

South Nation Conservation 2011 Annual Report



SOUTH NATION
CONSERVATION
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Port of Prescott Upgrades get Green Light in 2011

Wildlife habitat considerations, which had the Project delayed for over two years, finally became untangled in 2011. A partnership between federal, provincial and municipal governments, the marine terminal revamping was announced early in 2009 as part of Build Canada stimulus funding. At the time, construction was expected to begin in about 60 days. Then came what has been described as an “extensive, cross-jurisdiction approval process,” which threatened the project. Senior political intervention was sought more than once to help move provincial environmental processes along. At the local level, South Nation Conservation was applauded for assisting in moving the Project forward with our pragmatic approach to environmental protection. Council for Edwardsburgh-Cardinal, which owns the St. Lawrence Seaway port

and grain elevator, approved Phase One of the Project in September, 2011. The Project totals \$14.8 million dollars and consists of 12 stone filled cells. Phase one of the project encompasses a 340-metre extension of the dock permitting two ships to berth while providing additional space for cargo handling. The first phase is targeted for completion in April 2012; two more phases are expected to be finished by the fall of 2015. Throughout this process, SNC will be working at the Port ensuring the Project meets all environmental standards. The Port is recognized as an important economic generator across the region, providing jobs, development, and other spinoffs. Its presence – including its corn handling and storage capability – is one of the main reasons GreenField Ethanol located a refinery directly

across from it. Edwardsburgh-Cardinal was keen to rely on the expertise of SNC for environmental project management for the expansion of the Port. SNC’s involvement on the Project has resulted in significant cost savings for the Municipality.



An overhead view of the Port of Prescott. The Port of Prescott is the only deep water port between Montreal and Toronto.

Improvements to Two Creeks Forest Conservation Area Please Local Residents

In 2011, work continued on the latest addition to South Nation Conservation’s network of natural parks and hiking trails. Set on 457 acres of land along County Road 2 between Morrisburg and Iroquois, Two Creeks Conservation Area was acquired by SNC after Cornwall’s Domtar Inc. ceased operations. The property was the jewel of Domtar’s Eastern Ontario holdings. When Domtar agreed to negotiate the transfer of this Property to SNC, the primary goal was to ensure that the new owners would preserve it for the enjoyment of local residents: SNC’s commitment to this end

are evident. Improvements undertaken in 2011 include: a parking lot expansion with addition of 120 tonnes of gravel; 4.5 kms of marked trail with addition of 150 tonnes of gravel; and two new foot bridges. SNC offers special thanks to South Dundas for their contributions. SNC maintains 7 Conservation Areas and a number of trails and river access docks for the use and benefit of watershed residents. These areas are perfect spaces for family friendly activities. At Two Creeks, hunting and motorized vehicles are not permitted, but hiking and cross-country skiing are welcome.



The photo above shows a new bridge installed at Two Creeks Conservation Area near Iroquois. The many upgrades made to this Conservation Area in 2011 will allow residents to take full advantage of the natural beauty of this Property.

Protecting People & Property from Flooding & Erosion



This photo was taken in the Village of Chesterville in the Municipality of North Dundas, showing high water levels on the South Nation River during 2011.

The ability of our watersheds to adapt to changing climate conditions, unpredictable weather, and associated flood threats directly impacts the safety, security, and economic well-being of residents. Protecting homes and people from the dangers of flooding and erosion is a key priority upon which Conservation Authorities are based. SNC works with municipalities and property owners to help people and places prepare for high and low water levels. Eleven Flood Safety Bulletins were issued in 2011 to warn residents of Spring run-off and heavy rainfall events. While no major flooding was observed, SNC staff monitored conditions closely throughout the year using a network of monitoring stations and snow surveys. After a normal spring melt, watersheds dried out con-

siderably in June and July, bringing a dry summer. Under the Ontario Low Water Response Program, each Conservation Authority has a Water Response Team to ensure that the public is provided with advance warning of reduced water availability. Decisions related to water conservation are then made by these groups of local stakeholders. In August 2011, the WRT met to discuss the effects of low water in the watershed. The watershed received a significant amount of rain in August; however, the watershed remained in a Level 1 Low Water Condition for an extended period of time. Since water is a shared natural resource, SNC has an important role in ensuring that watershed interests work together to protect it.

Water Quality Sampling Programs Yield Key Information About River Health

2011 marked another successful year of sampling for the Provincial Surface Water Quality Monitoring Network (PWQMN) in the South Nation watershed. Initiated by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), 13 surface water sites are sampled on the South Nation River and its tributaries. These 13 sites are only a sample of the 180 surface water sites being monitored by 28 other Conservation Authorities throughout Ontario. When evaluating the

health of our surface water, technicians measure nutrient concentrations, specifically phosphorus and nitrogen. These values are indicative of the chemical quality of our surface water. In addition to nutrient analysis, SNC studies the biological health of surface water by participating in the Ontario Benthic Bio-Monitoring Network. These programs gather a wealth of information, which help determine the health of the South Nation River.

Information on the quality of surface water in the South Nation River dates back to the 1960s, a comprehensive report on current watershed health will be released in March of 2013.

Discovery of Invasive Chinese Mystery Snails and Red-Eared Slider Turtle



Live creatures, dumped by owners who are no longer prepared to care for them, can carry diseases to native species while competing for food and habitat.

In 2011, SNC fisheries staff discovered Chinese mystery snails in a Winchester drain, and a red-eared slider turtle in the Payne River near Finch. Also called rice snails, the more commonly known mystery snails grow very large and can be present in high densities, clogging water pipes and inhibiting flow. They compete with native snails for food and space. The snails were found in an area stretching from the Gypsy Road culvert south of Winchester to the culvert on County Road 3 north of the village; the highest snail density is within the village itself. The most likely explanation is that

someone dumped unwanted aquarium pets into the drain, a practice highly discouraged by SNC. In response to the discovery, technical staff organized a site visit to reduce the snail population and slow their spread. The red-eared slider found in the Payne River, weighed eight pounds and was 23.5 cm long. The species is not native to Canada, originating from West Virginia to New Mexico and south to the Gulf of Mexico. Sliders are sold in pet stores. As they grow larger and become harder to care for, pet owners have been known to release them into the wild.

SNC Forest Cover Efforts Continue

It is essential that we continue to work with property owners, municipalities, industry, and other partners to increase forest cover in the watershed. To ensure that SNC has the most recent and up to date information, in addition to the study, SNC will acquire new aerial photography in the upcoming years. On the ground, SNC planted over 150,000 trees. 2011 was the second year of a program to assist woodlot owners determine the value of their woodlots. The woodlot advisory service provides woodlot owners in Eastern Ontario with a free site visit to help evaluate the economic potential of their properties. The service also identifies forestry programs, grants, consultants, and provides access to forestry information. The service has

been funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the United Counties of Prescott-Russell, S.D. & G. Certified Forest Owners, Boisés Est, and the Raisin Region and South Nation Conservation Authorities are all active partners in the program. The service is based out of SNC's office in Finch and is available by calling 1-877-984-2948 extension 285. The WAS technician has visited over 48 property owners since the program started in 2010. SNC foresters currently manage approximately 19,000 hectares of forested land including the forests of SD&G, Prescott-Russell, in addition SNC forests. All forest properties managed by SNC are certified forest under the International Forest Stewardship Council, or FSC Certified.



There are many opportunities available to plant trees in the South Nation Watershed. Call our office to speak with one of our foresters.

Over \$600,000 Received for Federal Agri-Environmental Research

SNC received over \$600,000 from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Agricultural Greenhouse Gases Program (AGGP), to coordinate research to assist farmers increase farm profits, while improving the environment. The Program provides funding to various partners across Canada to provide local farms with science and technology that provides real solutions for producers. SNC will use the funding to study how controlled tile drainage—a beneficial

management practice that allows farmers to manage water using an inexpensive, tile drain retrofit system—can reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by cropping activities. This system has been noted to improve water quality and increase crop yields. SNC is pleased to partner with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This is a win-win opportunity to provide farmers with the science and technology to manage greenhouse gases without sacrificing crop yields and

profits. SNC has a proven track record of working with Federal and Provincial governments and the agricultural community to deliver high level agri-environmental research projects. Our staff compliment, coupled with the physical and human geography of the watershed, have contributed to other successful projects such as: the microbial source tracking project, and the watershed evaluation of beneficial management practices project.

Protecting & Improving Municipal Drinking Water

In 2011, the Source Protection Committee completed the Assessment Report. The Report was then submitted to the Province, following extensive public consultation. The Assessment Report identifies Protection Zones near municipal drinking water intakes and vulnerable groundwater wells. These science-based studies also identify land-use activities that may be potential threats to drinking water sources and evaluates issues with the quality of untreated source water. The Committee also began to prepare for the development of the Source Protection Plan, which will be completed by 2012 and will identify actions to address the threats and issues identified in the Assessment Report. Early Action pro-

jects were also completed with provincial funding with local property owners. The projects will help protect water sources in Protection Zones. The key to source protection work is its local focus and local solutions. South Nation Conservation and Raisin Region Conservation Authority have worked together with the provincial government, First Nations, municipal politicians, planners, water treatment plant operators, businesses, community groups, and agriculture to identify local solutions that make sense. Many watershed Municipalities have expressed interest in working with SNC in the delivery and implementation of their local Source Protection Plan.



Source Protection considers protecting municipal drinking water at its source in the natural environment

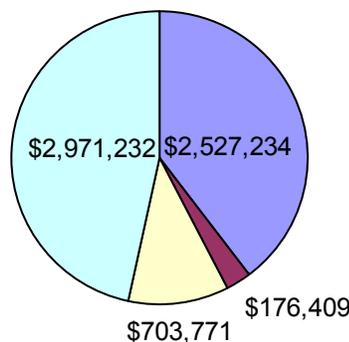


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- Doug Thompson, City of Ottawa

Financial Summary 2011

Revenues



TOTAL \$ 6,378,646

Committees

South Nation Conservation works with four Committees that provide program direction:

- Clean Water Committee*
- Communications Committee*
- Forestry Committee*
- Fisheries Committee*

Members are a partnership of residents, farmers, community groups, industry, and government. For information on memberships and activities please contact our office.

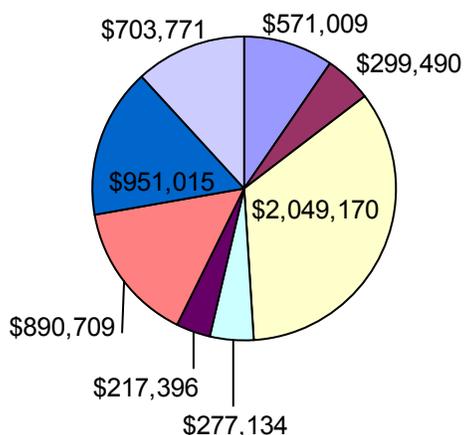


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Expenditures



TOTAL \$ 5,959,694

In 2011, the Budget totaled \$6,378,646. The general levy for 2011 was \$2,527,234, representing approximately 40% of the total revenues.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
WWW.NATION.ON.CA

Copies of the 2011 Audited Financial Statements may be obtained by contacting South Nation Conservation's Director of Finance.