

Question	Answer
What is a wetland?	Wetlands are transitional areas between land and water, where water covers the soil, permanently or seasonally. Wetlands are the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems, as they support both aquatic and terrestrial plant and wildlife species. They provide a range of benefits or services, such as flood control and storage, improved water quality, groundwater recharge, and socio-economic products and opportunities (e.g., timber, hunting, fishing, nature appreciation). Wetlands also play a critical role in helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
What is CH's role related to wetlands?	<p>CH has multiple roles related to the protection and management of wetlands, including as a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regulatory agency</b> under the <i>Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act)</i>, as Section 28 of the CA Act sets out that Conservation Authorities (CAs) may make regulations prohibiting, regulating or requiring permission for interfering in any way with a wetland.</li> <li>• <b>Technical advisor</b> to municipalities, provincial agencies and property owners, on high-level provincial and municipal planning and policy documents, as well applications circulated under the <i>Planning Act, Aggregate Act</i> and <i>Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Restoration contractor</b> restoring wetlands on CH properties as well as on private and public lands.</li> <li>• <b>Landowner</b> that protects wetlands on CH owned properties.</li> </ul>
What areas do Conservation Authorities regulate? What is CH's regulation?	<p>Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act) sets out that Conservation Authorities (CAs) may make regulations prohibiting, regulating or requiring permission for interfering in any way with a wetland.</p> <p>Under Ontario Regulation 162/06, CH regulates development in areas that meet the CA Act definition of a wetland, as well as development in lands adjacent to wetlands or "other areas" where development could interfere with the hydrologic function of a wetland (i.e., lands 120 metres from the limit of Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) and wetlands greater than 2 hectares in size and lands 30 metres from wetlands less than 2 hectares in size).</p> <p>Ontario Regulation 162/06 prescribes that CH may grant permission to develop in a regulated area if, in the opinion of the authority, the control of flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, pollution or the conservation of land will not be affected by the development. CH may also grant permission to change or interfere with a wetland. However, for staff to issue permission, the works must meet CH's Board-approved regulatory policies.</p> <p>Note: CH's regulation and regulatory policies are not being reviewed or updated as part of CH's wetland mapping review/update.</p>
How are regulated wetlands defined under the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act)?	<p>Under the CA Act, wetlands are defined as land that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>is seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water or has a water table close to or at its surface;</i></li> <li>b) <i>directly contributes to the hydrological function of a watershed through connection with a surface watercourse;</i></li> <li>c) <i>has hydric soils, the formation of which has been caused by the presence of abundant water; and,</i></li> <li>d) <i>has vegetation dominated by hydrophytic plants or water tolerant plants, the dominance of which has been favoured by the presence of abundant water.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>but does not include periodically soaked or wet land that is used for agricultural purposes and no longer exhibits a wetland characteristic referred to in clause c) or d).</i></p>
What role do other agencies play in the protection and management of wetlands?	<p>The Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mining, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNDMNR) identifies, evaluates and maps wetlands as part of their Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) program, using the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES). Sixty-four percent of our wetland layer are provincially evaluated wetlands.</p> <p>Municipal Official Plans contain policies to protect wetlands, which are implemented when development applications are received.</p>
Are there other definitions of wetlands?	<p>The Provincial Policy Statement and municipalities define wetlands as:</p> <p><i>Wetlands means lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic plants or water tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens.</i></p> <p><i>Periodically soaked or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not considered to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition.</i></p>
Are there any changes to CH's regulation or regulatory policies proposed?	CH's wetland mapping review and update is a mapping update only. No changes are proposed to CH's regulatory policies nor is the Province proposing any regulatory changes, at this time. CH's regulatory policies related development within and adjacent to wetlands remains unchanged since 2006.

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How was CH's wetland mapping developed?	<p>CH's current wetland mapping was developed in 2006, the same time that <i>Ontario Regulation 162/06</i> came into effect. This layer was developed using air photo interpretation and site visits, as well as the Provincial wetland mapping available from the Land Information Office. This layer has been modified over the years to reflect site specific updates as part of the permitting or planning process, but the last comprehensive update was in 2012.</p> <p>For this update, CH staff undertook an extensive review of CH's existing wetland mapping and merged it with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CH's Ecological Land Classification (ELC) mapping (includes field verified and air photo interpreted wetlands);</li> <li>• Updated Provincial wetland mapping [includes Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) and other wetlands identified by the Province via wetland evaluations, field verification, and air photo interpretation]; and,</li> <li>• Wetland data obtained from subwatershed studies or other studies via the planning process.</li> </ul>
How does CH use wetland mapping?	<p>CH's wetland and approximate regulation limit (ARL) mapping is a screening tool used to flag potential wetlands, as well as to flag whether a property may be regulated by CH and permission may be required to develop on a site. When permit applications are received from landowners within or adjacent to a wetland or the regulated lands adjacent, a wetland boundary may be refined on a site-by-site basis using the above outlined approach and our mapping is then updated to reflect the wetland limit established in the field.</p> <p>Wetland mapping is used to identify wetlands as part of our planning and advisory services to our municipal partners and/or provincial agencies.</p>
Why do we need updated wetland mapping?	<p>Since CH's last comprehensive wetland mapping update, there has been a considerable change in land use across CH's watershed. In addition, technological advances using LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), updated and higher quality of air photos, and the completion of large-scale technical studies, enable staff to better identify, characterize, and map wetlands across CH's jurisdiction. As this update cover CH's entire jurisdiction (note: CH's watershed is approximately 900 square kilometres) and wetlands occur on both public and private lands, air photo interpretation was largely used to identify wetlands for this screening tool. Up-to-date mapping supports the delivery of CH's regulatory and planning program by ensuring that staff can undertake timely reviews, deliver good customer service, provide technical advice, and implement CH's regulatory policies to ensure wetlands are protected from the impacts of development.</p>
Who is responsible for mapping wetlands?	<p>Conservation Authorities, as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), produce wetland mapping. CAs develop wetland mapping to support the implementation of the CA regulatory program, while the Province maps Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) as part of their provincial wetland evaluation process. This mapping can be used by our municipal partners as part of the Natural Heritage System mapping as well.</p>
How are wetland limits confirmed?	<p>Wetland limits are confirmed through site visits by CH's planning ecology staff at the appropriate time of year (typically June to late September). CH staff will confirm if a wetland is on a property or the limit of a wetland using the methodology outlined in the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (MNR, 2013) and CH's regulatory policies. Delineation of wetland boundaries is based on the vegetation present. Wetland boundaries are transitional areas where there is gradual vegetation change. A wetland boundary is established where 50% of the plant community consists of upland plant species and 50% wetland species. This is based on the percentage of area cover by upland plant species, not to the number of different upland plant species. Topography and soil data may also be used to identify where the wetland boundary will be established.</p> <p>Whether vegetation being staked is native, non-native and/or invasive, the quality of wetland does not affect the field delineation.</p>
What if CH's mapping looks different than what I see on my property?	<p>We would be happy to do a site visit to confirm the wetland limits on your property. Please contact <a href="mailto:wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca">wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca</a> and arrange a time for a site visit.</p>
What are the key changes in CH's draft wetland mapping?	<p>The draft mapping shows an increase of approximately 19% in the amount (area) of wetlands mapped across CH's watershed compared to CH's existing wetland mapping layer. Preliminary findings and/or reasons for the mapping changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many wetlands are larger than previously identified. Most mapping changes were the result of adjusting wetland limits based on different data sources.</li> <li>• New tools and technology allow for greater, more precise identification of wetlands and wetland limits than in the past.</li> <li>• New wetlands were identified and confirmed through field verifications by CH staff.</li> <li>• New wetlands were identified and confirmed through information from external partners (e.g., Province; municipalities via subwatershed studies).</li> <li>• Mapping changes were relatively uniform across the CH's watershed (i.e., changes did not affect one municipality, or urban or rural area more than another).</li> </ul>

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Do wetland limits change?	Yes, wetlands are dynamic systems and are highly influenced by how much water they receive. In periods of drought, their limits may slightly shrink, while in wetter years wetland limits may expand. CH's wetland stakings are typically considered valid for two years or the length of a permit approval; however, this timeframe may differ for larger scale studies through the planning process (e.g., Subwatershed Impact Study).
Who approves wetland mapping?	CH's Board of Directors approves CH's ARL and wetland mapping for use. All updates are in keeping with our Board approved Mapping Transition and Implementation Protocol (2021).
Who owns wetlands across CH's watershed?	<p>Wetlands are located on both publicly owned and privately owned properties across CH's watershed.</p> <p>In recent years, CH worked with municipal partners through the subdivision planning process to have CH regulated areas, including hazard lands and wetlands, included within appropriate Official Plan and zoning by-law designations (i.e., natural heritage blocks in subdivisions) and, where appropriate, convey hazard lands and wetlands into public ownership. This ensures that new development is not located in hazard lands and/or wetlands. Some communities within CH's watershed pre-date this planning practice or are not within plans of subdivision. In these areas, hazard lands and/or wetlands may be located on private properties.</p> <p>Wetlands are also located on public lands including CH's conservation areas.</p> <p>CH regulates all watercourses, valleylands, wetlands, Lake Ontario and Hamilton Harbour shoreline and hazardous lands, as well as lands adjacent to these features on both public and private property.</p>
How can I find out if my property is regulated?	<p>CH's ARL mapping is publicly available through our website at <a href="https://www.conservationhalton.ca/permitting/">https://www.conservationhalton.ca/permitting/</a></p> <p><b>Note:</b> Not all regulated areas are mapped. The regulation applies to all Regulated Hazards and Wetlands whether mapped or not. It is always best practice to contact CH if you are planning to undertake works in or near wetlands, creek valleys, watercourses, or shorelines (e.g. Lake Ontario, Burlington Bay).</p>
The mapping shows I am regulated, what can I do?	<p>To find out more about our regulation and associated policies, please visit: <a href="https://www.conservationhalton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Consolidated-Policy-document-26.11.20-Signed.pdf">https://www.conservationhalton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Consolidated-Policy-document-26.11.20-Signed.pdf</a></p> <p>If you still have questions, please reach out to <a href="mailto:wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca">wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca</a> and we will direct you to the appropriate staff member.</p>
Will this mapping update impact my ability to continue farming on my land?	<p>CH's wetland mapping review and update is not intended to restrict or limit current agricultural practices. CH's regulation and regulatory policies are not being reviewed or updated as part of CH's wetland mapping review/update. This is a review and update of our mapping for regulated wetlands only.</p> <p>General agricultural practices (e.g., cropping, crop rotation, raising livestock, etc.) are not considered development and permission is not required for these activities. Permission is required from CH for development as defined by the CA Act, in or adjacent to wetlands. If you have any questions, please contact <a href="mailto:wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca">wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca</a> and we will direct you to the appropriate staff member.</p>
Are there other regulated features?	Yes, in addition to wetlands CH also regulates riverine and shoreline hazards, as well as erosion hazards, unstable bedrock/soils, dynamic beaches, and allowances associated with these features.
How can I provide feedback on CH's mapping review and update?	<p>Yes! Public Engagement is currently underway.</p> <p>Please visit our webpage to learn more about our wetland mapping update and provide feedback: <a href="https://www.conservationhalton.ca/public-notice-and-engagement/">https://www.conservationhalton.ca/public-notice-and-engagement/</a></p>
What is the timeline for the wetland mapping update and how will residents and stakeholders be kept informed?	<p>Draft mapping will be available for review and comment for 60 days from July 13 to September 13, 2022. During this time, property owners can review the mapping and engage with staff to have any questions answered and have CH staff undertake site visits to validate wetland mapping, if necessary.</p> <p>The timing of the public engagement is intentional, as wetlands must be looked at while vegetation is present and alive (generally June to September). In field wetland assessments confirm presence/absence as well as wetland limits, using the "50% rule" as outlined in the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System for Southern Ontario Manual (MNRF 2013). This is where 50% of the vegetation are wetland species and 50% of the vegetation are upland species, based on the relative cover, are found.</p> <p>Results from any in field wetland assessments will be incorporated into CH's wetland mapping.</p> <p>CH staff anticipate presenting the final draft mapping and a report to the CH Board of Directors for approval in Q4 2022. Once the mapping is approved, CH's stakeholders, municipalities, development proponents, and the public will be notified that CH has completed its mapping update and the new data will officially be incorporated into CH's ARL mapping and shared with our municipal partners.</p> <p>After the public engagement period ends and this project is complete, any additional site-specific edits identified through development review will be made in keeping with CH's Approximate Regulation Mapping Maintenance Protocol.</p>

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Who can I contact if I have questions about CH's wetland mapping?	Please email <a href="mailto:wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca">wetlandmapping@hrca.on.ca</a> and we will direct your inquiry to the appropriate staff member.