

# **Crowe Valley Conservation Authority**

## **Draft Land Development Policy**



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## Introduction

Since the establishment of the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority (CVCA) in 1958, the CVCA has had the opportunity to engage in the pursuit of land acquisitions to further the mandate of a conservation authority as per the Conservation Authorities Act. Conservation, protection, preservation and enhancement of land acquired by the CVCA is the foundation of CVCA land management.

The CVCA is a proud landowner and cares about the lands the Authority owns in our watershed. Land ownership is the foundation this Authority can build upon to create a resilient, healthy and sustainable environment for the benefit of residents, visitors and the flora and fauna living in this watershed. It is the example of leading the way for future generations, success in protecting all of the components of this watershed while also aiming to contribute to the local economy.

## Purpose

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority has been and will always be considered an environmental leader and significant land owner. The CVCA will need to demonstrate its due diligence and responsible land management practices pertaining to all lands owned by the CVCA. All of the properties owned by the CVCA are used by the public and are promoted in various degrees by the Authority, organizations, agencies and various levels of government.

This policy will entrench the Authority's commitment to the duty of care and ensure the properties are available for the public's use, enjoyment and outdoor educational opportunities, while enabling the flexibility to lease and operate the properties as required to assist with the financial constraints of ownership.

## Primary Conservation Areas Landholdings (Accessible to the Public)

### Crowe Bridge CA

- 26 acres
- Purchased in 1965
- Bisected by Crowe River Rd, 13 acres on each side
- South west portion situated on the Crowe River and is actively used as a daytime swimming destination
- Strong local community support as well as attracting visitors from across the province
- Maintained and operated by the Municipality of Trent Hills as per the lease agreement

#### Callaghan's Rapids CA

- 400 acres
- Purchased in 1974
- Situated on the Crowe River in the Townships of Stirling-Rawdon and Marmora and Lake.
- Public access developed and promoted in the 1980's for daytime use – access to Crowe River
- Long standing hunting leases

#### The Gut CA

- 400 acres
- Purchased in 1976
- Situated on the Crowe River in Marmora and Lake Township
- "Jewel" of Eastern Ontario
- Daytime use to view the Crowe River gorge and use hiking trails

#### McGeachie Conservation Area

- 538 acres
- Primary donation in 1994, subsequent 40 acre purchase in 1999, additional 200 acres donated
- Cottage and outdoor educational building
- Extensive trail network
- Rental revenue

## Secondary Landholdings

#### Agreement Forest

- 200 acres
- Transferred to CVCA from the Ministry of Natural Resources
- No public access
- Leased for hunting

## Background

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority has had a long history of protecting conservation areas within its jurisdiction. The CVCA owns approximately 1,564 acres of land within the Crowe River watershed. These lands have been acquired over time in an effort to protect natural features, the environment and promote their use for public enjoyment and public use. There are approximately 15 kms of trails offering a variety of experiences and conditions. The CVCA also owns a few buildings located at two conservation areas.

## Goals and Objectives for Land Development

This policy will establish the principles of land development on CVCA properties by:

- Continuing to build on precedents and direction by previous CVCA Boards regarding the overall use and intent of the CVCA's conservation areas.
- Investigating land use proposals on an individual basis when presented to the CVCA.
- Pursuing opportunities of strengthening and maintaining current infrastructure when funding permits (donations, grants, municipal and/or county support).
- Working collaboratively with individual supporters, agencies, community groups and/or not-for-profit organizations to achieve goals and objectives to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities for the public and protect the environment.
- Development on CVCA's properties will not be permitted if the development proposal threatens the degradation of the property in any manner.
- Development will not be permitted which will divide the CVCA properties into zones of exclusion. Ninety-five percent of the property is to be available to the public via the appropriate trail networks.
- Pursue research and monitoring opportunities when funding opportunities become available or at the request of our member municipalities.
- Integrate Traditional Knowledge where appropriate and where consent is given from local First Nations communities, receive and review new information and/or advice with the intent of improving management actions for these properties.
- Ensure ecological integrity and biological diversity of the natural heritage systems are maintained with a long term view through naturalization or wildlife habitat enhancement or maintenance.
- Ensure all new properties acquired have a management and/or master plan developed as resources allow.
- Ensure a land development policy conforms to the CVCA's Land Strategy.
- Identify permitted and prohibited uses on the CVCA's landholdings.
- Identify future needs of the conservation areas to expand or enhance opportunities for recreation and increase revenue to ensure sustainability of these areas for public use.
- Identify areas or natural heritage systems that will not be developed in any manner on the properties.
- Ensure all infrastructure meets current accessibility and safety standards including facilities and trails.
- Enhance revenue generation when possible without threatening the integrity of the natural features of the property, changing the intent how the property is used, what is offered to the public or creating financial barriers.
- Cap development to ensure precedents are not established, which will eliminate development creep from occurring over the long term.
- The proposal shall conform and be compatible with the defined use of the conservation area as per the CVCA's Land Use Strategy.
- Any development proposal shall be submitted to the CVCA Board of Directors for review.

## Current Leases

Most of the CVCA conservation areas are currently subjected to a short or long term lease agreement between the CVCA and an individual or a municipality. Through the terms of the lease agreement, the Lessee is typically responsible for enforcing the rules for the duration of the lease. In one instance, a long term lease has been signed between the CVCA and one of its member municipalities. Every other lease at this time is for a much shorter duration.

Any future long term leases will be considered by the CVCA based on the merits of the proposal. Details of the lease will incorporate clauses to ensure the CVCA's land management goals and objectives are met or exceeded.

The CVCA Board will not compromise the original goals and objectives as determined by the Conservation Authorities Act, prior Board decisions or the terms agreed upon by individual owners of property donated to the CVCA.

## Land Acquisition

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority does not actively seek out properties to purchase but will consider securement of lands located within its jurisdiction, on a parcel-by-parcel basis, to increase its Conservation Lands base and contribute to its vision and goals. Land securement includes obtaining from a willing landowner, interest in land title for conservation purposes through land bequest, land trading, donation, and fee simple purchase, as well as other means of holding rights on land such as leasing, restrictive covenants, and easements.

Additionally, the CVCA will work with the Crowe Valley Conservation Foundation in accepting donations of lands that further meet the objectives of the Conservation Authority.

## Revisions

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority Land Development Policy will be reviewed and revised as required to address changes in legislation, emerging issues, the expectations of the public and the unpredictable impacts climate change.