

Provincial Ruling Threatens Wetlands!

The province recently ordered a permanent halt to wetland mapping in three watersheds in Eastern Ontario — including the Mississippi and Rideau, the two main watersheds in Lanark County.

Wetlands have become some of the most targeted and threatened ecosystems on Earth. The rest of Southern Ontario, to which we formally belong, has lost about 70% of its wetlands. But Lanark County is in a different position. We are home to some of the largest remaining wetlands in the whole of Southern

our water supply is safe and abundant. The wetlands also buffer the impact of severe weather — dry or wet — and provide resiliency to the landscape for wildlife and people. Knowing that by protecting our wetland we are providing a climate change refuge for wildlife and creating a carbon capture sink (for free) is important to us." Thank you to all the private wetland owners who value their wetlands!

In Lanark County, especially to the west, many of our wetlands are not even mapped. Yet "mapping is an essential first step to protecting these critical ecosystems and protecting us against the ravages of the climate crisis," says Gord Harrison, who is CNL's Co-ordinator of Nature-Based Climate Solutions projects.

CNL has been working with many local partners to protect precious wetlands, and Lanark County Council and staff have been very receptive. One of our successes was to bring a national program to Lanark County that pays farmers to undertake environmental projects; local farmers have already created several new wetland protection and restoration projects on their lands. But the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has expressed opposition to the mapping.

CNL is very disappointed with this latest development. There are 36 conservation authorities in Ontario. All the other conservation authorities except the three in eastern Ontario already regulate wetlands. "This latest decision flies in the face of the province's stated goal of ensuring all wetlands under the jurisdiction of conservation authorities are regulated the same across the province," says Gord Harrison.

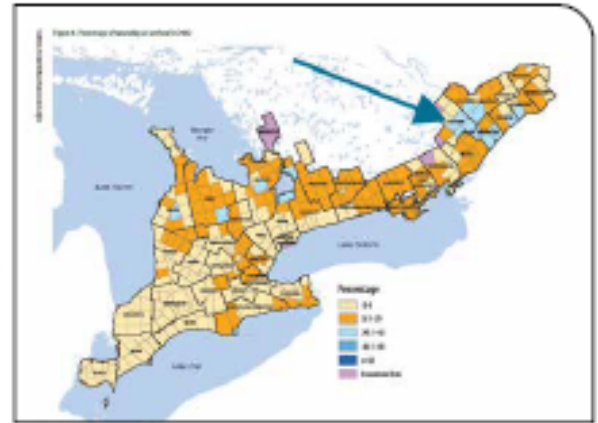
Here's the nub of it, he says: "We — the residents who live in these three areas — are second-class citizens who don't deserve the same protection of our wetlands that mitigate floods and droughts, absorb carbon, filter drinking water and protect biodiversity."

Call For Action

CNL has issued a call for action: Call or email our MPP John Jordan and tell him that protecting wetlands is critical for the planet's and Lanark County's wellbeing. Tell him you want this decision reversed. Mr. Jordan can be reached at 284-1630 or <John.Jordan@pc.ola.org>.

And please email or call Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Stephen Guilbeault at <Steven.Guilbeault@parl.gc.ca> or 992-6779 to encourage him to pressure Ontario to protect all wetlands.

Climate Network Lanark (CNL) is a community organization, bringing people together to implement practical solutions to climate change such as promoting the use of renewable energy, using natural systems to absorb carbon emissions, and improving building energy efficiency.



As the above map shows, Lanark County holds some of the most important and largest collections of wetlands remaining in Southern Ontario. But they are under threat and are being lost faster than any other ecosystem.

The final word goes to Philippa Whitlaw: "Over the past few years we have allowed a family of beavers to build a lodge and create a wetland on our property. The resulting beaver ponds provide habitat with an astounding number of different species of insects, birds, frogs and turtles. The wildlife provides us great enjoyment watching nature at work. With the availability of apps like Merlin and iNaturalist we can often identify who is there, even if we can't see them, and learn the extent of the biodiversity now living on our property."



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Ontario! This gives us a special responsibility to preserve and protect them, especially given the threats to drain them in order to benefit housing developers and gravel mining.

The long list of benefits of wetlands can make one's eyes glaze over. But it really is worth repeating. Wetlands are rich in the number and diversity of plants and animals. Anyone who enjoys watching birds and wildlife knows that a walk or a paddle in and around a wetland is the most productive. As Glenn Tunnock, President of the Friends of the Tay, says about his wetland: "It's an area where we listen to a symphony of frogs, a land where mergansers breed and proudly lead their ducklings out into the lake, a frozen terrain traversed by deer in the winter, a landscape of luxurious and colourful pond lilies, a fishing station for a great blue heron, and a sanctuary for turtles and an untold diversity of other fish and wildlife habitat."

Wetlands also filter and clean water. "No human engineered technology can clean such huge volumes of water as cheaply and efficiently as wetlands do," says CNL Chair Scott Hortop, a former executive with a water treatment company.

There have been media stories about how threatening the regulation of wetlands is to private landowners, even going so far as to suggest this is the first step in the government's expropriation of wetlands! It is too true that wetlands held in private lands serve our community interests and protect us all. In fact, according to Ontario government statistics, they give us \$14 billion in economic benefits each year, every year! That translates to taxes and insurance premiums we don't have to pay to try to replace those benefits.

Not only that, but wetlands protect against erosion and offer protection against wildfires!

Thankfully, we should consider ourselves lucky in Lanark County because we have so many wetland owners like Philippa Whitlaw, who told us: "In dry spells, we have fire suppression security that the wetlands provide, and as the ponds replenish the aquifers,