



2021



Conservation  
Halton

CONSERVATION HALTON'S

# ANNUAL REPORT

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We continue to build on Momentum as we look forward to a **green, resilient** and **connected** future.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO & BOARD CHAIR

This was another pandemic year for our communities. Instead of approaching the situation with a focus on surviving, Conservation Halton has taken the opportunity to drive innovation and strive for resilience.

During the early stages of the pandemic, it became immediately obvious how important our programs and services were to the community, so we made a commitment to be there for the people who were counting on us. With this in mind, the staff at Conservation Halton applied their resiliency, creativity, adaptability and hard work to deliver our programs and services in an ever-changing landscape, which is a true testament to the people who work here.

In 2021, we took some time to pause and reflect on our efforts, listened to feedback from our stakeholders and made adjustments to our path forward. As a result, we charted a course that allowed us to embrace new challenges, such as the ever-changing public health landscape, growing interest in access to greenspace, increasing effects of climate change, unprecedented demand for our planning and permits and the need to support responsible growth and development commitments made by provincial and municipal partners.

We are proud to say that we have not only responded to these challenges, but we exceeded expectations despite the obstacles we were forced to overcome. This year, we planted forests of trees, educated thousands of children, completed dozens of environmental restoration projects, worked with hundreds of landowners, offered several new experiences in our parks and ended the year with a record-breaking number of park visitors.

Internally, we made staff a priority through health and safety, invested in training and professional development, and took steps to weave the practices of equity, diversity and inclusion into the fabric of our organization both internally and in our service to our communities.

This year, we were able to continue with capital works to maintain our dams, channels and other critical assets, and made technological improvements to our flood management operations. When planning and permit services were forced to pivot, we kept stakeholders at the centre of our solutions to provide more convenience, efficiency and predictability through digital transformation initiatives.

Conservation Halton has taken a lead role in efforts to advise the Province on the development of regulations, which resulted from changes to the Conservation Authorities Act—often providing solutions based on our own experience with improving governance, financial management and customer experience over the past five years.

As if that were not enough, we have started planning for the future with a new strategic plan. Momentum will use the transformation, progress and success of the last four years to move toward a greener, more resilient and connected future.

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**It is often said that limitation leads to creativity, and this year, we have proven that to be true.**

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Thank you to everyone who supported us this year. In particular, we would like to show our appreciation to the Board of Directors for guiding us with prudence, trusting in our judgment and having faith in our abilities, and to Conservation Halton staff for making it all possible. It is often said that limitation leads to creativity, and this year, we have proven that to be true.



**Hassaan Basit**  
President  
& Chief Executive Officer



**Gerry Smallegange**  
Chair, Board of Directors



## OUR DRIVERS

The challenges and demands of a changing horizon highlight the importance of a strategic plan for Conservation Halton.

### HALTON REGION

2019 → 2051  
**632,000**      **1.1 Million**

### GROWING DEMAND ON PARKS

2009 → 2020  
**853,565**      **1.53 Million**

GROWING POPULATION

CHANGING CLIMATE



#### WARMER SUMMERS + WINTERS

- Average winter temperatures are up from -3.4°C to -1.3°C. Average coldest minimum temperature is up from -20°C to -13°C.
- More hot summer days (above 30°C) and nights (above 20°C). Longer-lasting heat waves.



#### WETTER

- Annual precipitation up 10% in 2050.



#### WILDER

- More intense and extreme rainfalls. Freezing rain up 40% in 2050.

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

## OUR VALUES

# momentum

Green • Resilient • Connected

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

LEARNING & INNOVATION

PERSON CENTERED SERVICE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESILIENCE

*Learn more about our strategic plan at [chmomentum.ca](https://chmomentum.ca)*



In 2017, Conservation Halton started a process of transformation through our strategic plan, Metamorphosis. The goals set out in that plan created a strong foundation for what needed to be done to bring us to where we are today. Metamorphosis has steered Conservation Halton forward and in reaching its end, has created a strong foundation upon which we will continue to build through our new strategic plan, **Momentum**.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF HALTON

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### BURLINGTON

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward  
Councillor Rory Nisan  
Mr. Gerry Smallegange, *Chair*  
Mr. Jim Sweetlove

### HALTON HILLS

Councillor Moya Johnson, *Vice-Chair*  
Councillor Bryan Lewis

### MILTON

Mayor Gordon Krantz  
Councillor Mike Cluett  
Councillor Rick Di Lorenzo  
Councillor Zeeshan Hamid

### OAKVILLE

Mayor Rob Burton  
Councillor Cathy Duddeck  
Councillor Allan Elgar  
Councillor Dave Gittings

## REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL

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### MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Hamza Ansari  
Mrs. Jean Williams

### CITY OF HAMILTON

Ms. Joanne Di Maio  
Dr. Zobia Jawed

### TOWNSHIP OF PUSLINCH

Mr. Stephen Gilmour

A photograph of a rustic wooden cabin in a forest. The cabin has a dark roof and a prominent chimney. It is surrounded by tall, thin trees with some autumn-colored leaves. String lights are strung across the scene, and the ground is covered in fallen leaves. The image is used as a background for the text overlay.

# SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Hassaan Basit, *President & Chief Executive Officer*

Mark Vytvytskyy, *Chief Operating Officer*

Kim Barrett, *Associate Director of Science & Partnerships*

Garner Beckett, *Executive Director of the CH Foundation*

Leah Bortolotti, *Director of Communications*

Craig Machan, *Director of Parks & Operations*

Kellie McCormack, *Director of Planning & Regulations*

Marnie Piggot, *Director of Finance*

Plezzie Ramirez, *Director of Human Resources*

Jill Ramseyer, *Director of Corporate Compliance*

Barb Veale, *Senior Director of Watershed Strategies & Climate Change*

# OUR PRIORITIES, AT A GLANCE

Conservation Halton is reporting on seven priorities as identified by the Senior Leadership Team. Within each priority there are measures which have their progress tracked based on the 2021 outcome and what the target is for 2024. You will find these results on the following pages.



NATURAL HAZARDS  
AND WATER



SCIENCE, CONSERVATION  
AND RESTORATION



EDUCATION, EMPOWERMENT  
AND ENGAGEMENT



NATURE AND PARKS



ORGANIZATIONAL  
SUSTAINABILITY



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION  
AND INNOVATION



PEOPLE AND TALENT



Target Met



Making Progress



No Progress



Program funded in part by the Conservation Halton Foundation.  
For more information visit [conservationhalton.ca/foundation](https://conservationhalton.ca/foundation)



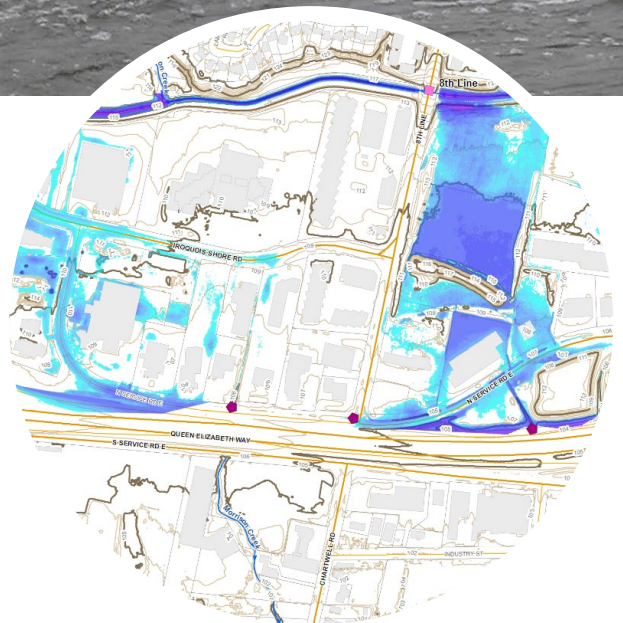
# NATURAL HAZARDS + WATER

Protect people, property, drinking water sources and natural resources to support development that is in balance with the environment.



## FLOOD MAPPING

Flood hazard mapping is being updated to support planning and regulations and flood forecasting operations. This mapping also informs infrastructure management decisions, emergency planning and response, prioritization of flood mitigation efforts, and infrastructure design. Last year, flood hazard mapping studies were launched for East Burlington Creeks and Sixteen Mile Creek watershed. In October, more than 70 participants attended a public engagement session for East Burlington Creeks.



# NATURAL HAZARDS + WATER SCORECARD

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	2021 PROGRESS
Lead the Halton-Hamilton source water protection program through a comprehensive review and update of drinking water science and source protection plan policies	TARGET MET
Foster partnerships and identify opportunities to build mutual understanding, trust, respect and support with watershed stakeholders	MAKING PROGRESS
Lead in delivering planning and permitting customer service and experience excellence	TARGET MET
Modernize Planning and Regulations policies and mapping and adopt a sustainable program delivery model	MAKING PROGRESS*
Optimize dam safety, operations and flood forecasting within a sustainable funding model	TARGET MET*

\*See more detailed breakdown on pages 11 and 12



## SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Source Water Protection focuses on the surface and groundwater that supplies our municipal drinking water. Initiatives include detailed scientific work, policy updates, working with watershed partners and the public to support policy implementation.

- 99%** OF SIGNIFICANT DRINKING WATER THREATS ADDRESSED
- 15** WATERSHED CHARACTERIZATION UPDATES
- 35** SOURCE WATER SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED
- 25%** OF THE SOURCE PROTECTION PLAN POLICIES REVISED

## FLOOD FORECASTING

Our flood forecasting team is responsible for operating a forecasting and warning system and for monitoring and advising municipalities on flood conditions. In 2021, we introduced a new drone inspection program, as well as two new water quality sampling stations installed on Indian Creek and Grindstone Creek to collect data on the water flowing into Hamilton Harbour. We also installed an aeration system at Mountsberg Dam to support fish populations in the area during winter months.

*To learn more about our flood forecasting, dam safety and operations watch a video [here](#).*



### OPTIMIZE DAM SAFETY, OPERATIONS AND FLOOD FORECASTING WITHIN A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL

% of CH jurisdiction covered by real-time hydrometric monitoring stations

67%

# of additional watersheds integrated into real-time flood forecasting & warning system

1

% of identified safety, maintenance, inspection and repair concerns addressed within assigned response time

95%

% of capital funding from external grant programs

45%

% of major capital repair projects for dam and channel within scope, budget and on schedule

95%

## PLANNING & REGULATIONS

Conservation Halton received more requests for planning and permit services in 2021 than ever before. Thanks to our streamlined process and focus on customer experience, we were able to deliver our services to a high standard of quality, even with the increased demand, and strengthen relationships with our partners and stakeholders.

### 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- 442** PERMITS ISSUED *(6% increase from 2020)*
- 35%** MORE CLEARANCE LETTERS ISSUED *(155 letters)*
- 79%** INCREASE IN SOLICITOR INQUIRIES *(262 reviews)*
- 49%** MORE TECHNICAL REVIEWS FOR PLANNING *(288 reviews)*
- 27%** INCREASE IN NEW PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS *(248 reviews)*

### LEAD IN DELIVERING PLANNING AND PERMITTING CUSTOMER SERVICE AND EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE

% of minor permit applications processed within 30 days	94%
% of major permit applications processed within 90 days	98%
% of regulatory technical reviews for permit applications reviewed within six weeks	97%
% of major Regional Infrastructure Team permit applications processed within 90 days	100%
% of Regional Infrastructure Team technical reviews completed within six weeks (e.g., EAs)	100%
% of planning & development files reviewed by municipal / NEC deadline (no technical review)	92%
% of planning technical reviews completed within six weeks (standard technical review)	70%

# SCIENCE, CONSERVATION + RESTORATION

Use environmental science, collaborative research and collective data to protect the integrity and strengthen the resilience of our ecosystems.



## FLAMBOROUGH CENTRE PARK

The restoration work at Flamborough Centre Park was completed with the development of a new two-hectare wetland. This under-utilized area was maximized to provide wildlife habitat, water purification, flood prevention, climate change resilience and other services to the community.

- **5,000 trees and shrubs planted**
- **25kg of native seed**
- **104 different native species**
- **160 wildlife habitat structures created**
- **412 hours of volunteer work**



# SCIENCE, CONSERVATION + RESTORATION SCORECARD

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

## 2021 PROGRESS

Expand monitoring and analytical capabilities to support resource management decisions

TARGET MET

Undertake and implement watershed plans to identify and prioritize actions that enhance sustainability

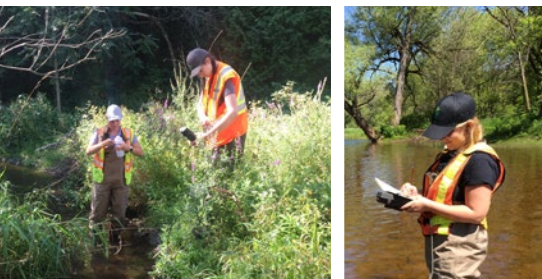
MAKING PROGRESS

Implement restoration activities to help manage natural hazards and improve watershed functions

TARGET MET

Identify and promote climate change approaches for watershed resiliency and lead by example

MAKING PROGRESS

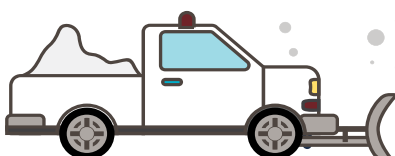
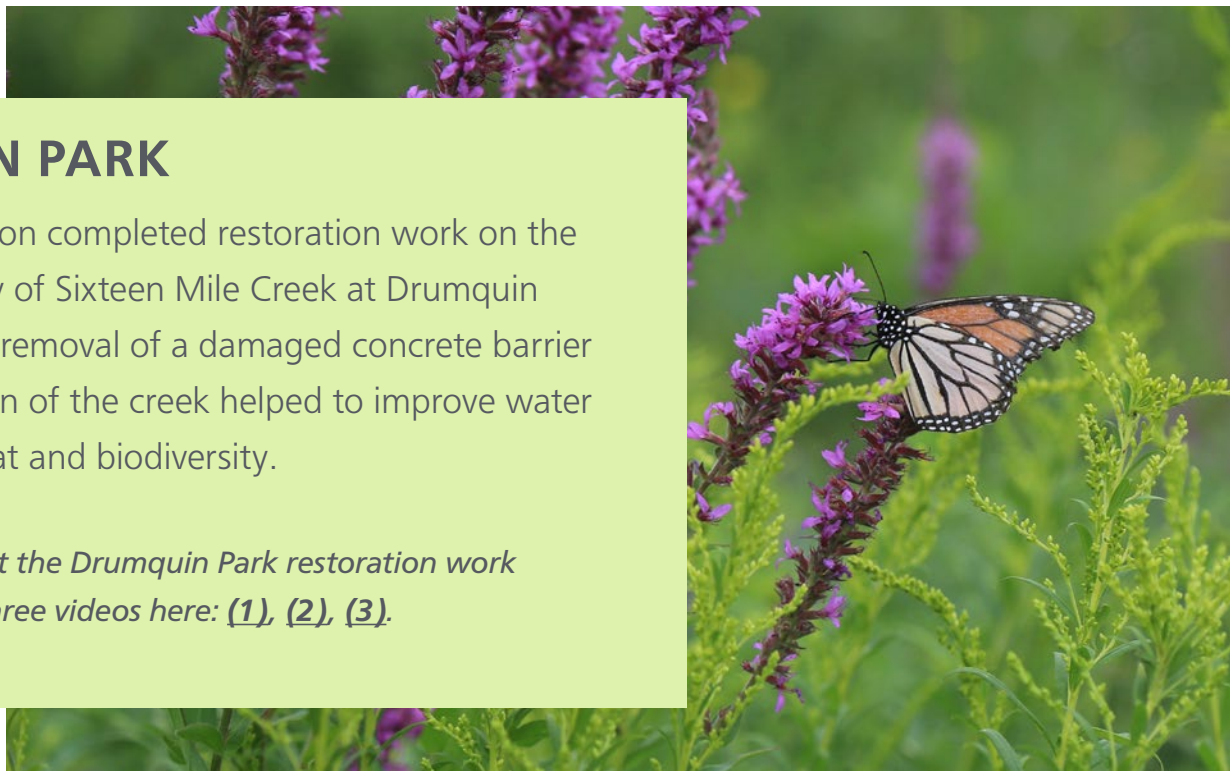


Conservation Halton installed two new water quality sample stations—one on Indian Creek and one on Grindstone Creek—to collect data on the water flowing into Hamilton Harbour. The stations were funded through the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan.

## DRUMQUIN PARK

Conservation Halton completed restoration work on the Trafalgar Tributary of Sixteen Mile Creek at Drumquin Park in 2021. The removal of a damaged concrete barrier and the restoration of the creek helped to improve water quality, fish habitat and biodiversity.

To learn more about the Drumquin Park restoration work watch one of our three videos here: [\(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#), [\(3\)](#).



A pilot study began at Kelso Conservation Area, in partnership with engineering firm Flodraulics, to help reduce and optimize the use of road salt. One of our trucks was fitted with a salt spreader designed to spread only the amount of salt required, reducing the impact on the environment while keeping vehicle and visitor safety a top priority.



## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

**79,216**

TREES &  
SHRUBS  
PLANTED

**47.3 HA**

FLOODPLAIN,  
FOREST &  
WETLAND  
RESTORED

**4.7 KM**

RESTORED  
STREAMS

## WATERDOWN WOODS

Waterdown Woods was one of the focus areas for conservation efforts in 2021, with 2,000 hazard trees removed from 3,000m of trail, surveys to identify potential habitat for species at risk, such as Little Brown Bat, aerial spraying for Spongy Moth and removal of other invasive species, such as Common Buckthorn.

# EDUCATION, EMPOWERMENT + ENGAGEMENT

Inspire action by fostering an appreciation of our environment and heritage through leading edge educational programming and outdoor experiences.



## GREEN SPACE

Last year, Green Space: Newcomer Youth Climate Forum, provided workshops for young community members. Participants learned how to collect environmental data, discovered ways to address climate change and gained the confidence to take on leadership roles. They also had the opportunity to take part in nature-based climate solutions, such as invasive species removal, seed collection and native species planting.



# EDUCATION, EMPOWERMENT + ENGAGEMENT SCORECARD

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	2021 PROGRESS
Build community awareness and support by demonstrating the value and impact of our programs and services	TARGET MET
Broaden our reach by engaging and empowering community allies and advocates through stronger partnerships and collaboration	TARGET MET*
Develop community informed programming through greater allyship with Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, Racialized, LGBTQ+ and Disability communities	TARGET MET
Inspire action and create leaders by empowering, youth, volunteers, landowners and the greater community	TARGET MET
Lead in delivering planning and permitting customer service and experience excellence	TARGET MET
Provide learning opportunities and recreation programming of the highest quality by leveraging current research, cross-sector collaboration and smart technologies	TARGET MET

\*See more detailed breakdown on page 18

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 continued to present in 2021, Conservation Halton was able to launch a number of new events, in partnership with other community-based groups.

- Pride In Nature
- Community Healing Garden and Picnic
- Black Campout Weekend
- Indigenous Food Celebration



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the education team developed virtual programs for schools and other groups. More than 10,000 students participated in the virtual learning programs, such as Virtual Longhouse Tour, Owls in Focus and Pollinator Power.





## COMMUNITY HEALING GARDEN

Conservation Halton partnered with Halton Black Voices to plant gardens with native species at the main entrance to a community housing complex in Halton. The project has attracted pollinators, like bees and butterflies, and created a sense of pride for those living in the community. Since the project was completed, residents have noticed others in the community taking better care of their environment.

### BROADENING OUR OUTREACH

# of participants in virtual enhanced programming

10,880

Landowner stewardship initiatives

136

Increased # of volunteer hours contributed

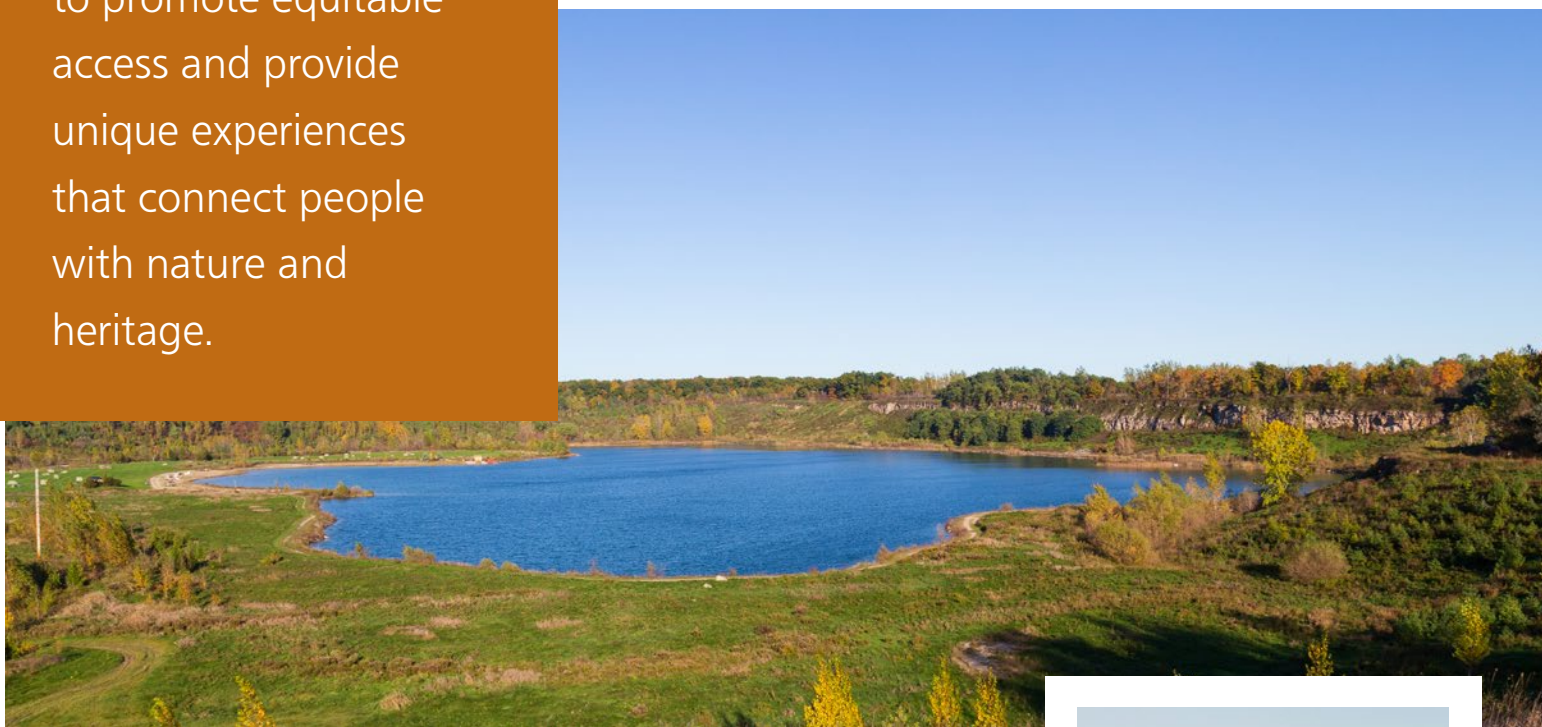
5259

# of private sector third party and collaborative events hosted

130

# NATURE + PARKS

Grow our network of parks and green spaces to promote equitable access and provide unique experiences that connect people with nature and heritage.



## AREA 8 OPENS TO THE PUBLIC

After more than 20 years of restoration work, Conservation Halton opened a new park, temporarily referred to as Area 8, with a stunning blue lake, nestled into the escarpment. 2,200 people have visited the park since it opened, and species like Widow Skimmer Dragonfly, Gray Tree Frog and Sharp-shinned Hawk have started to take up residence in the restored habitat. Currently, there is one trail that loops around the lake, and park development is set to continue in phases over the next few years.

- **10,000 acres (400 ha) land under active management**
- **112 km of managed trails available to the public**
- **1,263,208 visitors to CH Parks**
- **84% positive survey responses from customers and staff on new tools**



# NATURE + PARKS SCORECARD

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

## 2021 PROGRESS

Expand the CH Parks System to provide additional green space and opportunities

TARGET MET

Develop and implement a new vision for CH Park spaces and infrastructure to ensure optimization of resources

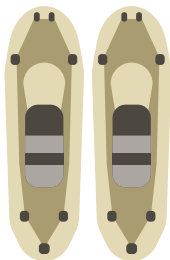
TARGET MET

Implement new tools to enhance customer experience and streamline internal operations

TARGET MET

Develop and implement a marketing and branding playbook to support customer engagement and product development

MAKING PROGRESS



*When COVID-19 forced Glen Eden to close after the hill had already been prepared, staff responded quickly by developing a snowshoe experience at the park. This made use of the resources that had already been invested while offsetting the loss of revenue from the closure.*

## WAYS OF THE WOODS CAMP

During a year when many camps were canceled due to COVID-19, Conservation Halton was able to offer our own summer camp, Ways of the Woods, with an adapted approach to program delivery, reduced capacity for program groups and “social circles” used for registration. The community responded incredibly well to the modified version of Ways of the Woods, and camp was sold out all summer long.



# WINTERLIT

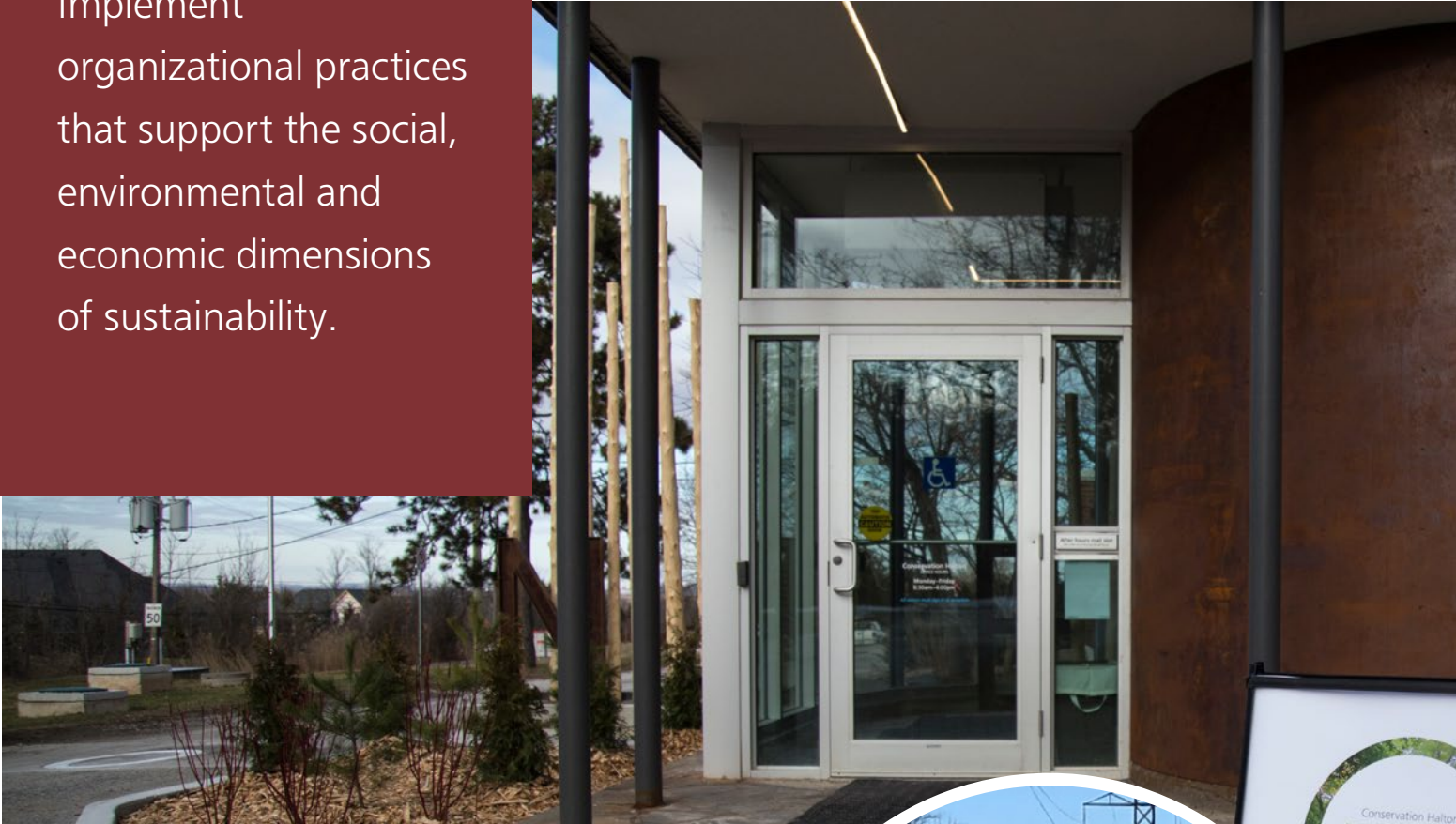
With COVID-19 continuing to present challenges for many of our events, we developed a new outdoor experience, Winterlit. Not only did Winterlit provide a safe experience for the community during the pandemic, but it filled a gap at Mountsberg, which is normally quiet during the months after Christmas Town and before Maple Town. Winterlit was recognized with the Sustainability Award from Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association.



*"I was so impressed by this event! The experience was masterfully curated. The thought and intention paid to every installation was brilliant. I especially appreciated the sustainability factor and the write-ups that were provided at the various installations. The burnt wood was such a wonderful memento! I mentioned to several staff how fantastic this event was and was told it was a team effort. Way to go! I have been telling all my friends about it! You should be so proud! Thank you for being one of my best holiday highlights!" - Winterlit Guest*

# ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Implement organizational practices that support the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability.



## PROGRAM UPDATES

Conservation Halton has updated the Ethics and Compliance program with a new Code of Conduct and mandatory training for all full-time and long-term contract staff. Additionally, we have updated the Risk Management program with a new Enterprise Risk Management Committee and completed a risk assessment for Parks and Operations.



# ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY SCORECARD

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	2021 PROGRESS
Create a sustainable plan for the long-term management of CH lands	TARGET MET
Transition infrastructure and operations from grey to green solutions	MAKING PROGRESS
Implement a CH Parks experiences and cost recovery model	TARGET MET
Apply an integrated approach to risk, governance and compliance to ensure alignment of operations with enterprise business objectives	MAKING PROGRESS
Implement an enterprise information management framework for governance, utilization and reporting of data assets	TARGET MET

## CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT

In 2021, Conservation Halton commissioned a greenhouse gas report, which found that Conservation Halton currently emits 524.61 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, equivalent to having 163 passenger vehicles on the road for one year. With this baseline established, Conservation Halton has committed to reducing our emissions by 30% by the end of 2024.



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION + INNOVATION

Integrate digital technologies, processes and mindsets to strengthen adaptability and problem-solving capabilities.



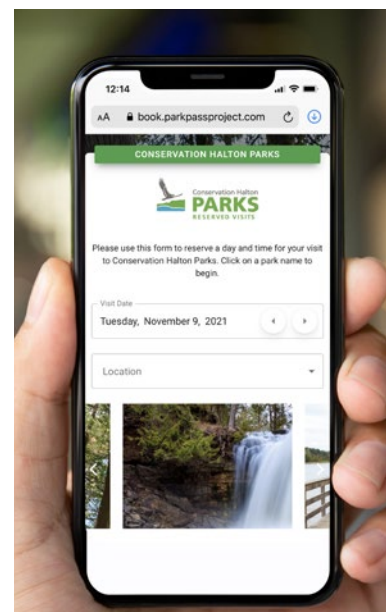
## PARKPASS + WINTERPASS

The Conservation Halton Parks reservation system, ParkPass, was refined to provide a more convenient and full user experience. The reservation system was also integrated with the entrance gates for automatic access at most parks. After the success of ParkPass, Glen Eden implemented its own reservation system, WinterPass, at the end of the 2020/2021 season, followed by the launch of a new mobile-optimized Glen Eden website for the start of the 2021/2022 season.

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***"Your system is brilliant. Thank you. I have been visiting your parks for decades. At least 40 years! What you have in place now is working so well. Please keep the reservation system in place. Bravo!" - CH Parks Member***

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# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION + INNOVATION SCORECARD

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

## 2021 PROGRESS

Establish digital reinvention and readiness standards to guide the development, implementation and operations of digital solutions

TARGET MET

Enable a digital culture across the organization

TARGET MET

Invest in high-potential technologies to improve problem-solving and service delivery

TARGET MET

Implement cross-departmental business intelligence analytics and visualization solutions to derive actionable insights and customized reports

TARGET MET

Establish partnerships with agencies, nature-tech companies and academia to raise awareness and co-create solutions to environmental problems

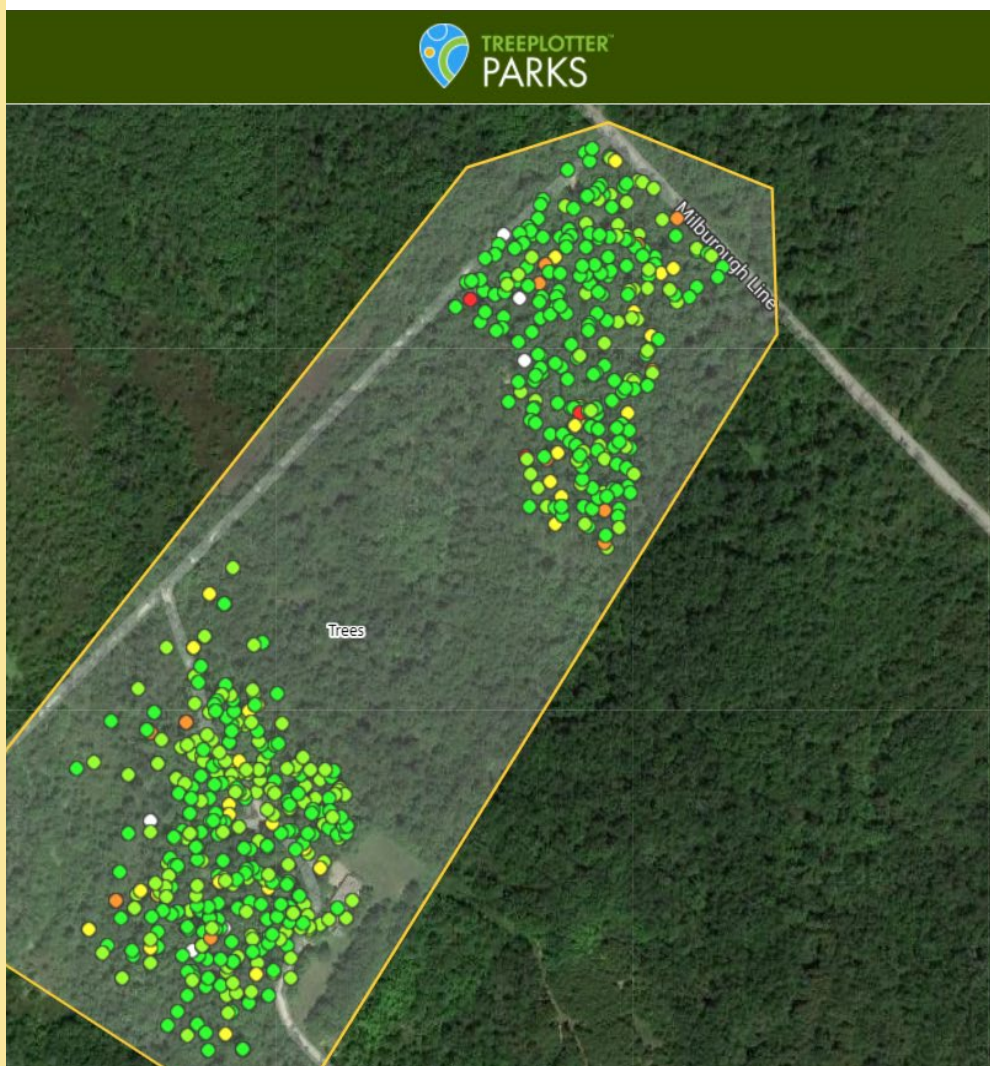
TARGET MET

## TREEPLOTTER

A GPS-based software, TreePlotter, is now used by the Forestry Team to keep an inventory of trees and other natural, structural and mechanical assets on our properties. The software, which is now used throughout the organization, records the location and provides valuable metrics, like health, condition and value of each asset. Conservation Halton has used the software to schedule inspections, manage maintenance, better understand budget requirements and support more informed decisions.



*The flood forecasting and operations team implemented a drone inspection program. Using video recognition technology, it has allowed us to identify infrastructure in need of repair and manage construction with greater accuracy.*



# PEOPLE + TALENT

Attract, support and invest in the brightest and most passionate people to collectively achieve our ambition.



## COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

Conservation Halton launched a Community of Learning (CoL), a virtual space where employees can learn from each other about new and innovative practices, projects and ideas. Through the CoL, Conservation Halton then launched the CoLLab Talks, which provided staff with the opportunity to learn from others in the organization through TED Talk-style presentations.

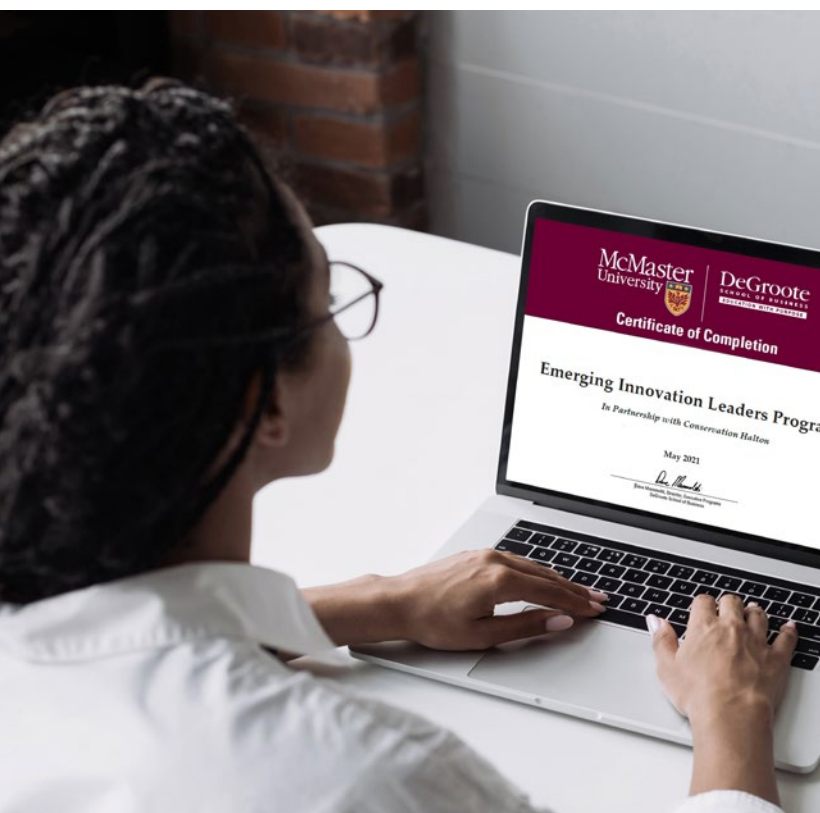


# PEOPLE + TALENT SCORECARD

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	2021 PROGRESS
Broaden the wellness program initiatives to invest in employee well-being	TARGET MET
Position CH as an employer of choice to attract, invest in and retain talent	MAKING PROGRESS
Increase employee safety competency through enhanced training and development processes	TARGET MET
Create an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework to cultivate a culture that honours and embraces differences	MAKING PROGRESS
Establish a growth mindset, learning organization to enable and empower employees to achieve our collective ambition	TARGET MET



Staff were invited to participate in a Community of Learning Day with Jamie Miller, founder of Biomimicry Frontiers, for a CoLLab talk where he introduced us to the philosophy of biomimicry—innovation inspired by nature. The philosophy encourages looking to the natural world for insights on how to design, behave, and thrive on this planet.



## EMERGING LEADERS

Last year, the first cohort of 20 employees completed the Emerging Innovation Leaders program through the DeGroote School of Business. This eight-month program was developed to empower people with leadership potential, provide the tools to drive innovation and support a growth mindset. As part of the program, participants developed solutions to “problems” at Conservation Halton and put the solutions into practice.

*“The program was a very meaningful bright spot during the pandemic. I appreciated the breadth of the sessions and the variety of teaching styles—it kept things fresh throughout the program. The Capstone Project was a real highlight and I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with people from across the organization—a truly silo-busting endeavour. Thank you again for the opportunity to take part.” - Brenna Bartley, Education Manager*

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Conservation Halton's financial health helps inform our strategic direction and how our resources are allocated. Here are some highlights:

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

## 2021 PROGRESS

Ensure tax support levy increases are within municipal guidelines

**TARGET MET**

Recreation programs fully self-sustaining

**TARGET MET**

Ensure asset management plans are up to date along with financing strategy

**TARGET MET**

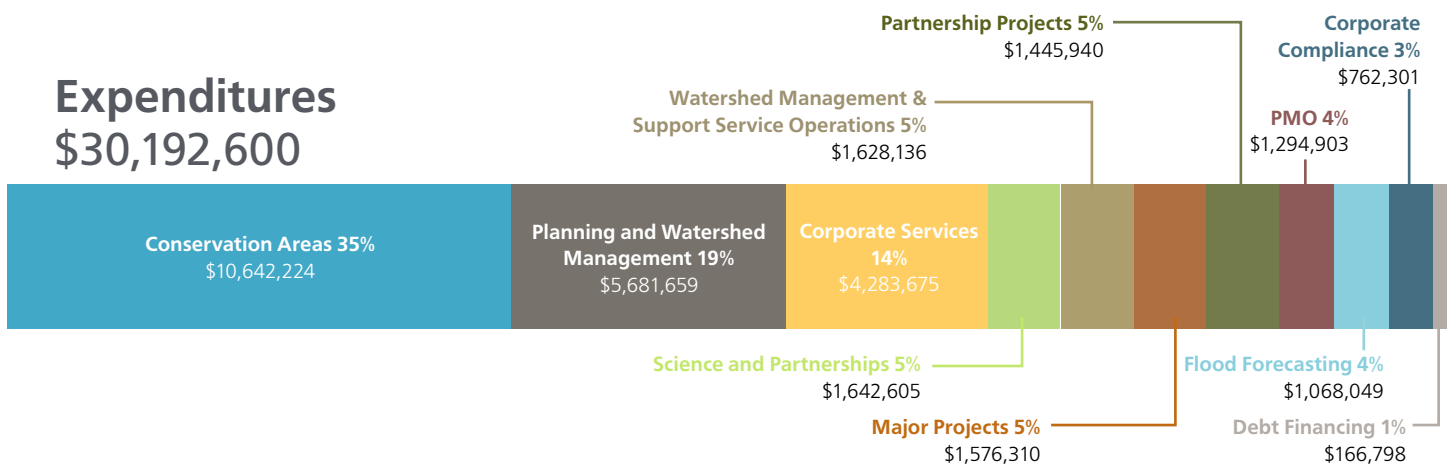
Ensure adequate reserves balances

**TARGET MET**

## Revenue \$31,234,065



## Expenditures \$30,192,600





Conservation  
**Halton**

2596 Britannia Road West  
Burlington, Ontario L7P 0G3  
905.336.1158 | [info@hrca.on.ca](mailto:info@hrca.on.ca)

[conservationhalton.ca](https://conservationhalton.ca)