiversity, and species.

- The development of transportation/utility corridors should be located outside forested areas to reduce forest fragmentation and impact on interior forest species.

- There is a need to protect and enhance forest lands in areas that are being urbanized such as Milton and North Oakville.

- Conservation Halton has a forest monitoring program to assess the health of the 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.

## Watershed Forest Cover



### Forest Benefits

- Provide wildlife habitat
- Store carbon and clean the air
- Protect water sources and purify water
- Provide places of beauty and tranquility for people
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Protect watershed creeks and streams
- Provide shade and add value to urban properties
- Help combat global warming

### How Much Forest Cover is Enough?

Conservation Halton's watershed includes 948 square kilometres of land drained by 17 watercourses that flow into Lake Ontario. The watershed currently has approximately 25% forest cover with more forests located about the Niagara Escarpment than below and the least amount in urban areas. Conservation Halton believes that 30% forest cover is the minimum target to maintain healthy forest ecosystems for wildlife and people.

## 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 about Watershed Forest Cover contact Conservation Halton:

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