



A Renewed Vision for the Credit Watershed - 2016-2019

Following extensive discussion with the members and deliberation at the Steering Committee, the Credit River Alliance is pleased to release a set of priorities for the upcoming three and a half years, through 2019.

The timing is important. Provincially, Ontario is pursuing amendments to the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan, Conservation Authorities Act, our wetland strategy, how we manage aggregates, and establishing improved ways to protect the Great Lakes.

Regionally, the watershed is experiencing continued pressures from increased settlement, development, climate change, and invasive species, each of which may adversely impact the watershed's natural heritage, biodiversity, ecological integrity, economic well-being, and public health.

To help implement the seven principles of the Alliance, as can be found on our website (*What the CRA Recommends*), we offer the following observations and recommendations to local agencies involved in protecting the watershed.

Watershed Planning

CVC research and monitoring indicates that currently the upper portion of the watershed is holding its own but is advocating for low impact development practises. Orangeville, at the top of Sub-watershed 19, is continuing to build out and is expanding its sewage treatment plant by 20%. Urban development continues to the west of Orangeville, adjacent to the wetlands that surround Caledon Lake, the beginning of Shaws Creek (Sub-watershed 17). The two sub-watershed studies have been under development for a decade but remain incomplete. We therefore suggest that

1. Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) expeditiously complete the two needed sub-watershed studies and that the CVC defer supporting further development until appropriate plans are complete; and,
2. CVC and other permitting authorities work to ensure that the quality of the hydrologic and natural heritage features in the upper, middle and lower sections of the watershed are maintained and improved through land use planning and development process as required under the Provincial Policy Statement.

Adequate Water Supply

Under Ontario's Source Water Protection process, a Tier 3 water budget assessment defines an area of vulnerability called the "Local Area". Such a water budget was completed for the Town of Orangeville (Credit River Sub-watershed #19) as part of the plan for the Credit River Source Water Protection Area. Analyses undertaken for the Village of Alton (Sub-Watershed #17) planning study suggest inadequate water resources exist in the adjacent area to support further development, even though municipal planners are still debating the "build out" population figures for the Village. Moreover, the local municipality has designated the Village as a tourist destination. The impact of these visitors on water resources and for sewage treatment has not been made public. We therefore suggest that:

3. The completed Sub-Watershed Studies #17 and #19, noted above, be used as the key determinant for further development in the upper portion of the watershed. Further development should be deferred until the CVC and local municipalities have developed and implemented the necessary mitigation mechanisms e.g. water conservation programs that ensure adequate water, both to sustain both natural heritage features and groundwater supplies.

Stormwater Management and Sediment Control

Residential development underway in the Village of Alton has resulted in several significant sediment releases into Shaws Creek, in spite of a stormwater management program approved by local authorities, including the CVC. Additionally, a proposal to rehabilitate a mill pond in Alton, including the creation of an off-line pond and the installation of a fish passage, raises significant concerns with respect to downstream flow, sediment, and water temperatures. We therefore suggest that:

4. CVC and the Region take all the required steps, including the completion of Sub-watershed #17 and a comprehensive stormwater management plan for the Village of Alton, to ensure that should the project proceed, any associated sediment release does not cause adverse downstream affects, especially on the nearby provincially significant Alton Grange wetland complex. Completion of these plans should be a prerequisite before any development is allowed to proceed.

Low Impact Development

The CVC has embraced (LID) and storm water management practises as approaches that will help sustain the upper portion of the watershed. However, there is no supporting evidence nor apparent monitoring program(s) in place that indicate what the long-term benefits and any potential adverse impacts would be if such practises are adopted, nor are there any studies on the long-term maintenance and potential impacts of decreased effectiveness of existing and or future stormwater ponds. We therefore suggest that:

5. CVC develop and make available information on how the long-term effectiveness of LID and storm water management will be monitored and assessed; and
6. CVC should in addition identify and assess necessary mechanisms for the monitoring, maintenance, and possible remediation for existing stormwater management ponds.



Aggregate Operations

For more than 20 years, the Town of Caledon has been one of Ontario's top ten aggregate producing municipalities. Caledon currently hosts a 3,380 acre corridor of aggregate production between Erin and Caledon Village. Several new applications are in play, and large areas of the upper portion of the watershed contain significant aggregate resources yet to be extracted. See: <https://www.caledon.ca/en/townhall/resources/OfficialPlanScheduleL.pdf> . In addition, little information is available with respect to the remediation of aggregate operations no longer in production. Pressure to redevelop these sites for active recreation and or tourism is evident. We therefore suggest that:

7. CVC and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry undertake a cumulative impact assessment of existing and planned aggregate operations, including aggregate recycling to identify impacts on local streams, wells and recharge rates, thermal loads, and sediment, chloride and other pollutant loads-upon the watershed; and,
8. CRA request that the CVC undertake an inventory of closed aggregate operations with specific attention being paid to those lands that could be restored and added to existing natural heritage corridors and centres. This inventory should include identification of the financial resources necessary to rehabilitate these lands and anticipated time-lines for rehabilitation.

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural lands in the "white belt" area of the Credit River Watershed, above the northern boundary of Brampton, are under development pressure, while agricultural run-off containing sediment and nutrients remains a challenge across the watershed. We therefore suggest that:

9. CVC and local municipal organizations, with appropriate financial support from the Province, work with the agricultural sector to retain local agriculture, expand agricultural stewardship and monitoring programs and encourage sustainable agricultural practises.



Natural Heritage, climate change, invasive species, and increased recreation

The sustainability of the natural heritage of the watershed is and will continue to be adversely impacted by climate change, invasive species and increased recreation. We therefore suggest that:

10. CVC, municipal governments and the Province, collaborate as necessary to:
- Ensure good base line studies for natural heritage, especially for woodlands, hydrologic integrity, and sensitive biota;
 - Establish targets for lands to be set aside for natural heritage in each of the sub-watersheds;
 - Acquire lands/encourage conservation easements as needed;
 - Market the Credit Trail in a manner that encourages conservation and the protection of natural heritage and not just public health and increased recreation; and,
 - Ensure that proposed recreational developments do not negatively impact natural heritage and hydrologic conditions in the Credit.

We look forward to meeting with CVC and other agencies to discuss these priorities and to help develop plans to better protect the health of the Credit in a landscape of increasing pressures.

Sincerely,

Paul Newall
Chair