

Natural Environment

Goal: Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water, and diverse flora and fauna.

Strategy: Maintain, Protect and Improve the Quality and Quantity of Huron County’s Surface and Groundwater Resources (NE3)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Develop a foundation for Rural Storm Water Management Plans for use across all watersheds in Huron County

Description

The quality of our water is critically important. This project will seek to develop solutions that will assist with the unique challenges of rural storm water, including addressing increased rainfall intensities, and changes in freeze/thaw cycles. While we should focus on rural lands, it is important to also realize the role of settlements and lakeshore development in water management. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes: natural environment, agriculture and liveable communities. The Water Protection Steering Committee will coordinate actions, share information and pool resources. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Liveable Communities (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Agriculture (Economic Security)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)

Activities will include

- Development of storm water management modelling through the multi-agency Southeast Shore initiative
- Identify priority areas through a modelling process
- Ongoing creation of demonstration watersheds showcasing best management practices
- Seeking funding for implementation
- *Others to be completed*

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee

Partners

- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
- Lake Huron Southeast Shore Initiative (interagency steering committee and working group)
- Stewardship Council
- Lakeshore Groups
- General Farm Organizations
- Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Measures of Success

- Funding secured
- Completion of the model
- Number of demonstration watershed plans completed
- Number of projects completed

Timeline

- Complete the model and trial implementation in priority watersheds by the end of 2013.



Craig Allen

“Because climate change threatens to irrevocably change the environment around us, Ontario municipalities will be faced with numerous challenging decisions as they adapt to these new circumstances. More frequent extreme weather events will damage built capital including municipal infrastructure. Exposure to more pronounced threats, such as heat waves, will tax our public health units and can erode human capital.” *Climate Change Position Paper, AMO, 2010*

Climate Change in Huron County

The media is full of often confusing commentary and debate about rising greenhouse gases and the implication this has for our planet’s climate. Climate change is typically talked about on a global scale, and in reference to faraway places – sea level rising in small island states, deserts receiving too much rain, and rainy regions receiving too little. Scientists present models about what our planet will look like in 20, 30 or 50 years dependent on the measures taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

What does any of this mean for us in Huron County, today? The issue of climate change is important for three main reasons, reasons often missing from conversations on the news: 1) climate change is not just a concern for the future – the impacts of climate change are being felt around the world right now; 2) while a global problem, the impacts of climate change are experienced locally by communities like ours; and 3) climate change impacts aren’t limited to one group or one sector of society – they cross environmental, economic, cultural and social boundaries.

In Huron County, we can relate to climate change impacts through the changes seen in the natural environment – more severe weather events, flooding, erosion, and other stresses on our natural resources. This is only the surface, however. These impacts have economic implications – costly cleanups and repairs from roads washing out, poor crop productivity and its negative impacts on the agricultural industry, money spent on rebuilding structural damage. These physical and economic impacts in turn have implications for our communities. Low-income individuals and families, for example, are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts because they do not have the financial resources and social networks to bounce back from major disturbances.

Huron County has an opportunity to develop local solutions to the global problem of climate change, and the Huron County Sustainability Plan represents one step towards this goal. The Plan includes actions towards climate change mitigation, such as improving energy efficiency (e.g. ENCO1, ENCO2, ENCO3), promoting the use of green energy (GE1), and reducing single-occupancy vehicles through active transportation (HAC2). The Plan also includes actions that strengthen our natural environments, our economy, and our society, making us more resilient and able to withstand negative climate change effects – for example by protecting our natural environment (e.g. NE1, NE2), by supporting all sectors of our community (e.g. POP4, CN2) and by fostering a strong economy (e.g. EC1, EC2).

Climate change is a global problem, and will require the cooperation of nations to resolve. But here in Huron County, we can work together to ensure that our environment, economy, and society is resilient to change, all while carrying out local actions that are part of the global solution.