



SOUTH NATION
CONSERVATION
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SOUTH NATION
CONSERVATION

2023 Annual Report

The Healing Place, Township
of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal

Findlay Creek Boardwalk Extension



Findlay Creek Conservation Area boardwalk extension in the City of Ottawa, Fall 2023.

South Nation Conservation (SNC) has extended Ottawa's Findlay Creek Boardwalk to create a 1-kilometre looped trail network within the Leitrim Wetland! The older section of boardwalk will also be replaced by SNC in 2024.

The \$1-million-dollar investment was supported by SNC, the developers Tartan and Tamarack Homes, and the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

The Findlay Creek Boardwalk was originally built by SNC in 2012 to provide recreational access to the Leitrim Wetland. SNC has been working with the Leitrim Wetland Advisory Committee to oversee the management and stewardship of the Leitrim Wetland and to fundraise for the completion of the looped boardwalk extension.

The boardwalk, which received a record number of nearly 20,000 visitors in 2023, provides access to the 570 acres of the Leitrim Wetland, which is a Provincially Significant Wetland and Area of Natural and Scientific Interest.



Representatives from SNC, City of Ottawa, Findlay Creek Community Association, and Tartan and Tamarack Homes.

Ducks Unlimited Canada Partnership

The revitalization of lost and degraded wetlands in Eastern Ontario has been the focus of a three-year \$375,000 restoration project, thanks to a partnership between SNC and Ducks Unlimited Canada and with support from the Government of Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund.

SNC has worked with municipalities, public agencies, and landowners to implement restorative action on public and private land. 5 restoration projects were completed in 2023 and an additional 4 are ongoing in 2024, totalling 225 acres restored to natural wetlands.

Each project design was unique and restoration work included shallow excavation in low-lying areas and Beaver Dam Analogs in small watercourses to increase water storage to create new wetland habitat.

In 2024, SNC will monitor water retention, vegetation growth, and wildlife use to ensure that the designs function as intended.



Completed excavated wetland pond on private property, Municipality of South Dundas



Follow-up monitoring at a restoration site, Municipality of South Dundas

Woodlot Storm Recovery Program

On May 21, 2022, a destructive narrow line of intense winds with speeds up to 195 km/hr, known as a derecho storm, caused extensive damage to thousands of acres of woodlots from the City of Ottawa eastward through the municipalities of Clarence-Rockland, Alfred-Plantagenet, Nation, Champlain, and East Hawkesbury.

To help woodlot owners recover, SNC introduced a Woodlot Storm Recovery Program to help provide cost-share funding to support storm clean up and reforestation efforts in an effort to increase carbon sequestration and forest resiliency through increased biodiversity.

Funding for this program is supported by all levels of government, including the Government of Canada, through the 2 Billion Tree Program, the Province of Ontario, the City of Ottawa, and the United Counties of Prescott and Russell.

The program is based on the long-standing success of SNC's Tree Planting Programs and Woodlot Advisory Services.



A woodlot site visit to a property damaged by the derecho, City of Clarence Rockland



SNC joined by Minister Graydon Smith, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, MPP Stéphane Sarrazin, Mayor Mario Zanth, City of Clarence-Rockland, and Mayor Normand Riopel, Township of Champlain



Ottawa River Natural Hazards Mapping Public Consultations, Township of Alfred and Plantagenet



Benthic invertebrate sampling demonstration at Findlay Creek, City of Ottawa



Biodiversity tree planting event at W.E. Burton Conservation Area, Township of Russell



Ottawa Valley Farm Show, City of Ottawa



Nurses Week tree giveaway, Township of North Dundas



Annual septic contractors meeting, Township of North Stormont



Scouts planting event at Camp Sheldrick, Township of North Dundas



Maple Day at the Oschmann Forest, Township of North Dundas



SNC at the Morrisburg Waterfront for the 'It's All About the River' event, Municipality of South Dundas



World Wetland Day celebration at Coopers Marsh CA with Raisin Region Conservation Authority, Township of South Glengarry

SNC Approvals Programs: Planning and Development Reviews, Conservation Authority Regulations, and Municipal Septic Services

The way we plan and build our communities affects our natural environment. Environmental planning is an important part of protecting our land and water resources.

SNC's Approvals Team ensures people and property are protected from natural hazards by participating in local planning and development review to support local municipalities.

With expertise in natural hazards and natural heritage, municipal drinking water source protection, and private servicing, the team also supports development projects and environmental studies.

SNC's Septic Program through the *Ontario Building Code* (Part 8 - Sewage Systems) is delivered in 17 municipalities; working with landowners and contractors to ensure proper installation and repair of septic systems.



SNC's Septic Team works together to inspect private sewage systems under the Ontario Building Code

SNC's Regulations Program is delivered under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and enables staff to work with municipal and agency partners, developers, landowners, and contractors, to safeguard human life and property from natural hazards.

The following summary identifies the number of development applications processed by SNC in 2023.

Planning and Development Reviews

- 375 development applications
- 66 property inquiries
- 60 technical reviews
- 16 applications reviewed for threats to municipal drinking water
- 0 new risk management plans established to protect municipal drinking water

Conservation Authorities Act: Section 28 Permits

- 191 permits
- 45 occurrence reports processed
- 84 drain maintenance requests

Sewage Systems Review

- 473 permits
- 152 septic record searches
- 80 renovation reviews
- 15 occurrence reports investigated

For all planning applications, timelines are established by municipalities depending on the type of development, applicable legislation, and municipal policies.

Timelines for *Conservation Authorities Act* permits are established by the Province of Ontario. The following summary notes the number of permits issued within established timelines.

Permits Issued Within Provincial Timeline

Major (90 days)	Minor (30 days)
7	153

Permits Issued Outside Provincial Timeline

Major (90 days)	Minor (30 days)
0	31

As part of Conservation Ontario's new Client Service Standards, SNC works to achieve the following service standards:

- 21 days for minor applications,
- 28 days for major applications, and
- 14 days for routine applications.

2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Endless Recreational Opportunities At SNC Conservation Areas

In 2023, SNC's network of 14 Conservation Areas (CA) welcomed over 190,000 recorded visitors to hike, geocache, picnic, kayak, canoe, launch their boat, bird watch, fish, and enjoy their local outdoor environment.

The most popular destinations?

Year-Round Sites:

- W.E. Burton CA in Russell (40,755 visitors)
- J. Henry Tweed CA in Russell (34,926 visitors)
- Findlay Creek CA in Ottawa (19,052 visitors)
- Warwick Forest CA in North Stormont (17,909 visitors)

Seasonal Sites:

- High Falls CA in Casselman (22,150 visitors)
- Jessup's Falls CA in Alfred-Plantagenet (18,022 visitors)
- Cass Bridge CA in North Dundas (8,501 visitors)

In 2023, SNC:

- Extended the Findlay Creek Boardwalk
- Installed new sap lines at the Oschmann Forest Conservation Area
- Built first fully serviced outdoor washroom at the High Falls Conservation Area
- Improved trail entrance and bridge replacement at the Warwick Forest Conservation Area
- Established a pollinator meadow at the Mill Run Conservation Area
- Restored damaged forest and reopened old trail network at the Jessup's Falls Conservation Area



New memorial benches installed at various Conservation Areas



Donation of firewood to local foodbanks



Local residents enjoying the freshly groomed trails at the Robert Graham Forest Conservation Area, Municipality of South Dundas

Land Partnerships Support Local Economy

SNC partners with area businesses and community members to sustainably harvest locally sourced products.



HUNTING

Nearly 9,000 acres of SNC land is used by hunters; 122 permits issued in 2023.



HONEY

SNC is gifted 10 lbs of honey annually from local beekeepers; 1 land lease in 2023.



MAPLE SYRUP

In 2023, 7,700 gallons of sap was collected from the Oschmann Forest and sold to a local producer. 33 acres of land is also leased for sugar bush operations.



TRAPPING

Nearly 9,000 acres of land is used by trappers; 11 permits issued in 2023.



CROP PRODUCTION

30 acres of SNC land is leased to local farmers.

Living Natural Legacy: SNC Land Securement

SNC's Land Securement Strategy, which is supported by 16 member municipalities, has helped guide the securement of 1,133.9 acres of land since 2014, adding to the over 12,000 acres of land owned by SNC.

The strategy identifies the need for public land securement in Eastern Ontario and has provided a framework for recommending land acquisitions decisions to SNC's Board of Directors.

SNC is a member of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and is approved to accept donations of land through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. SNC's Land Donation Program continues to offer donors a way to preserve the past and provide hope for the future by leaving a natural legacy.

In 2023, SNC acquired 270 acres of land on 4 properties through partial purchase and donation in the municipalities of:

- South Dundas (20 acres)
- North Dundas (72 acres)
- Clarence Rockland (77 acres)
- North Stormont (101 acres)



Winter Walk at Warwick Forest, Township of North Stormont



New clear sap line and ladder installed at the Oschmann Forest, Township of North Dundas



Completion of the Children's Butterfly Garden, Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal



Benthic invertebrate sampling, City of Ottawa



Building Beaver Dam Analogs at wetland restoration site, Township of Alfred and Plantagenet



Planning of the pollinator garden at Mill Run Conservation Area, Augusta Township



Sowing seed at wetland restoration site, City of Ottawa



Canoeing the Castor River to remove European Water Chestnut, Township of Russell



Youth Fish Camp Catch, Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal



A days work of pulling European Water Chestnut from the Castor River, Township of Russell



Wildlife using wetland restoration site, Municipality of South Dundas



Planting at Oak Valley Pioneer Park, Township of North Dundas



SNC Staff Tree Planting, Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal



SNC staff tree planting day at The Healing Place, Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal



2023 SNC Summer Students, Township of North Stormont



Staff celebrating SNC's 75th Anniversary, Township of North Stormont



Youth warming up by the fire at Oschmann Forest Conservation Area, Township of North Dundas



Wetland restoration follow-up monitoring on private property, Township of Alfred and Plantagenet

Conservation Authorities: Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards

Floodplain and Erosion Mapping

SNC updates floodplain and erosion maps (or natural hazard maps) on behalf of its partner municipalities when requested, specifically in areas facing increased development pressures.

In 2023, SNC was successful in working with all levels of government to secure Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Funding for four priority projects. These projects involved updating hazard information and mapping along the Bear Brook in Prescott-Russell, Castor River in the City of Ottawa and Prescott-Russell, and South Branch of the South Nation River in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. The fourth project involved a large land cover and watercourse update across Eastern Ontario.

This milestone marks the largest natural hazard study area completed in a single year by SNC, following the update of the Ottawa River natural hazard mapping in 2022.

Flood Forecasting and Warning Program

SNC is continuously enhancing water resource monitoring programs to advise municipalities and residents of potential flood and drought emergencies. Updates were made to climate stations to support SNC's watershed model.

Under the Flood Forecasting and Warning program, which advises of potentially unsafe conditions due to flooding, SNC issued 17 notices in 2023.

Under the Low Water Response Program, which advises of possible drought conditions, SNC did not issue any notices in 2023.



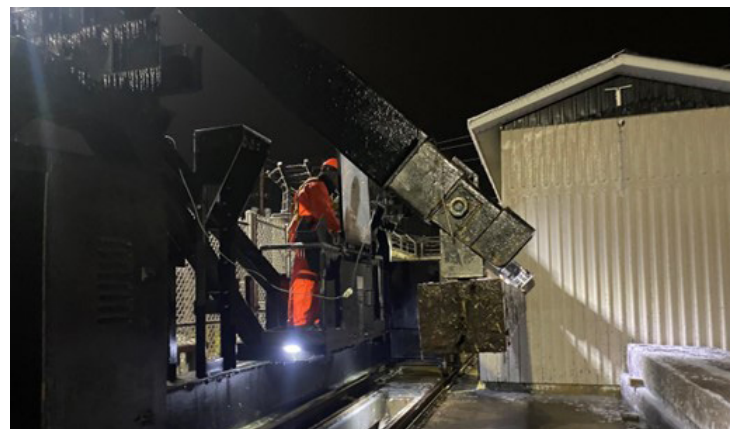
SNC staff conducting a snow survey at Larose Forest, Nation Municipality

Water Control Structure Management

SNC operates several water control structures including dams, weirs and berms to reduce risk to life and property from natural hazards.



Chesterville Dam, Township of North Dundas



Staff operating the Chesterville Dam on Christmas Eve, Township of North Dundas

Woodlot Management and Tree Planting

In 2023, SNC:

- Planted over 198,000 tree seedlings, adding to the 3 million trees planted since 1990.
- Provided \$164,000 in grants through Forests Ontario's 50 Million Tree Program to help plant trees on private land.
- Completed free Woodlot Advisory Service site visits in both UCPR and SDG. In UCPR, 39 grants were distributed, providing \$19,308 in grants for over 1,700 acres of forested land. In SDG, 18 grants were distributed, providing \$8,750 in grants for over 730 acres of forested land.
- In 2023, continued conservation land management provided \$25,000 in timber revenue, nearly \$14,000 in user fees and \$4,300 from maple sap sales. The SNC Forest is managed sustainably, and our forest operations are certified under Forest Stewardship Council.
- SNC expanded its forestry service through cost-recovered agreements to local municipalities to provide support for forest management and tree planting projects on municipal land.
- 18 Forest Stewards worked with SNC to monitor forest activity on 45 SNC properties.
- SNC partnered with municipalities to provide over 10,000 free tree seedlings to watershed residents.

Watershed Monitoring and Reporting

Environmental monitoring programs focus on quality and quantity of our land and water ecosystems including: surface and ground water; native, invasive, and at-risk species; stream assessments; and municipal drains.

SNC collects and provides scientifically accurate data for stakeholders and municipalities to make informed decisions; data also helps guide SNC stewardship projects and programs.

Clean Water Program

Provided \$43,379 in cost-share grants to residents for 18 projects that improve water quality within the SNC jurisdiction.

Provided \$163,682 in cost-share grants for 57 projects within the City of Ottawa.

The Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program is delivered by the Rideau, Mississippi, and South Nation Conservation Authorities on behalf of the City of Ottawa.

Ottawa Tree Replacement Program

Provided \$126,000 in cost-share grants for 60 projects on private property that helped replace 356 Ash trees and control the invasive Emerald Ash Borer.

SNC remains committed to controlling invasive species within its forest properties through research partnerships and tree management activities on Conservation Land.

Grassland Stewardship

Thanks to years of successful industry partnerships to restore grassland habitat for Species at Risk birds, SNC, on behalf of Forests Ontario, is delivering a habitat restoration program called the Grassland Stewardship Initiative. The program has seen a successful launch and now, going into its third year, new projects are proposed to further increase grassland habitat to critical Species at Risk birds such as the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark.

SNC continues the Grassland Stewardship Project at the Healing Place property by maintaining the bird-friendly hay harvesting schedule to improve the overall productivity and effectiveness of the habitat. SNC works with private landowners who intend to create, enhance, or maintain grasslands on their property to support the conservation and recovery of grassland bird populations. Additional sites were added to the project in 2023, and SNC continues to maintain them and manage invasive plant species.

2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SNC Golf Tournament Raises Funds to Support Forest Conservation Initiatives

80 golfers and local sponsors helped SNC raise over \$4,000 at its annual Friends of SNC Golf Tournament on August 11th at the Casselview Golf and Country Club in Casselman. Tournament proceeds supported SNC's Forest Conservation Initiative and will support Community Free Tree Picks ups in each partner municipality.



Staff pictured with SNC Board Chair Pierre Leroux at the 2023 Friends of SNC Golf Tournament, Municipality of Casselman.



Operation Pollinator native seed planting, Township of North Dundas

Pollinators Have a Need for Seed

Syngenta Canada's Operation Pollinator program provided SNC with native wildflower seeds to establish two meadows of pollinator habitat in North Dundas. The new meadows will create essential habitat and food sources for a range of pollinators and enhance the biodiversity of the region.

Wildflower seeds were sowed directly adjacent to the South Nation River near Camp Sheldrick. The new pollinator meadows are considered a win-win for the environment and for neighbouring agricultural fields due to the expected influx of pollinating insects that will live and thrive in the new habitat.

In partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, SNC successfully created a publicly-accessible pollinator meadow at Mill Run Conservation Area in Augusta Township. This 1.5-acre community space saw its first full growing season in 2023. The site was mowed once during 2023 and will be mowed at least two more times in 2024 to ensure unwanted vegetation is cut before the wildflowers are left to flourish.

Fighting the Spread of the Invasive European Water Chestnut

The invasive European Water Chestnut was identified along the South Nation River and the Castor River in 2022, outside of the previously known distribution in Ontario.

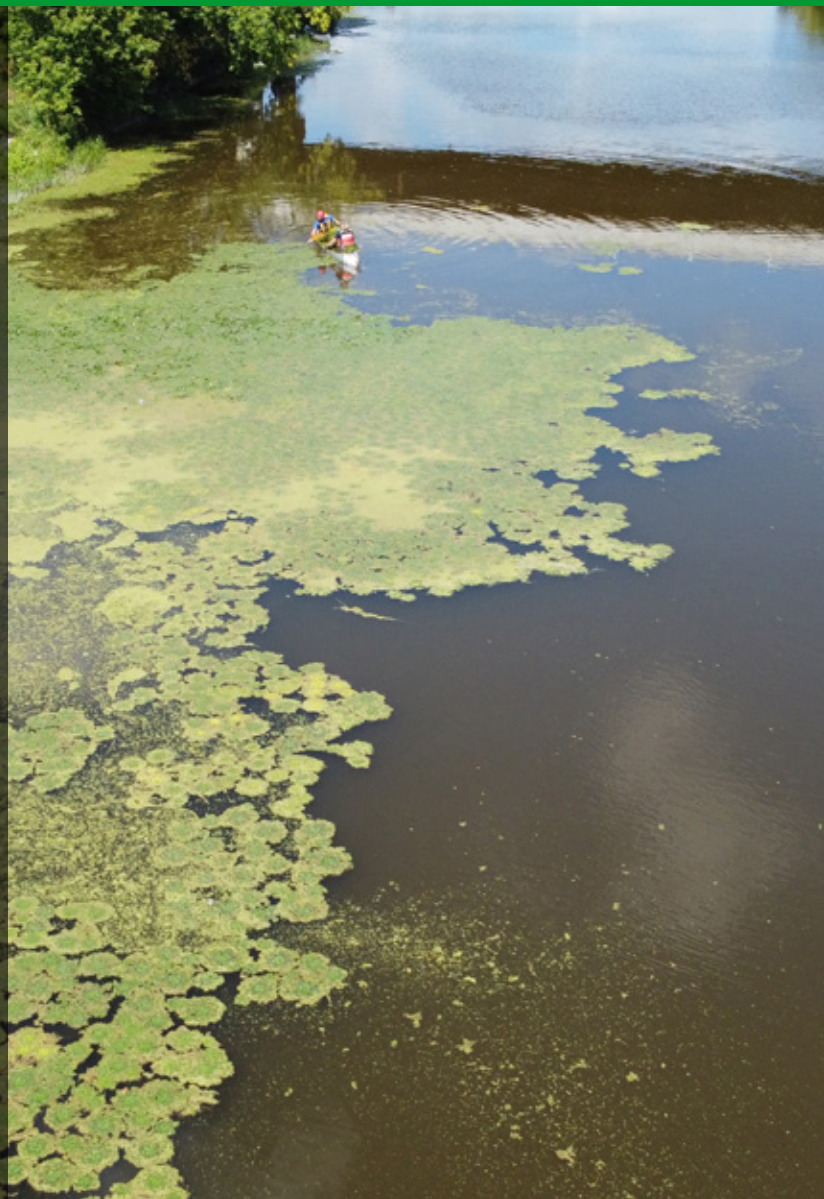
The presence of this invasive plant threatens the health of ecosystems due to its aggressive and rapid growth which shades out native vegetation, prevents light penetration, and decreases plant biodiversity which can result in reduced dissolved oxygen levels which can impact native aquatic species and cause fish kills. The dense floating mats of vegetation and barbed spines also make recreational activities like swimming, angling, and boating almost impossible.

Preliminary surveys and removal were carried out in August 2022 and follow-up monitoring and control of the invasive was undertaken throughout June, July, and August 2023.

Approximately 18,000 plants were removed from the South Nation River and the Castor River in 2023.

Long term monitoring and management are required to fully eradicate the invasive from our waterways due to the persistent nature of the plant.

Staff removing European Water Chestnut from the Castor River, Township of Russell



Thanking Angela Coleman, General Manager of Conservation Ontario, for her years of commitment and continued support.

SNC Celebrates its 75th Year in Conservation

SNC has been a leader of natural resource management in Eastern Ontario since 1947 and in 2023, a belated 75th Anniversary event took place in Finch and welcomed over 150 guests from partner organizations to celebrate the important milestone.

The outdoor occasion celebrated seven and a half decades of environmental stewardship, conservation efforts, and community engagement.

Working on behalf of 16 member municipalities, SNC has been at the forefront of managing, conserving, and restoring natural resources, managing over 20,000 acres of land, planting over 120,000 trees every year, adding to the 4 million trees planted since 1990, and protecting people and property from the impacts of flooding, erosion, and landslides, while supporting sustainable development activities in growing communities. SNC remains a partner of choice for its member municipalities.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



SNC's Board of Directors consists of 13 appointed representatives from SNC's 16-member municipalities who govern and provide direction for all the work completed by SNC staff.

The 2023 Board of Directors include:
 Pierre Leroux, Chair, Prescott-Russell;
 Steve Densham, Vice-Chair, Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry;
 George Darouze, Past Chair, City of Ottawa

City of Ottawa:
 Catherine Kitts, Matthew Luloff, Linda Payant

United Counties of Prescott-Russell:
 Genevieve Lajoie, François St. Amour

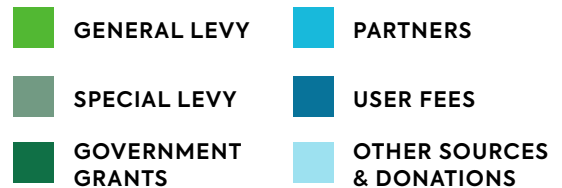
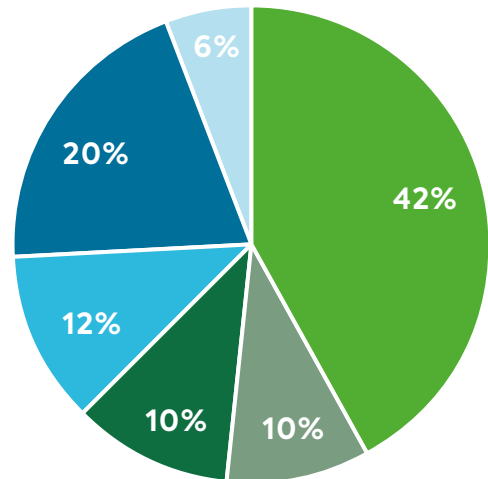
United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry:
 Bill Smirle, Tom Smyth

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville:
 Adrian Wynands, Deb Wilson

2023 SNC BUDGET SUMMARY

2023 Budget: \$9,323,454

- General Levy: \$3,920,525
- Special Levy: \$906,000
- Government Grants: \$1,001,556
- Partners: \$1,105,401
- User Fees: \$1,847,541
- Other Sources and Donations: \$542,431



OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT; WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER.
 NOTRE ENVIRONNEMENT LOCAL, PROTÉGEONS-LE ENSEMBLE.

