



# Draft CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY 2024

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**Maitland**  
CONSERVATION

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# CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY

## PURPOSE

This strategy has been developed by the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) to provide key objectives to inform decision making relating to the land owned and managed by MVCA. The strategy identifies the mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services that are provided on these lands, along with the sources of funding required to provide these services. Land use categories will also be identified and used in a Conservation Authority owned land inventory.

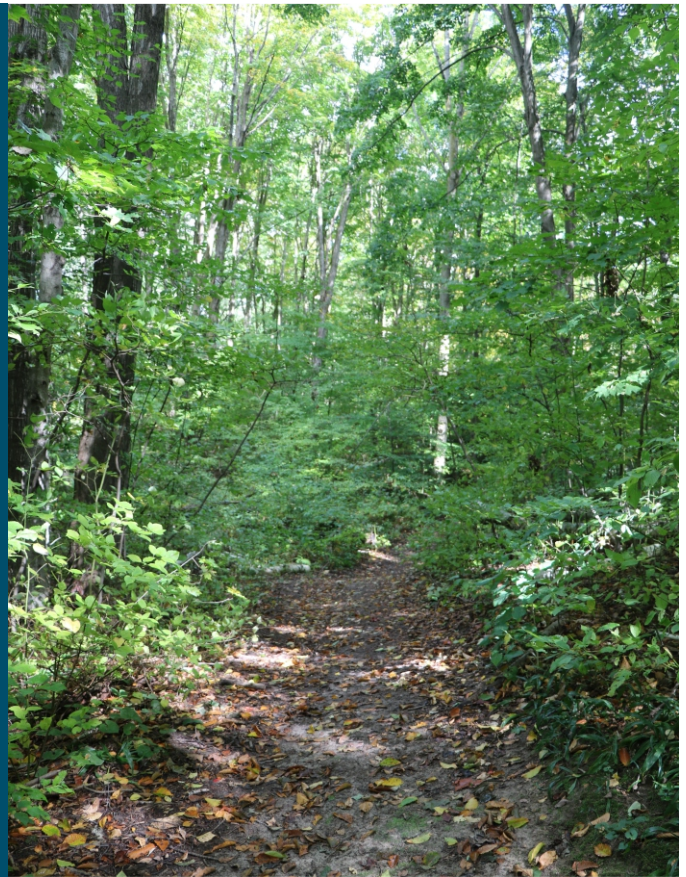
## LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Ontario Regulation 686/21 under the Conservation Authorities Act, sets out the Mandatory Programs and Services which must be delivered by all Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Ontario. Section 10 of the regulation requires all CAs to prepare a “Conservation Area Strategy” as a required component of the “Conservation and Management of Lands” mandatory CA program and service area. This strategy will meet the requirements of O. Reg 686/21.

## MAITLAND CONSERVATION’S VISION, MISSION AND ENDS

This strategy incorporates and considers Maitland Conservation’s mandate and vision in the decision-making process of how lands owned by MVCA are managed or considered when acquiring and disposing of lands.

Conservation Area strategies will also meet the overall MVCA Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy and its objectives to ensure the authority is providing by example in the management of its lands.



### Vision

Working for a healthy environment.

### Mission

Providing leadership to protect and enhance local water, forests and soils.

### Ends

1. To protect life and property and prevent social disruption from flooding and erosion hazards.
2. To protect water and related resources for present and future generations.
3. To protect and expand natural areas

### Short-term Goals (long-term effect)

1. To strengthen capacity of flood and erosion safety services.
2. To strengthen capacity of watershed stewardship services.
3. To ensure MVCA's financial stability.

Conservation lands offer outdoor recreation opportunities to the public when and where appropriate (e.g., hiking, canoeing, biking, etc.). These experiences build value among users for the watershed's environmental features and therefore function as an important tool to assist in achieving the Authority's goals or ends.

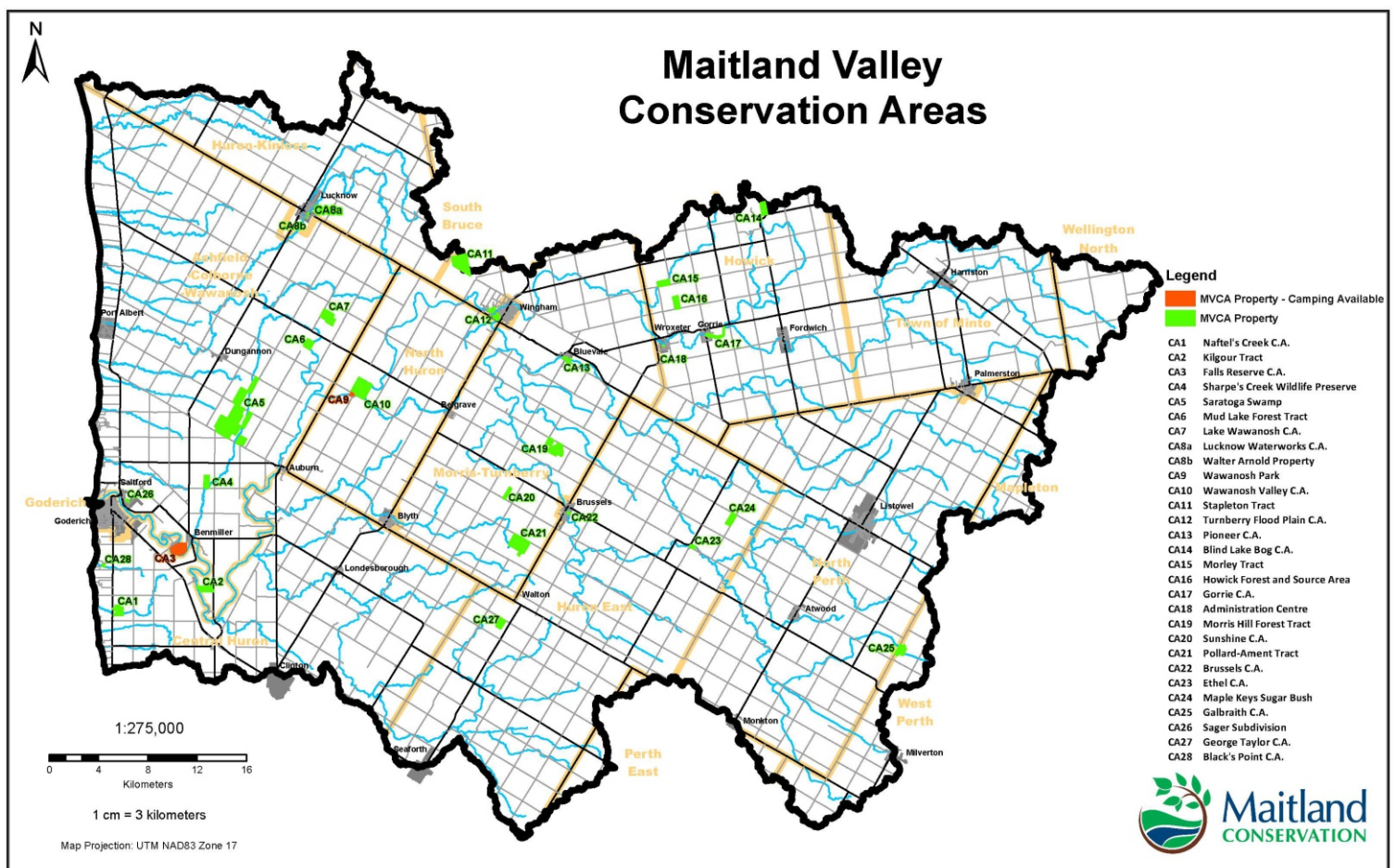
## HISTORY

Formed in 1951, the MVCA is committed to working with our community partners to create a healthier environment. Our area of jurisdiction covers the watershed, or drainage area, of the Maitland, Nine Mile and Eighteen Mile Rivers, along with smaller watersheds on the Lake Huron shoreline.

Land acquisition began in 1954 through the establishment of a land acquisition committee with funding programs administered by the Province. This program continued with the majority of MVCA properties being acquired during the 1960's and 70's. The program ended by 1990 when funding was no longer provided by the Province. Property acquisitions after 1990, were limited to donations and considered only when the Authority deemed them as significant in terms of resource protection.

## MVCA OWNED LANDS

MVCA owns and manages 28 properties which totals approximately 4,600 acres (1,862 hectares). These properties environmental features range from wetlands, river valleys, forests, rivers, and meadows. Small areas of parkland and agricultural fields also exist where compatible with the land and surrounding features.



## **GUIDELINES FOR CONSERVATION AREAS MANAGEMENT**

Maitland Conservation lands have been categorized into four types of land-use. These categories are consistent with those developed by Conservation Ontario and are based on the types of activities that occur on each parcel or other matters of significance related to the parcel. Some Conservation Areas will have multiple types of land-use based on past development, usage and natural heritage features of the parcel. These parcels will meet the objectives for each type of land-use identified.

Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services also includes three category descriptions and how those programs and services may be offered and funded. In 2022, the MVCA Membership approved the programs and services which are described under each land-use category along with the associated financing requirements. These programs and services are provided in Appendix A. The three categories for Conservation Authority programs and services are described below:

- Category 1 programs and services are mandatory and are defined in regulation. Municipal levy funds can be used for these programs.
- Category 2 programs and services are those provided at the request of a member municipality or municipalities and are funded through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement with the participating municipality or municipalities. Currently, no programs or services are provided under this Category under Conservation Areas.
- Category 3 services are those other programs and services an Authority determines advisable by the Authority's Board and must be self-financing. Any municipal funds used for Category 3 programs and services must be provided under an MOU or Agreement. At present, all MVCA Category 3 programs and services on Conservation Area lands are funded internally and do not rely on municipal funding.

While specific objectives have been identified for each land-use category in this report, the following objectives pertain to all land-use categories and will be used when considering future management and planning:

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVES:**

- Ensure all current and future landholdings contribute to the goals and objectives of the MVCA.
- Build resiliency and demonstrate good resource management on all authority owned lands.
- Promote and ensure the protection of natural heritage systems through naturalization and habitat creation.
- Ensure the Rules of Conservation Areas (O. Reg 688/21) are followed. Provide education and enforcement of these rules to encourage compliance.
- Identify permitted and prohibited uses while considering all environmental features.
- Land-use permits will be required for any requirement listed under O. Reg 688/21. Commercial operations will be restricted or limited based on the type of use proposed.
- Perform inspections to ensure land holdings are protected from encroachment or illegal activities.
- Ensure all infrastructure and lands meet appropriate safety standards.
- Incorporate accessibility standards when appropriate when replacing or creating new infrastructure.
- Identify essential infrastructure and dispose of surplus items.
- Monitor and manage invasive species, diseases and pests.
- Ensure signage is provided to convey desired information regarding safety, environmental or educational aspects and is accessible to users.
- Ensure service disruption notifications are provided to all applicable users in a timely manner.
- When appropriate, integrate municipal, provincial or other publicly accessible trails and lands with MVCA lands including any future land acquisitions.

## LAND USE CATEGORIES

### 1. Conservation Areas - Active Recreation

This category includes areas that require direct support or supervision and have been developed for compatible recreational uses including campgrounds. These lands are usually well promoted, require staffing of buildings, and require entrance and usage fees.

Active Recreation properties are identified as Category 3 services under Ontario Regulation 686/21 of the Conservation Authorities Act for Mandatory Programs and Services. These properties are currently self-funded using user-fees and require no municipal levy. Any Surplus revenue raised is used to fund infrastructure upgrades or major maintenance to facilities.

#### Conservation Areas with Active Recreation and Category 3 Services:

##### a) Falls Reserve Conservation Area

Falls Reserve Campground and day-use services provides camping, picnicking, hiking, biking, skiing, fishing, and educational services.

##### b) Wawanosh Valley Conservation Area

Wawanosh Park Campground Services provides seasonal camping, picnicking, and fishing.

#### Specific Objectives:

- Balance the protection of natural heritage features of the area with compatible public use.
- Enforce the rules and regulations of the C.A to ensure protection of the environment and the safety of all users.
- Identify and plan for future requirements of the conservation area to expand or enhance opportunities for active recreation when considered appropriate.
- Ensure financial sustainability of these areas by monitoring usage, trends, and yearly adjustment of fees.



## 2. CONSERVATION AREAS - PASSIVE RECREATION

This classification includes areas where day-use recreational opportunities are offered but do not require direct support or supervision. Recreational opportunities offered to the public include walking trails, picnic areas, pavilions, parking lots and urban parklands. Where recreational development has been completed on existing land for community use (soccer fields, ball diamonds, recreational multi-use pads, playgrounds, etc.) existing municipal partnerships will be required to operate and maintain this infrastructure for continued operations.

These properties are identified as Category 1 programs and services which are funded through municipal levy or funded through partnerships and donations.

### Conservation Areas with Passive Recreation:

- i. Gorrie Conservation Area
- ii. Pioneer Conservation Area
- iii. Brussels Conservation Area
- iv. Lucknow Water Works Conservation Area
- v. Turnberry Floodplain Conservation Area – Galbraith Soccer Fields

### Specific Objectives:

- Partnerships with local municipalities to facilitate maintenance and development of these areas will be encouraged to provide existing or compatible services.
- Maitland Conservation will focus on the naturalization and environmental protection of these areas when future planning.
- Recreational uses will be monitored to ensure compatibility with the land and adjusted if required.



Brussels Conservation Area



Turnberry Floodplain



Gorrie Conservation Area

### 3. MANAGEMENT AREAS

Management areas are lands where natural resources are protected or managed with limited or no recreational use. Properties may meet any of the following designations:

- Natural Heritage Lands
- Natural Hazard Lands
- Water Management Areas
- Forest Management Lands
- Environmentally Sensitive Lands, etc.

Recreational use is usually limited to hiking trails, hunting, fishing, boating and nature appreciation.

These properties are identified as Category 1 programs and services which are funded through municipal levy or from self-generated revenue. Funding assistance is also sought through various programs, partnerships and donations to assist in the maintenance and development of these properties

#### Conservation Areas Under a Management Designation

##### i. Forest Management:

Stapleton Tract, Morely Tract, Pollard-Ament Tract, Howick Forest and Source Area, Wawanosh Valley C.A, Ethel C.A, Naftel's Creek C.A, Morris Hill Forest Tract, Falls Reserve Conservation Area, Sharpes Creek Wildlife Preserve, Kilgour tract, Galbraith C.A, Maple Keys C.A, Blacks Point CA, Sager Subdivision, Sunshine C.A, Saratoga Swamp, Lake Wawanosh C.A, Blind Lake Bog C.A, George Taylor C.A

##### ii. Agriculture Management Area:

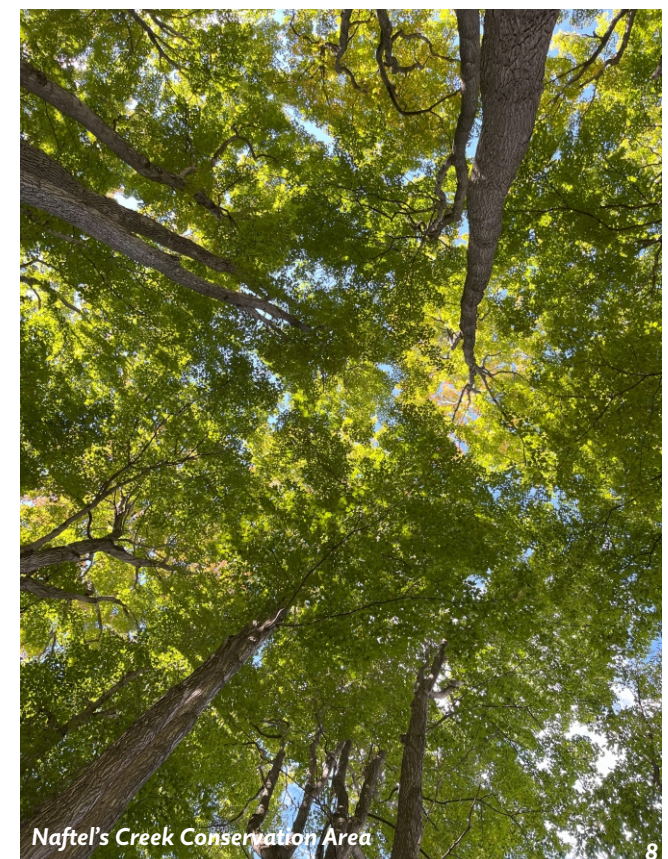
Wawanosh Valley Conservation Area

##### iii. Conservation Lands (Provincially Significant Wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, Habitat of endangered species, Community Conservation Lands):

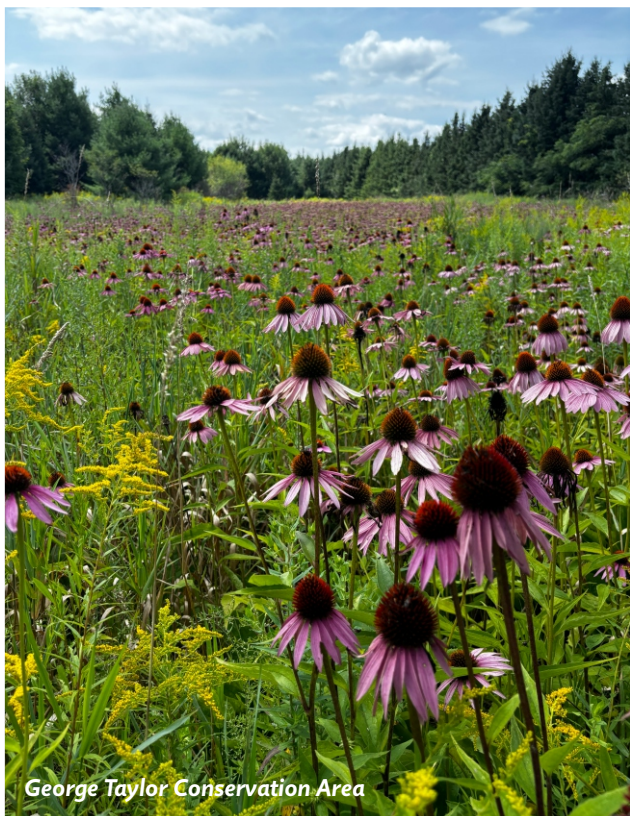
Saratoga Swamp, Mud Lake Forest Tract, Blind Lake Bog C.A, Turnberry Floodplain CA, Lake Wawanosh CA, Stapleton Tract, Morely Tract, Howick Forest and Source Area, Sunshine C.A, Pollard-Ament Tract, Maple Keys C.A.

##### iv. Recreational Water Control Infrastructure:

Pioneer, Brussels and Lake Wawanosh Conservation Areas







## Specific Objectives

- Support environmental research (internally and externally). Organizations outside of MVCA will require to obtain a research permit. Research findings will be requested as part of the permit process to assist the MVCA in future planning and development.
- Forest Management Plans will be created or renewed for lands eligible under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program. Properties will be managed as indicated in the approved Forest Management plans based on the resources of the Authority.
- Forest management will consider forest succession, from plantations to healthy, mature hardwood stands where native local ecology can thrive and better resist invasive degradation. Climate change will be factored into forestry management planning.
- Lands that are designated under the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program will be managed in accordance with the principles outlined in the program.
- Agricultural lands determined suitable for agriculture will be identified and offered for lease. Lease details will be determined based on the land features with a focus on best farming and environmental practices.
- Recreational opportunities will be limited and may include hiking, hunting, fishing, boating and nature appreciation. Hunting will be permitted on designated lands only and will require a permit to be obtained following O. Reg 688/21 requirements.
- Recreational Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure will be operated and maintained following operational plans where required. Financing agreements will be in place with the local Municipality following the approved cost sharing policy adopted by the Membership.
- Motorized vehicles will be prohibited from these lands



## 4. Administrative Area

Administrative areas include those lands that contain buildings to support the operations and delivery of the Authority programs and services.

These properties are identified as Category 1 programs and services which are funded through the municipal levy.

### Conservation Areas with Administrative Area designation:

Administrative Centre - This property consists of the main office building and workshops to support the operations of Maitland Conservation.

### Specific Objectives

Infrastructure development or replacement will consider environmental products that can be used as demonstration and educational components with consideration to the Authority's resources.



## LAND ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION

Historically, acquisition of properties by Maitland Conservation occurred prior to 1990 when provincial funding was available. Property acquisitions from 1990 to current, largely occurred from donations or through notification from other agencies of land that may benefit from Authority ownership.

Maitland Conservation recognizes that property ownership provides protection of natural heritage systems, hazard lands, and can provide community recreational opportunities. The MVCA does not actively seek land securement opportunities, however, considers potential parcels from willing landowners on an individual basis. Acquisition can be through donation, land bequest, or fee simple purchase.

A Land Acquisition and Disposition Policy will be developed based on the following principles and guidelines:

### Land Acquisitions

Properties will be reviewed by Maitland Conservation staff to determine if it meets one or more of the required criteria for further investigation:

- Property joins an existing Maitland Conservation land holding.
- Property contains significant natural heritage or hazard land features.
- Property is within the MVCA watershed.
- Acquisition will further promote the objectives, and goals of the authority.
- Reviewed for potential concerns including structures, contamination and access.

MVCA Members are notified of potential acquisition for further review if acquisition meets the initial criteria.

A Land Acquisition Committee will be established consisting of the Chair, Vice Chair, and a Member representing the municipality where the property is located (or the 2nd Vice Chair if already represented) if motioned to proceed.

All acquisitions will be conducted in a confidential manner

### Land Disposition

Disposal of land will be considered if the following apply:

- Property no longer meets the goals and objectives of the Authority.
- Property is determined to be surplus to the Authority's needs.

Disposal of properties obtained with Section 39 provincial funding will require approval from the Minister following the Conservation Authorities Act regulations.

### CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY REVIEW

The Conservation Areas strategy will be reviewed and updated every 3 years to ensure the priorities and objectives remain current, based on any changes in resources and priorities of Maitland Conservation. If the strategy remains current, the MVCA Membership may approve the strategy for another 3 years. Public consultation requirements on any revisions will be determined by the Membership, based on the revision and impact to the Conservation Areas Service.

## APPENDIX A

| <b>Category 1: Mandatory Services:</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Conservation Areas Services:</b>   |
| Includes the management, development, and protection of significant natural resource lands, features, and infrastructure on authority owned property. MVCA has 28 conservation areas with a land area of 4,600 acres (1,862 hectares).  |
| <p>Service Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Management &amp; Development of Authority Lands           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build resiliency and demonstrate good resource management on 28 Conservation areas ranging from day -use parklands, wetlands, and forest tracts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>i) Lands and Infrastructure – inspections, maintenance and enforcement           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and removal of hazards to reduce liability</li> <li>• Maintain essential infrastructure and dispose of surplus items.</li> <li>• Manage public use that is compatible with the land and enforcement of regulations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>ii) Water Control Structures – inspections, maintenance and operations           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation of recreational dams following regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Develop and monitor funding agreements with Municipalities where dams are located for maintenance and major repairs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iii) Forest Management           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement activities identified in managed forest plans to improve forest health including harvesting, tree planting and monitoring of woodlots</li> <li>• Removal of invasive species and monitoring of disease and pests.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iv) Administration           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of policies and procedures for conservation area use.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Land Acquisition           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Review land donations or purchases for conservation purposes.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify benefits and concerns for potential land acquisitions for members direction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>c) Leasing and Agreements           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Review Agreements that are compatible with the land -use</li> <li>ii) Monitoring of agreements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## APPENDIX B

| <b>Category 3 Programs &amp; Services:</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Falls Reserve and Wawanosh Campground Service:</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MVCA provides overnight and seasonal camping at the Falls Reserve Conservation Area. The Conservation area also provides day -use services.</li> <li>• MVCA provides seasonal camping at Wawanosh Valley Conservation Area.</li> <li>• Campgrounds are funded through user -fees.</li> <li>• All revenue raised is used to fund the operations of the campgrounds. Any surplus revenue is used to fund infrastructure upgrades and major maintenance to equipment and facilities.</li> </ul> |