

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 11, 2008

Lakehead Region Conservation Authority Year In Review

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority Board and Staff are looking back on 2008 with a sense of achievement and looking forward to 2009 with optimism.

The Neebing - McIntyre Floodway, which will celebrate its 25th Anniversary in 2009, was called into service four times in 2008. The biggest event was the June 6th storm in which more than 80 millimetres of rain fell in the Region. While many area roads were washed out and some homes suffered flood damage, the Neebing - McIntyre Floodway successfully diverted excess waterflows around the Intercity area of Thunder Bay.

During the summer of 2008 sediment traps along the Neebing-McIntyre Floodway were dredged in order to maintain the overall integrity of the Floodway and its ability to handle a Regional Storm. On an annual basis, inspections are carried out on the structural conditions of the Hazelwood Lake dam, Neebing River weir and the Floodway Diversion Structure with required maintenance scheduled as warranted. As 2009 marks the 25th Anniversary of the completion of the Floodway, the Authority will be holding special events to commemorate the occasion.

In 2008, Summer Experience Program students and the Authority's Stewardship Intern conducted an assessment of the Slate River in the Municipalities of Neebing and Oliver Paipoonge. They conducted an inventory of the river's characteristics such as water quality, plant and animal life. The general health of the River was found to be good. The information gathered will be used as a benchmark for future monitoring of the watershed. A watershed assessment will be conducted on the Wolf River in Dorion Township during the summer of 2009.

2008 was a busy year for the Lakehead Source Protection Committee and the Lakehead Source Protection Authority as they started work on the process to develop a local Source Protection Plan for the Lakehead Source Protection Area. The Lakehead Source Protection Committee is working in partnership with local Municipalities and community stakeholders to produce a science-based plan to be completed by August 2012.

The Authority's 8 Conservation Areas continue to be popular destinations for local residents as well as visitors to the region. With higher gas prices this past year, residents were invited to save travel costs and Play In Our Backyard! Our Conservation Areas, which attract about 100,000 visitors a year, offer hiking, wildlife viewing and other recreational opportunities such as canoeing. Education programs are delivered to local schools at several of our Conservation Areas which include features such as Provincially Significant Wetlands.

With a \$2 per vehicle admission fee, visiting Conservation Areas is an extremely affordable way for the entire family to keep active this winter. Frequent visitors can purchase an annual pass. The 2009 Explorer Card is available at the 2008 rate of \$25.00 until December 23rd, after which the price will increase to \$30.00.

"This holiday season, the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority invites you and your family to keep active by coming to Play In Our Backyard," says Chairman Bill Bartley. "Enjoy a hike at Cascades, wildlife viewing at Mission Island Marsh or snowshoeing at Hazelwood Lake."