



**Sault Ste. Marie Region
Conservation Authority**

Draft
Conservation Lands Strategy

Version 1.0

2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority (SSMRCA) is a community-based environmental non-profit agency that provides for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources within the local Watershed. The SSMRCA was established in 1963 by the Province of Ontario at the request of four participating municipalities: the City of Sault Ste. Marie and the townships of Prince, Korah and Tarentorous. The subsequent amalgamation of the city and the townships of Korah and Tarentorous reduced the number of participating municipalities to two.

As legislated, the SSMRCA provides mandatory programs that manage the risk of natural hazards, manage lands owned or managed by the Authority, protect sources of drinking water and monitor groundwater and surface water. The Authority also provides non-mandatory programs including programs at the request of the municipality (grass cutting on City property, Risk Management Inspector services, and Source Protection education & outreach materials).

As part of the Conservation Authority Lands and Conservation Area Program, the SSMRCA owns and maintains approximately 5,000 acres of land. The land owned by the Authority was acquired through purchase, donation, or expropriation. Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, O. Reg. 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services, Section 9 outlines the required components of the Conservation and Management of Lands Program and Section 10 outlines the requirements of creating and maintaining a “Conservation Area Strategy”. In order to be clear on the scope of the Strategy, the Strategy will be called the “Conservation Lands Strategy” to indicate that it applies to all Authority owned land. The “Conservation Lands Strategy” includes the management of SSMRCA’s Conservation Areas as well as all other land owned by the Authority.

This document is the first version of the SSMRCA’s Conservation Lands Strategy, which will guide the efficient, transparent, and inclusive approach for the long-term management of Conservation Areas and other lands owned by the SSMRCA. The document is intended to outline land-based objectives, mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services, and land uses. The primary intent of the Strategy is to inform decision-making regarding lands owned and controlled by the SSMRCA.

1.1 Legislative Requirements

Ontario Regulation 686/21 under the *Conservation Authorities Act* outlines the Mandatory Programs and Services which must be delivered by all Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Ontario. As outlined in subsection 9(1)1, each Conservation Authority is required to prepare a “Conservation Lands Strategy”. The required components of the Strategy are further outlined in subsection 10(1) of the regulation:

Section 10. (1) *A Conservation Lands Strategy referred to in paragraph 1 of subsection 9 (1) shall include the following components:*

1. *Objectives established by the authority that will inform the authority’s decision-making related to the lands it owns and controls, including decisions related to policies governing the acquisition and disposition of such lands.*

2. *Identification of the mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services that are provided on land owned and controlled by the authority, including the sources of financing for these programs and services.*
3. *Where the authority considers it advisable to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1, an assessment of how the lands owned and controlled by the authority may,*
 - i. *augment any natural heritage located within the authority's area of jurisdiction, and*
 - ii. *integrate with other provincially or municipally owned lands or other publicly accessible lands and trails within the authority's area of jurisdiction.*
4. *The establishment of land use categories for the purpose of classifying lands in the land inventory described in section 11 based on the types of activities that are engaged in on each parcel of land or other matters of significance related to the parcel.*
5. *A process for the periodic review and updating of the Conservation Lands Strategy by the authority, including procedures to ensure stakeholders and the public are consulted during the review and update process.*

(2) The authority shall ensure stakeholders and the public are consulted during the preparation of the Conservation Lands Strategy in a manner that the authority considers advisable.

(3) The authority shall ensure that the Conservation Lands Strategy is made public on the authority's website, or by such other means as the authority considers advisable.

1.2 Conservation Lands Strategy Objectives

The following objectives of the SSMRCA's Conservation Lands have been identified to establish a framework for the Conservation Lands Strategy.

1. Ensure the SSMRCA's properties are in compliance with the *Conservation Authorities Act* and all other municipal, provincial and federal regulations that govern the ownership of property.
2. Ensure ecosystems on the properties will not be altered or reduced significantly at any point in time by managing SSMRCA's properties in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.
3. The SSMRCA will retain properties as outdoor recreational areas for the benefit of its watershed residents and visitors to connect with the natural environment.
4. Issues such as climate change impacting the SSMRCA's properties will be identified and resources (when available) will be allocated to study, review and provide recommendations for management of conservation areas and lands.
5. Promote additional partnerships with all SSMRCA municipalities, First Nations, environmental organizations and all other interested stakeholders as staff and financial resources permit.
6. Protect life and minimize property damage from flooding and erosion.

Through this Conservation Lands Strategy, the SSMRCA aims to preserve and protect the natural ecosystems which provide a healthy foundation for the communities making up the watershed.

2. BACKGROUND

The current SSMRCA Strategic Plan is in development and will outline the overall priorities and actions for the Authority over the next five-year period, carrying on from the Authority's first ever Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2017. The plan provides a focus on the continual protection of natural hazards, natural heritage, and ecosystems, in partnership with the community and organizations in the watershed.

The Conservation Lands Strategy will encompass the SSMRCA's vision of a healthy watershed existing in a balance between the natural environment and human needs, with a mission to protect, improve and promote our local watershed through the delivery of resource management services and programs in cooperation with community partners. The guiding principle of the SSMRCA Conservation Area Strategy is to manage and protect conservation lands so that they are not degraded by development or other unauthorized activities and can be enjoyed by current and future generations. The SSMRCA aims to provide community members as well as visitors to the watershed with access to nature through our beautiful conservation areas.

2.1 *Area of Jurisdiction*

The SSMRCA's area of jurisdiction is approximately 522 square kilometres and includes the two Member Municipalities of the SSMRCA being: City of Sault Ste. Marie, and the Township of Prince. The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for the areas outside the jurisdiction of the Authority.

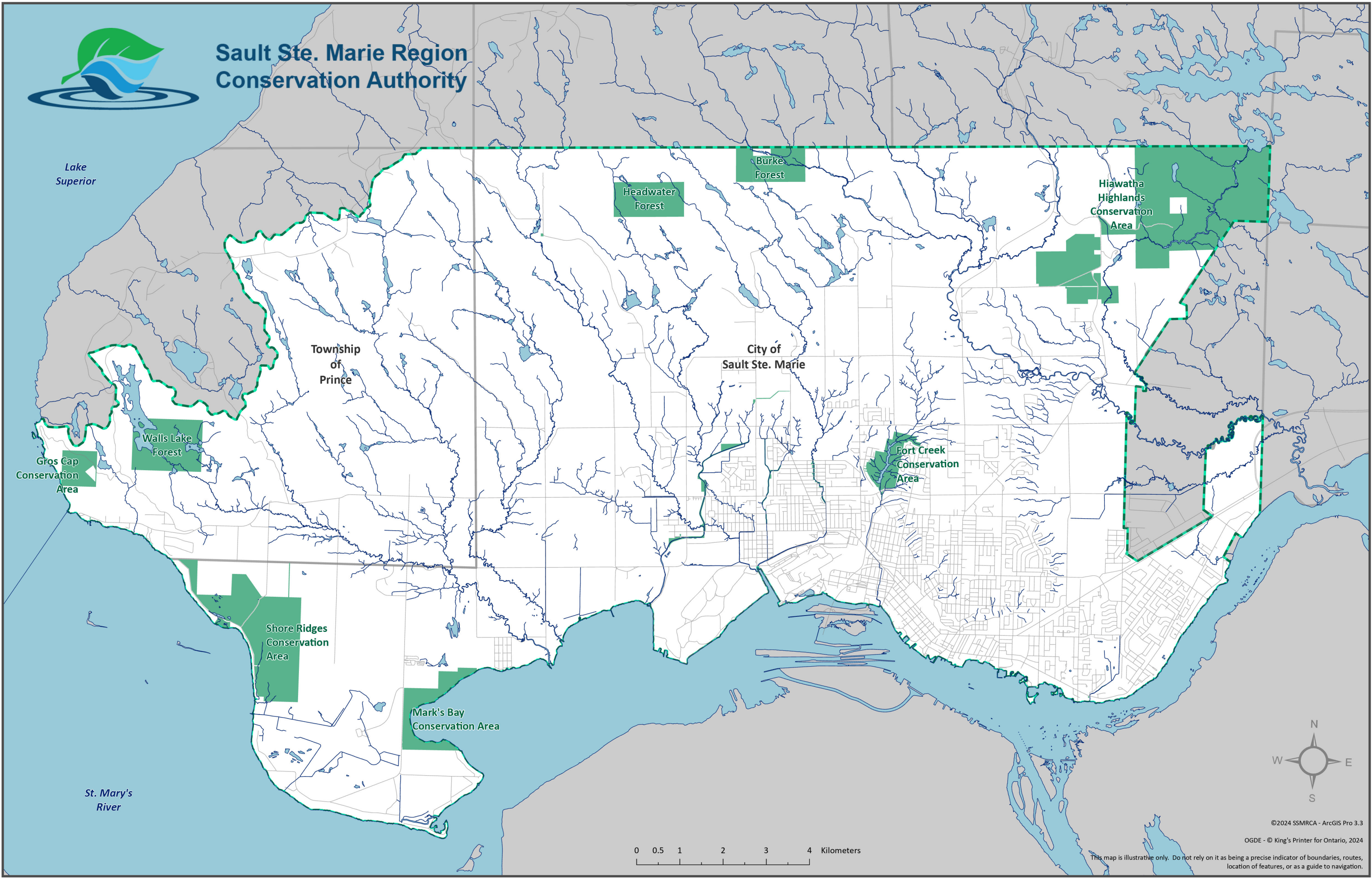
2.2 *SSMRCA Owned Lands*

The SSMRCA owns and manages approximately 5,000 acres (Map 1) of diverse ecosystems including forests, wetlands and shorelines. Some of the properties contain significant natural features while others hold portions of our five flood control channels and the Fort Creek Dam and Reservoir. These water control structures help protect against the loss of life and property damage due to flooding. Some of the ways SSMRCA-owned properties were acquired include through financial support from provincial and local governments, purchased from private landowners at market-value rates, expropriation, or donated from municipalities, conservation organizations, or watershed residents. The lands owned by the SSMRCA offers a diversity of services to the Member Municipalities including recreation, water management, protection of natural heritage features, flood protection, erosion control, and forest management. The properties owned by the SSMRCA fall in three different land use categories as indicated within the Land Inventory:

1. **Conservation Area for Passive Recreation:** intended for passive recreation, accessible to the public (i.e., Conservation Areas)
2. **Conservation Authority Administration Area:** SSMRCA's administration office and grounds (Administrative Office: 1100 Fifth Line East, Sault Ste. Marie)
3. **Management Area:** public accessibility varies or is completely restricted (e.g. Natural Hazard Lands, Water Management Areas, Forest Management Lands, Environmentally Sensitive Lands, Headwater Preservation, etc.)



Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority



2.2.1 Conservation Areas

The SSMRCA offers the public five Conservation Areas which have been identified as the “Conservation Area for Passive Recreation” land use category. SSMRCA properties do not have personnel on site and require limited resources to maintain. In order to continue with this management plan, the SSMRCA is considering expanding its volunteer base to assist with the property maintenance and possibly expand certain key amenities on site for public use. All of the properties are open to the public, with seasonal closures taking place in some instances. There are no user fees charged for regular day use, and the services are limited to parking lots and trails. Garbage bins and privies are only provided at the Fort Creek and Mark’s Bay Conservation Areas. There are no SSMRCA staff on site at any of the Conservation Areas.

The Conservation Areas include:

- **Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area:** (~2,200 acres, City of Sault Ste. Marie)
Sault Ste Marie is fortunate to have the natural splendor of Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area. The Highlands offer magnificent scenery including breathtaking waterfalls and 35 kilometres (22 miles) of nature trails. Hundreds of hectares of forests with creeks, lakes and wetlands create the ideal habitat for more than 70 species of birds and 18 species of mammals.

This area offers diverse opportunities for mountain biking. The Pinder Trails located in the Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area offer 5.2 km of easy to moderate trails for riders. The Red Pine Trails are more accommodated to riders with moderate (Intermediate) skills. The Crystal Creek Trails are located in Kinsmen Park and offer 9.4 km of moderate to difficult trails for more advanced riders.

In the winter trails are groomed for cross-country skiing by Hiawatha Highlands (a division of the Soo Finnish Nordic Ski Club). The ski trails wind their way through the Conservation Area, Kinsmen Park, the City’s Wishart Park and Crown property surrounding the provincial fish hatchery appealing to both novice and expert skiers. While skiers pay to use these trails in the winter and early spring, there is no charge to hikers the rest of the year.

Within the Highlands is Kinsmen Park which is maintained by the Kinsmen Club. The park includes one of the most spectacular views of the Crystal Falls from the Crystal Creek Trail. For visitor safety and to prevent further exposed tree root damage, a wheelchair accessible boardwalk was constructed beside the trail. Although each trail within the park highlights unique terrain the park also includes a baseball diamond, children’s playground and picnic area.

- **Fort Creek Conservation Area:** (~190 acres, City of Sault Ste. Marie)
The Fort Creek Conservation Area is owned by the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority and was purchased to address flood control concerns experienced by businesses and residents living downstream. The Fort Creek Dam was constructed between 1968 and 1971 and has a reservoir of approximately 3.24 hectares (8 acres).

In addition to its primary purpose of flood control the Fort Creek Conservation Area also provides the ancillary benefit of green space, recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat. In the summer hikers can enjoy the diversity of scenery and trail difficulty level or have lunch under the pavilion. Offering a delightful diversion in the winter, visitors can go snow shoeing, tobogganing or cross-country skiing. This area creates a sense of tranquility in the heart of the city and is a small example of the beautiful Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest and wetlands.

A portion of the John Roswell Hub Trail runs through the Fort Creek Conservation Area, which is a city-wide multi-use non-motorized trail system for various types of users, such as cycling, walking, in-line skating, cross country skiing and is wheelchair accessible. The trail connects many significant points of interest including the waterfront walkway, Bellevue Park, Algoma University College, Sault College, and the hospital.

The SSMRCA encourages schools and other groups to make use of the Conservation Area to teach children about nature. Besides the reservoir, there are two ponds in the early stages of growth. Children can see how pond life develops and how the surrounding vegetation turns bare ground, over time, into mature forest.

- **Shore Ridges Conservation Area** (~920 acres, City of Sault Ste. Marie)
The Shore Ridges Conservation Area includes 366 metres (1200 feet) of shoreline, some of which has been designated as provincially significant. The area is easily accessible to residents and visitors alike. The Conservation Area has two trails for year-round use by hikers or cross-country skiers and includes a designated dynamic beach.
- **Mark's Bay Conservation Area** (~270 acres, City of Sault Ste. Marie)
The Mark's Bay property includes 3000 metres (10,000 feet) of shoreline on the St. Marys River. The sandy shoreline is perfect for swimming and sunning or kayaking/canoeing. The forest creates picturesque surroundings for hiking, nature viewing or simply relaxing.

The forest is part of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Forest region and is home to many different birds and small mammals. There is a red pine forest that is as striking as it is peaceful. Cedars scattered throughout the property provide the ideal habitat for deer as well as various species of rare plants of Algoma.

- **Gros Cap Conservation Area** (~150 acres, Prince Township)
Rock faces and bluffs highlight the rugged, natural characteristics of Gros Cap. Steep cliffs rise from the water to a height of 60 to 90 metres (200 to 300 feet) overlooking Lake Superior and the shipping lanes. The 40-kilometre (25 mile) Saulteaux section of the Voyageur Trail starts in the Gros Cap Conservation Area and runs through to the Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area.

The SSMRCA's Conservation Areas provide facilities for passive outdoor recreation including: hiking, geocaching, bird-watching, swimming, snowshoeing and more. Combined, the Conservation Areas have 103 kilometres of hiking trails owned by the SSMRCA that offer different unique views including bluffs, rivers, and lakeside views. It is estimated that the Conservation

Areas have over 40,000 visitors annually. The Conservation Areas are highly valued by residents of the local watershed, often used by community groups for public events.

Conservation Areas provide public access for passive recreation; however, also protect the natural heritage features on the landscape while contributing to the overall health of the local watershed. While offering recreational opportunities for community members, the lands also provide ecological benefits to water quality, protect land susceptible to erosion or flooding hazards, and increase resilience to climate change. Each Conservation Area is unique and provides varying functions to local ecosystems. Conservation Areas can also be utilized as a tool to build knowledge and understanding of natural ecosystems and the impacts of anthropogenic activity. Portions of each of these Conservation Areas are also covered under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP). The program provides tax relief as well as a plan for proper long-term forest management.

2.2.2 Conservation Authority Administration Area (Other Owned Land)

The SSMRCA Administration office is located within the Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area at 1100 Fifth Line East in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The facilities include an administrative building with open and private office space and a meeting space. The meeting space, affectionately referred to as the Sugar Shack, is available to the public and organizations to rent for a fee. Other buildings on site include a detached garage and some storage sheds. Within the Lands Inventory, these properties are referred to as “Conservation Authority Administration Areas”.

2.2.3 Management Areas (Other Owned Land)

2.2.3.1 Flooding Control Lands

Defined by the *Conservation Authorities Act* Section 25(d), “Hazardous Land”, also referred to as regulated land, “means land that could be unsafe for development because of naturally occurring processes associated with flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches or unstable soil, or bedrock”. The SSMRCA has acquired certain properties to afford further flood protection and prevent development within hazard lands.

Fort Creek Dam, Reservoir and Flood Control Channel:

The Fort Creek Dam and Reservoir project began in late 1967 and was completed in 1971. The drainage area for the dam is approximately 7.7 square kilometres, while the reservoir surface area is 3.24 hectares. The Fort Creek Flood Control Channel is 0.46 km in length. The dam is an earthen structure with a low permeability clay core confined by shells of granular material. The dam is 12 metres high and 117 meters long. The outlet consists of a 0.9-metre-wide gate and a 91.4-metre-long chute spillway passing through the base of the dam. There is also a hexagonal shaped concrete drop inlet structure/overflow weir and a broad emergency overflow spillway, temporarily blocked by a series of erodible berms with clay cores and granular shells (fuse plugs). Downstream from the dam, the Fort Creek channel crosses Second Line and Carmen’s Way. Further downstream, Fort Creek is enclosed in a concrete aqueduct from Hudson Street near Wellington Street to Queen Street near John Street. The lower portion of Fort Creek is an open channel south of Queen Street to the St. Marys River.

East Davignon Flood Control Channel:

The East Davignon Flood Control Channel was completed in 1978 and is 1.08 km in length. This channel was designed to protect areas of Korah Road and Douglas Street from severe flooding. It extends from Rossmore Road to Farwell Terrace where the creek enters an underground aqueduct. The aqueduct outlets to a channel within the Algoma Steel Inc. property and exits into the St. Marys River.

Bennett - West Davignon Diversion Channel:

The Bennett-West Davignon diversion channel was completed in 1979 and is 6.5km in length. The drainage basin originates in a large marshy area in the northwestern part of Sault Ste. Marie and the headwaters of the West Davignon Creek are in the Allard Lake area. This project was intended to minimize flooding west of Goulais Avenue between Third Line and the St. Marys River.

Central Creek Flood Control Channel:

The Central Creek Flood Control Channel was completed in 1986 and is 2.5 km in length. This flood control channel starts near the intersection of Moss Road and Third Line and flows west to Goulais Avenue into the Bennett-West Davignon Diversion Channel. From there it flows to a continuous box aqueduct at Wallace Terrace, through which it flows until final discharge into the East Davignon Creek Channel on Algoma Steel Inc. property near Base Line.

Clark Creek Flood Control Channel:

The Clark Creek Flood Control Channel was constructed in 1969 and is 1.7 km in length. It follows along Boundary Road from Bennett Boulevard, through the Sault Ste. Marie Golf Club and to Drake Street. From the intersection of Drake and Queen Street East, the creek is conveyed by a box culvert to the St. Marys River.

2.2.3.2 Forest Management Property

The SSMRCA owns three Forest Management Properties, the Walls Lake Forest (~475 acres), Headwater Forest (~322 acres), and Burke Forest (~300 acres). In accordance with the Managed Forest Plan, the parcels are managed for the health of the forest, to provide habitat for wildlife, protection against floods and erosion and the protection and production of water supplies. These forests are not open to the public and have not been designated as recreational areas, therefore the properties have been classified as a Management Area.

The property receives a tax reduction as it is registered under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP). The program provides tax relief as well as a plan for proper long-term forest management.

2.3 Section 29 Regulation in Conservation Areas

The SSMRCA has designated a Provincial Offences Officer to enable enforcement under the *Conservation Authorities Act R.S.O 1990*, Part VII Enforcement and Offence, Section 30.1 and associated regulations. The Section 29 Regulations Officers are appointed to manage, patrol, and monitor activities on all authority-owned land to encourage compliance with the associated regulations. Under the *Provincial Offences Act R.S.O 1990*, c. P.33, a Provincial Offences Officer who believes that one or more persons have committed an offense may issue a certificate of

offense (i.e., ticket). Additionally, enforcement is conducted under the City of Sault Ste. Marie's By-Law Officer.

The SSMRCA will be developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), that allows the SSMRCA's designated Provincial Offences Officers to follow a uniform process and provide a higher level of consistency regarding compliance matters within the Conservation Areas. The SOP will assist the officer in navigating complex situations, providing a set of best practices to enhance officer safety when performing their duties. By following the SOP, the SSMRCA's Provincial Offences Officer can maintain consistent interactions with the members of the public, while ensuring visitors to the Conservation Areas are following the safety rules and regulations.

2.4 Public/Private Use of SSMRCA Owned Land

Members of the public or groups can request the use of SSMRCA owned land. Staff review all requests and where the activity is permitted a Land Use Agreement is issued and a fee is charged (dependent on the activity). When warranted the user is required to obtain liability insurance for the event. Conservation Areas remain open to the public and all other rules and regulations apply (i.e., no alcohol, no fires, open dawn to dusk, etc.).

3. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Table 1. Identification of Category 1 “mandatory”, Category 2 “municipal” and Category 3 “other” programs and services provided on SSMRCA owned land and respective funding sources.

Program & Service	Category	Description	Funding Source
Natural Hazard Management Program	1	Flood Forecasting & Warning (FFW) (Dam, channels, and some stream flow gauges are located on SSMRCA-owned lands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Transfer Payment Municipal Levy Apportionment
	1	SSMRCA Owned Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Operation and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Transfer Payment Municipal Levy Special Benefitting Municipal Levy – when required
	1	Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Major Maintenance (Dam and Flood Control Channels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial WECL funding
	1	Low Water Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Levy
	2	Non-SSMRCA Owned Flood and Erosion Control Infrastructure Operation and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Agreement
Enabling Services Program	1	Administrative Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Levy Self-Generated
	1	Administer Leased Conservation Lands/Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Levy Self-Generated
Conservation Authority Lands and Conservation Area Program	1	Conservation Areas Management including Section 29 – Conservation Areas regulation enforcement and compliance. Management and maintenance of 5 conservation areas and associated recreational trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Levy Self-Generated
	1	Conservation Area Major Maintenance and Capital Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Levy

Provincial Water Quality & Quantity Monitoring Program	1	Watershed Management (Some monitoring stations are located on SSMRCA-owned lands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Levy
Special Projects	3	Watershed Stewardship and Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Generated • Alternate Grant Funding

For more information on Category 1, 2, and 3 programs, refer to SSMRCA's *Inventory of Programs and Services – Final Version*.

3.1 External Programs Utilized

3.1.1 Conservation of Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP)

The SSMRCA applies annually to the Conservation of Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) for four SSMRCA owned properties to recognize the Provincially Significant Wetlands on the lands. This program reduces the taxes in recognition of natural heritage features.

3.1.2 Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)

Several SSMRCA owned lands have Forest Management Plans developed under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive program (MFTIP), which provides some tax relief as well as provides a plan for proper long-term forest management. As warranted, harvesting occurs with revenue used to maintain the forest management area and the associated Forest Management Plans (i.e., costs related to maintaining forest management plans, hiring of Registered Foresters to oversee harvesting operations, etc.).

Forest Management Plans registered under the MFTIP are for the following SSMRCA owned properties:

- Fort Creek Conservation Area
- Gros Cap Conservation Area
- Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area
- Shore Ridges Conservation Area
- Mark's Bay Conservation Area
- Burke Forest
- Headwaters Forest
- Walls Lake Forest

3.1.3 Canadian Heritage River

The Canadian Heritage River System was established in 1984 by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. The goal is to conserve and protect the best examples of Canadian river heritage, to give them national recognition and to encourage the public to enjoy and appreciate them.

The St. Marys River was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 2000. The designation recognizes the outstanding Indigenous and settler cultural heritage values and excellent recreational opportunities along the rivers. The designation carries no regulatory or legal authority or restrictions.

The SSMRCA's involvement in celebrating heritage within the St. Marys River watershed is two-fold:

- As custodian of the Canadian Heritage River designation, the SSMRCA reports to the Canadian Heritage River Secretariat on the status of the St. Marys River.
- As a property owner, the SSMRCA provides recreational opportunities on Conservation Areas and Conservation Lands, and some properties are home to cultural heritage features.

4. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Table 2. Objectives of the Strategy and Future Considerations

Objective	Future Considerations
<p>Ensure the SSMRCA’s properties are in compliance with the <i>Conservation Authorities Act</i> and all other municipal, provincial and federal regulations that govern the ownership of property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain up-to-date maps of each SSMRCA-owned property that provides applicable information on the site such as: wetlands, natural heritage features, infrastructure, trails and amenities, etc. • Install adequate signage in all accessible areas, outlining the applicable rules and regulations within the Conservation Authorities Act and regulations. • Conduct frequent documented inspections of lands, maintaining essential infrastructure and amenities. • Continue to have substantial infrastructure inspected by engineers on a recurring basis to ensure their proper function. • Monitor for hazards on SSMRCA property; once identified, address hazards as soon as possible to maintain the safety of visitors and staff. • Maintain the marking of boundaries of all property boundaries.
<p>Ensure ecosystems on the properties will not be altered or reduced significantly at any point in time by managing SSMRCA’s properties in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the use of only native species on SSMRCA owned lands. • Ensure the sustainable management of forest resources on SSMRCA-owned lands for future generations through sound forest management practices in accordance with completed Managed Forest Plans (MFTIPs). • Maintain, enhance, or restore ecologically significant habitats on SSMRCA-owned lands to prevent the loss of biodiversity. • Properties owned by the SSMRCA should contribute to the continual protection of natural hazards, natural and cultural heritage, ecological functioning, and the integrity of the watershed.
<p>The SSMRCA will retain properties as outdoor recreational areas for the benefit of its watershed residents and visitors to connect with the natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key properties for acquisition that provide a benefit to the watershed, prioritizing floodplain, hazard lands, erosion prone lands, and source water areas. • Evaluate the Conservation Areas and their respective facilities to determine if AODA facilities would be complementary to the site (i.e., privies, rest areas). • Where feasible and funding-dependent, continue to integrate AODA infrastructure in the

	<p>Conservation Areas, including accessible washrooms, trail systems, and rest areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new trail classification system that provides essential and consistent information, allowing visitors to select trails that meet their physical requirements, expectations, and preferred experience. • Provide signage regarding the rules and regulations of the Conservation Area.
<p>Issues such as climate change impacting the SSMRCA's properties will be identified and resources (when available) will be allocated to study, review and provide recommendations for management of conservation areas and lands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct adequate water quality monitoring to detect trends over time and identify emerging issues. • Complete a natural heritage inventory of significant features on SSMRCA-owned lands, incorporating these assets into the Conservation Area Master Plans and Land Management Plans. • Evaluate all wetlands on SSMRCA lands under the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System. • Identify and protect Species at Risk, or species with Conservation Status Rank, and their respective habitats on SSMRCA-owned lands. • Assess all erosion prone land to identify any areas that may need remediation • Monitor and manage invasive species on SSMRCA owned land.
<p>Promote additional partnerships with all SSMRCA municipalities, First Nations, environmental organizations and all other interested stakeholders as staff and financial resources permit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and protect Cultural Heritage Sites on SSMRCA-owned lands to preserve the history and traditions of past communities. • Encourage watershed residents to report any observed environmental hazards on SSMRCA-owned property to the SSMRCA (such as erosion or invasive species). • Solicit public and stakeholder input on significant projects conducted on SSMRCA-owned land. • Incorporate both Indigenous and Western knowledge into programming where appropriate. • Where feasible, partner with like-minded agencies to enhance user experience and/or expand services offered on SSMRCA-owned lands. • Review lands inventory to determine which properties could be integrated with other provincially, municipally, or publicly accessible lands or trail networks.

<p>Protect life and minimize property damage from flooding and erosion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct adequate surveys on the Dam and Flood Control Channels to have a continuous understanding of required maintenance (i.e., dredging). • Conduct annual maintenance to maintain the integrity of Dam and Flood Control Channels. • Conduct major maintenance as required to maintain the integrity of the Flood Control Structures. • When applicable apply for WECL funding for major maintenance to reduce the financial burden of maintenance.
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The SSMRCA will strive to complete the considerations included in Table 2 in an effort to uphold the Objectives of the Strategy, but may be limited to current and future financial and staff resources in order to implement fully. This, along with other pressures, both internal and external, such as an increasing demand for the public to have access to natural spaces, competing interests for those spaces, climate change, invasive species, habitat loss, funding support and political decisions at all levels of government, will all play a role and shape how the SSMRCA is able to achieve the Objectives of the Conservation Lands Strategy. Whether it be for the conservation areas, flood control properties, forest management properties, areas designated for the protection and production of water supplies or hazard lands within the SSMRCA’s jurisdiction, continuing to gather financial and physical support in order to expand on this Strategy will be an important step in maintaining the SSMRCA’s properties now and into the future.

4.1 Land Acquisition and Disposition

The SSMRCA does not currently have a policy for the acquisition of property, but one is in production. Generally, each opportunity to purchase or receive a donation is dealt with on an individual basis by the SSMRCA’s Board of Directors. The lack of financial resources has dictated the decisions to either pursue purchasing opportunities or whether to accept potential land donations. The SSMRCA is a corporate entity which owns property much like an individual. As a result, the SSMRCA would be subject to the same legal obligations and restrictions.

Disposition of SSMRCA owned property would be subject to approval of the Board of Directors. In addition, the Ministry of Natural Resources would require notification and the SSMRCA would be required to follow the Ministry’s guidelines governing the land dispositions. This would be particularly relevant when Provincial grant money was available to purchase the property originally. As well there are other considerations that the Authority has to take into account for donated properties.

4.2 Updates to the Strategy

The Strategy will be reviewed every 5 years and updated as needed. This will permit SSMRCA to adapt its programs and priorities to consider evolving political and socio-economic matters and address emerging environmental issues. Stakeholders and the public will be consulted during

these periodic reviews, in a manner that aligns with the degree of revisions and meets any regulatory requirements.