



Brent Verscheur takes a time out from plowing snow for a photo.

Fanshawe Plows Out!

Fanshawe Conservation Area staff have been kept busy this winter. Records indicate that we haven't experienced this much snow since the early 1970s! For a typical snowfall of about 10 cm, staff start the work day at 2 am and work until 9 am. This ensures that the roadways around the Conservation Area and Administration Office are plowed and sand salted before the 8:30 am work day starts.

Staff plow and shovel all walkways and main roads from Clarke Road to the Safety Village, including all parking lots at the administration building, park office, maintenance compound, Pioneer Village and Safety Village. Throughout the season, we also have to deal with snow banks, which require staff to use the tractor and blower. At the same time, the back parking lot is usually cleared of Authority vehicles and that lot is cleared as well to maximize parking.

In the event of freezing rain, a mixture of 10 to 1 sand salt is applied to the main road, on corners and in areas where traffic slows or stops. We also put 'environment and concrete friendly' ice melter on the steps and walkways.

We are very pleased to have two staff members join the conservation area staff at Fanshawe to help with the winter tasks and more. Brent Verscheur started with us in January as the Park Operations Technician and looks after plowing and general duties. Once the park begins the start up process for the 2009 season, Brent will be assisting Assistant Superintendent Sean Howley with overseeing the park maintenance team. Mary Ellen Kyte also started with us January. She is the Conservation Area Clerk and has been very busy selling, booking and showing the Fanshawe pavilions. She will also be assisting Superintendent Steven Musclow with overseeing the customer service staff and gate house operations. Both Mary Ellen and Brent worked with

us in the 2008 season as well.

Please feel free to visit staff at Fanshawe; our office hours are Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4 pm (unless we are plowing snow – we are always looking for a good wingman). Or, if you see the plow out during a snowstorm please feel free to bring them a coffee.

Contact: Steven Musclow, Superintendent, Fanshawe CA

Water Monitoring

In 2006 the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE), working with local Conservation Authorities, started an intensive water quality monitoring project in 15 small agricultural watersheds. The purpose of the project is to assess water quality in streams that drain agricultural lands and to look for trends related to nutrient management and other land use practices.

Some sites in the study, such as Nissouri Creek, were historically part of detailed agricultural watershed studies and have data to give a good measure of watershed change.

Stream monitoring includes stream flow, water chemistry, pathogens, and benthic invertebrates. Automatic samplers at some locations ensure that peak runoff times are monitored. Other researchers are also using these sites for studies, looking at pesticides and pharmaceuticals in the streams.

The UTRCA, which was originally contracted by the MOE to conduct the monitoring at seven of the 15 study watersheds, has recently renewed a three-year contract to continue this work.

Contact: Karen Maaskant, Water Quality Specialist, or Karla Young, Monitoring Technician

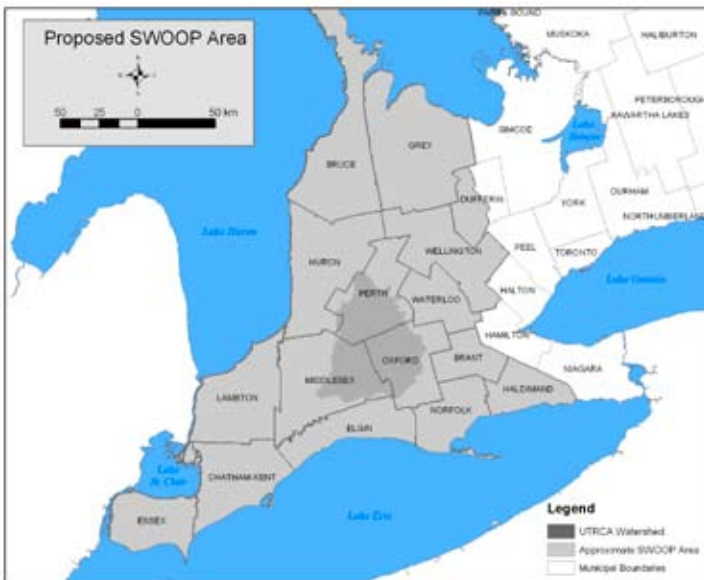
South Western Ontario Orthoimagery Project – SWOOP II (2010)

SWOOP

In May 2006, a new aerial photography project took place across the UTRCA watershed. The imagery was processed to shape the data to the earth's surface, to allow topographic mapping features, such as roads, water, and woodlands, to be overlaid on the photo (see image below). The UTRCA has access to this data to assist in showing change in natural heritage/hazard features compared to the previous imagery obtained in 2000.

The 2006 imagery was created in colour, which was an improvement over the black and white 2000 imagery. The colour imagery helps staff to identify current conditions on the watershed landscape.

The 2006 project was referred to as the South Western Ontario Orthoimagery Project (SWOOP). SWOOP was initiated by the County of Lambton and included many partners, such as municipalities, conservation authorities, government ministries and agencies, and private corporations. The number of partners meant a large cost savings for the UTRCA to acquire the photography,



Top: An example of the 2006 imagery.
 Bottom: SWOOP I covered a large portion of Southwestern Ontario.

compared to the costs in 2000. Technology had also significantly changed the way the photography was collected and processed, which reduced the overall cost of the project.

SWOOP II

Discussions have begun for new imagery to be collected in 2010. Preliminary meetings have been held with the original SWOOP partners to verify interest in the project. It is hoped that, by starting the process early, more partners will come on board to share costs and reduce the cost per partner.

The Ministry of Natural Resources will be the lead contact for the project, directed by a steering committee of partners. If all goes well the flight for the imagery will be completed in spring in 2010 and delivered in fall 2010 or spring 2011.

Contact: Terry Chapman, GIS Specialist

What's happening to Stoney Creek?

A local stewardship group known as the Friends of Stoney Creek (FoSC) has been looking out for the best interests of Stoney Creek and its tributaries for more than 15 years. This watershed has been the focus of considerable attention over the years, with subwatershed studies and environmental assessments undertaken in anticipation of future urban growth in London.

The Friends listened with interest at one of their meetings late last year, as City of London and UTRCA representatives spoke about a major project affecting approximately 2 km of channel. The erosion control remediation project was approved by the UTRCA and Fisheries and Oceans Canada in November, began in January and will be completed in March.



A contractor specializing in bioengineering and natural channel restoration projects undertook the work, which addressed



Benthic Technician Gina VanWieren helped with relocating fish. The ice in her net indicates just how cold this job was.

erosion concerns in a section of Stoney Creek and a main tributary known as Powell Drain. The frozen ground and very cold temperatures actually helped the contractor complete the work more efficiently, with minimal impact on the stream corridors.

The UTRCA was asked to assist by relocating any fish trapped in sections of channel where "dewatering" was needed to complete the work. Our

aquatic biologist, John Schwindt, led a small group of dedicated staff in the fish relocation work, despite extremely harsh working conditions. Special thanks to John and his team for looking out for our small-finned friends!

The work was funded through a cost-sharing agreement between the City of London and a developer in the subwatershed. Total project costs were \$1.79 million.

Contact: Mark Snowsell, Land Use Regulations Officer

New Insect Threatens Pines

While the Emerald Ash Borer has been in the news for some time, a new insect threat is moving into the spotlight. The Sirex Woodwasp (*Sirex noctilio*) is a wood borer of pine trees. Widely distributed in Europe, North Africa and Asia, this insect is considered only a secondary pest in its native range. However, in areas where it has been introduced accidentally such as South Africa, Australia and South America, it has caused considerable damage in pine plantations. Red, Scots, Jack and Pitch Pine are considered at risk. Other pines such as White Pine may be at risk.

Sirex Woodwasp was first confirmed in North America in upper New York State in 2004, and in Ontario in 2005. Ontario sites where adult beetles have been trapped include Prince Edward County, Prescott, Uxbridge and Cambridge.

This woodwasp, also known as a horntail, is a large insect 5-7 cm long. Females are attracted to stressed pine trees where they drill into the tree and deposit a fungus, toxic mucous and 25 to 450 eggs. The fungus and mucous act together to stress the trees and make a suitable environment for larval development. Once the eggs hatch the larvae feed on the fungus and tunnel into the wood, disturbing the



Female Sirex Woodwasp

tree's water and nutrient uptake and eventually killing it. The insect's larval stage takes 10-11 months to complete. Adults emerge three weeks later and live on for 1-2 weeks, completing the life cycle.

Silvicultural treatments to maintain and enhance plantation vigour are important in preventing establishment. Biological controls have been successful in other jurisdictions. A parasitic nematode (*Deladenus siricidicola*) has the ability to penetrate the larvae and render the female sterile. This nematode must be mass produced in the lab and inoculated into areas with Sirex Woodwasp since it does not naturally distribute well. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is in the process of regulating the infected area to prevent further spread into other parts of Canada.

Contact: John Enright, Forester

Emerald Ash Borer Update

In 2008, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was confirmed in Bluewater, Pickering, Sault Ste. Marie, Vaughan, Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville and in the Monterege region of Quebec. It is believed that EAB has been present in many of these communities for a number of years. Early detection is difficult as visual symptoms sometimes take two to three years to show up after infestation. This spread across Ontario and into Quebec has occurred much faster than anyone had predicted. It is believed that humans are primarily responsible for this spread through the movement of wood.

Although EAB is here to stay, it is still imperative that this spread be minimized. Slowing the spread will allow natural predators such as parasitic wasps and woodpeckers a chance to catch up. In Asia where EAB is native, this pest is only considered a secondary threat as natural predators keep the population in check. It is believed that over time these natural controls will increase here, providing a balance and allowing ash trees to survive.

In the meantime, it is important that we maintain the genetic diversity of healthy ash in our woodlots and urban landscapes. The theory that all ash should be cut because they are only going to die is not to be promoted. It is still hoped that some ash may be genetically resistant to EAB. If this potential genetic resistance is lost then hope for the survival of these species will be diminished. Good forest management practices that maintain a diverse mix of species and sizes in our woodlots is the best insurance against large scale losses of one family of trees, such as the ash species.

Contact: John Enright, Forester

Oxford Children's Water Festival

Planning for the Oxford Children's Water Festival is underway! Through a hands-on learning environment, the Festival will provide students in grades 3, 4 and 5 an opportunity to discover the importance of water in their lives. There will be over 45 interactive activity stations that focus on water conservation, protection, science, attitude and technology.

The Water Festival will be held at Pittock Conservation Area on May 26-29. Registration began in mid-January, and 1,250



An enthusiastic volunteer shows students how water percolates through different materials.

students from across Oxford County and the surrounding areas have registered so far. The organizing committee expects 3,200 students to participate in the event.

We are recruiting over 400 volunteers for the Festival for tasks such as interpreting activity stations, registering volunteers, delivering water, supervising, coordinating school buses and maintaining the site. The Festival's success depends on the help of volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, contact Linda Smith, Water Festival Coordinator, at smithl@thamesriver.on.ca or 519-451-2800 ext. 224.

For more information go to www.childrenswaterfestival.ca.
Contact: Linda Smith, Water Festival Coordinator

Charges Laid in Wildwood Trailer Break-ins

Hallowe'en pranks came early at Wildwood Conservation Area last year. On October 30, vandals broke into 42 trailers. The park had been closed for the season since October 19th and maintenance staff found the damaged trailers during their routine morning campground check and annual site clean up procedure on the morning of the 31st.

Although it was unclear what items were taken, there was visible damage to trailer doors, windows and patio doors. Sebringville OPP took over the investigation, collecting evidence for DNA sampling, taking pictures and recording missing items as reported by the campers.

Wildwood CA staff made the initial contact with trailer owners to advise them of the break-ins. On Saturday, November 1, staff gave trailer owners access to the campground to assess damage and report missing items to the police. Staff were also available to assist with sealing up damaged doors and access points on the trailers.

The media did an excellent job in covering the story via television, radio and newspaper encouraging anyone with information to contact the police. There seemed to be a string of recreation vehicle break-ins around this same time.

On February 17, Sebringville OPP contacted Craig Machan, WCA Superintendent and advised him that arrests had been made in the break and enters. Two males from Kitchener have been charged with eight counts of break and enter and possession of stolen property and will appear in court later this month to answer to the charges.

In 1997, 49 trailers were broken into at Wildwood CA; in 2003, 12 trailers were broken into. The culprits were never found in those incidents.

Contact: Craig Machan, Superintendent, Wildwood Conservation Area

Building a Great Team!

Conservation Areas staff have been working closely with Human Resources staff over the last two months initiating the hiring process for seasonal staff. Every year, the unit hires approximately 60 seasonal positions to assist with the daily operations of our conservation areas.

The hiring process can be tedious but it is well worth it in the end when we know that we have taken the time to hire the most qualified and energetic individuals for the positions.

Discussions began in December with reviewing position descriptions and creating job postings. This year, the unit gave a new look to the postings in hopes of attracting more resumes. Staff worked together to provide adequate detail about the position without overwhelming the applicants at first glance. This change was identified by the CA Unit as one of the goals and strategies in its HR Plan.

Sharon Vigilanti and Jonathon Pitts have been integral players in our hiring process this year. They receive resumes electronically and separate them according to desired work location and position. Park staff then review the resumes and create an interview list and dates. Jonathon and Sharon call the candidates to arrange interviews. Sharon and/or Jonathon participate in the interviews along with the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent. Once interviews are completed and staffing decisions have been made, Sharon and Jonathon are charged with the task of calling all interviewed candidates, offering positions as well as delivering the news to the unsuccessful candidates. Job offers are made both verbally and in writing.



Sharon, Steve and Sean comparing notes after a maintenance interview at Fanshawe Conservation Area

This year, we have received many more resumes than in the past, which adds to the sorting and review process but is much better than not having enough qualified people to choose from. We anticipate that most positions will be filled by the end of March – just in time for Orientation Day, training sessions and the parks opening on April 24th.

Contact: Jennifer Howley, Coordinator, Conservation Areas Unit

New Memorial Forest for St. Marys & Area

St. Marys and area churches and funeral homes have partnered with the UTRCA to create a new Memorial Forest Program.

The UTRCA was approached in December 2008 to consider joining forces with the interested parties in creating a Memorial Forest Program for the St. Marys area. The UTRCA is delighted to be a partner in this new forest initiative. Andrew Hodges from Hodges Funeral Home in St. Marys will act as the program administrator, in collaboration with the St. Marys and Area Ministerial Association.

The St. Marys and Area Memorial Forest partners are pleased to announce that a site for the new Memorial Forest has been chosen: a 19 acre parcel of land at Wildwood Conservation Area. The site is located at the southeast corner of Line 16 and Line 9 in Perth South Township.

The Memorial Forest program provides a lasting tribute to loved ones, and improves the environment by planting a tree in memory of loved ones in the Memorial Forest. The family of the deceased receives an "In Memoriam" card notifying them that a tree will be planted in memory of their loved one. A dedication service will be held each autumn at Wildwood Conservation Area for everyone who purchases memorial trees throughout the year.

The UTRCA is also involved in memorial forests in London, Woodstock, Thamesford/ Zorra Township, and Thames Centre.
Contact: Karen Pugh, Resources Specialist



The memorial forest will take root at the southeast corner of Line 16 and Line 9 in Perth South Township.

On the Calendar

Upcoming events are posted at www.thamesriver.on.ca

- April 2: Exhibitor, Thames Talbot Land Trust Annual Meeting, London
- April 18: Stoney Creek Community Day, London
- April 18: Thames River Clean Up and London Clean & Green
- April 19: Sunoco Earth Day, London
- April 24: Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock CAs open for the season
- April 28: Upper Avon River Conservation Club Planting Day, Stratford
- April: Community Forestry, Middlesex County
- April: Sunoco Community Forestry School Program, London
- April: Community Forestry, Woodstock
- April: Launch of *Heritage Landscape Guide to the Thames River Watershed*

On the Agenda

The following items will be presented at the UTRCA Board of Directors meeting on March 24, 2009. Board meeting minutes are posted on the Downloads section of our website, at www.thamesriver.on.ca.

- 2008 Financial Statements
- Property Assessment Project
- Administration and Enforcement - Section 28 Report
- Recreational Hunting at Kirkton-Woodham Community Arboretum
- Hunting Fees – Ellice and Gads Hill Swamp Friends' Recommendation
- Building Committee Update

Contact: Susan Shivas, Executive Assistant