

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group named Conservationist of the Year Award winner

The winner of the Conservationist of the Year Award is Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group. Ausable Bayfield Conservation announced the winner and presented the award at the annual conservation awards evening held at Ironwood Golf Club, east of Exeter, on Thursday, March 17, 2016.

Close to 80 people attended the event, including landowners, residents, and community group members; dignitaries; ministry and conservation authority staff; municipal representatives, and others.

Guest speaker Janette Anderson, Great Lakes Program Coordinator, Environment and Climate Change Canada, presented on the topic Collaboration Works: Lessons Learned from Global Review of Coastal Management.

Six members of the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group (LSPCG) were present at the event to accept the Conservationist of the Year Award. "We are really pleased to receive this recognition," said Nancy Vidler, LSPCG Chair. Cottage associations and community members came together several years ago when they identified invasive *Phragmites australis* (European Common Reed) on the beach in Port Franks, she said. The group had success managing the plant on the beach but members realized this problem affected a larger area and needed a concerted effort if they were going to keep the invasive plant in check. "We looked around at the landscape and the big picture and we thought 'No way, we can't quit ... if we quit it's going to come back with a vengeance' and, not only that, it was destroying the rich natural heritage we have in Lambton Shores and the watershed," said Vidler. The growth of the community group's work, much like the plant, "just took off."

"We feel really proud of the things we have accomplished," she said, in accepting the award on behalf of the group. "Thank you so much for this recognition," said Vidler. "It will keep us going." Also present at the awards evening was Dr. Janice Gilbert, of the Ontario Phragmites Working Group.

The awards evening programme described the community group as formed by "an enthusiastic, dedicated group of citizens in the Port Franks area." The community group received the award prize of a limited-edition conservation print of the Latonnell Tree, by Bonna Rouse, one of 310 made for a special edition by Conservation Ontario. Ausable Bayfield Conservation will also make a donation towards a tree and plaque at a local Commemorative Woods site.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation's Manager of Stewardship, Land and Education, Kate Monk, made remarks introducing the award winners. "The group should be very proud of the work they've done in just a few short years and we should be very, very appreciative for the work that they've done," Monk said. "They're very engaged and they're a very important part of the Ontario Phragmites Working Group and working with agencies and individuals across the province to control Phragmites," she said.

Agriculture and Agri-food Canada identified invasive Phragmites as this country's "worst" invasive plant, in 2005, according to the Ontario Invasive Plant Council Ontario Phragmites Working Group website. This tall invasive reed plant has a serious impact on shorelines, coastal wetlands, and rivers. It affects water quality, wildlife habitat (including species-at-risk turtle populations), recreation, and public safety.

The LSPCG has been successful in greatly reducing the Phragmites population in Port Franks and is making progress in other parts of the municipality, according to Monk. The community group has partnered with other organizations to raise more than \$100,000 to fight Phragmites. The group has engaged the community, held public meetings, been interviewed in media, and educated people door-to-door. Group

members have also been active in monitoring the plant and in active removal using proper practices for its removal and management.

The group started its work on a local basis but its education efforts have gone province-wide. They have worked with the Municipality of Lambton Shores, the Province of Ontario, the Ontario Phragmites Working Group, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) to promote management of this invasive plant. They have helped other communities start their own Phragmites control programs. "As a result of the extensive efforts of LSPCG, Phragmites populations have been reduced, native flora and fauna are returning, citizens and the municipality are engaged, and collaboration among agencies and organizations has increased," according to the awards programme.

The Grand Bend Community Foundation, in 2015, provided the community group with funds to help them address Phragmites upstream of Port Franks and Grand Bend. This partnership effort led to the creation of the first-ever two-page fact sheet for controlling Phragmites in agricultural areas. The community group also completed a roadside Phragmites survey in Lambton Shores and North Middlesex. The group also held two information sessions in the summer of 2015 in Thedford and Grand Bend for agricultural and rural landowners.

The group is continuing its efforts to monitor and manage Phragmites through followup and to engage neighbours and other partners.

The conservation authority also presented years of service awards to some directors and staff at the conservation awards evening. Board of directors recipients were Vice-Chair Burkhard Metzger, of the Municipality of Central Huron, three years of service and former ABCA Chair Dave Frayne, of the Municipality of South Huron and representing South Huron and Perth South on the ABCA board, nine years of service. Staff members recognized for years of service were Kate Monk, Manager of Stewardship, Land and Education, 25 years; Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor, 15 years; Bev Brown, Financial Services Coordinator, ten years; Tim Cumming, Communications Specialist, ten years; Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist, ten years; Kari Jean, Aquatic Biologist, ten years; Geoffrey Cade, Water and Planning Supervisor, ten years; Donna Clarkson, Source Protection Technician, five years; and Rob Carnegie, GIS Technician, five years.

## **Great Lakes Program Coordinator with Environment and Climate Change Canada shares examples of successful coastal management**

There are issues facing lakes, oceans, and ecosystems around the world. There are also successful examples of nations and interested people working together to address these issues, according to Janette Anderson, Great Lakes Program Coordinator with Environment and Climate Change Canada. She was guest speaker at Ausable Bayfield Conservation's annual conservation awards evening, held on March 17, 2016. Anderson presented on the topic Collaboration Works: Lessons Learned from Global Review of Coastal Management.

The presenter pointed out that rivers, lakes, and ecological systems don't recognize national borders and other boundaries of jurisdiction. She shared a number of national and international examples of governments and people working together to address shoreline issues and to reduce impacts to land, water, and habitat.

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, for example, has achieved 40 per cent reduction in nitrogen and phosphorus discharges between 1987 and 2000 and a 50 per cent decrease in 50 hazardous substance discharges. That action plan has also improved swimming beaches and helped to recover some wildlife populations. That action plan has addressed issues such as excess nutrients, loss of biodiversity, hazardous substances, and food chain disruptions. Since that time, they have acknowledged that more work is needed to address the nutrient loading to the Baltic Sea and further measures need to be implemented urgently.

Governments, agencies, and interested people along coastlines are "recognizing the interconnected nature of their ecosystems, their respective contributions to a greater whole, and the need to take initiative on priority actions," said Anderson.

The speaker acknowledged there are challenges coordinating a wide management area with zones of influence and impact. It's difficult "taking an ecosystem approach when the ecosystem is large and comprised of extensive, land, water, rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and offshore waters, overlaid with human

activity.” Some programs address specific issues in specific areas but coastal management is required for a large area with many partners involved in order to reduce impacts to the lake or ocean, nearshore and shoreline.

To “bring things home” in terms of the Lake Huron coastline “there were a number of success stories that were examined,” she said, including the Lake Huron - Georgian Bay Framework for Community Action ([lakehuroncommunityaction.ca](http://lakehuroncommunityaction.ca)) and the Healthy Lake Huron: Clean Water, Clean Beaches initiative along Lake Huron’s southeast shoreline ([healthylakehuron.ca](http://healthylakehuron.ca)).

“It’s essential to conduct regular assessments of goals and progress,” said Anderson. “The process must continue to grow and evolve and be communicated but of course you already know that because that’s what’s happening here.”

The presenter listed a number of local lessons learned in terms of managing coastal issues well:

- Community action empowers.
- There should be clear, strong, and measurable objectives.
- The work needs to be based in science.
- Decision-making should be based on consensus.
- There should be broad participation by many partners.
- The highest levels of leadership possible should be involved.
- Regular reassessment of objectives and strategies should take place.
- Partners should demonstrate and communicate progress.

The presenter also listed the top ten lessons learned globally about working effectively together to manage coastal issues:

1. A principled foundation in ecosystem-based management is needed.
2. Management challenges should be addressed at the appropriate scales.
3. Management should be centred at the land-water interface.
4. Aquatic spatial planning and analysis are needed.
5. Ecosystem-based management should be real and relevant to people.
6. Leadership and responsibilities should be shared.
7. Short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals should be set. Achievement of results for each stage should be planned. Milestones should be celebrated.
8. Accountability comes from effective partnerships.
9. Monitoring and reporting should take place on achievement of priorities, objectives and outcomes.
10. Sustainable funding should be obtained from within responsible organizations.

The speaker’s examples of collaboration came from locales as far away as Asia. Anderson said the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) partners are working together to address habitat loss and degradation; dead zones and algal blooms; climate change impacts; and pollution. There are ten countries and many partners involved in this work and it is providing a holistic, integrated system for coastal planning and management, she said.

The PISCES (Partnerships Involving Stakeholders in the Celtic Sea Ecosystem) is another example from overseas. This is “one of the most heavily used areas on the planet” and there is growing demand for finite marine resources. England, Wales, Ireland, France, and Spain are among the national partners. This partnership has produced a guide to strategically implement an ecosystem approach for the Celtic Sea and Western Channel.

The conservation and restoration of priority coastal habitat areas was one of the successes she identified from the work of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, a partnership between Canada and the United States of America. Anderson also pointed to their gulf-wide monitoring network and regional information management as other successes. This council is helping to tackle such issues as habitat loss, pollution, and the impacts of our changing climate.

Another example of successful collaboration, she said, is the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management Initiative. This multi-partnership work is led by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The speaker said successes to date include relationship-building between many partners; identification of unique, sensitive, and vulnerable ecosystems; an atlas of human activity; and a decision-support tool using geographic information systems (GIS) to guide the implementation of strategic actions.

The U.S. West Coast Governors' Alliance on Ocean Health is addressing pollution, non-native species, increasing human demands, and impacts of a changing climate. Their successes include issue-based action teams, recommendations to address the issues, and implementation of early actions addressing the issues.

Anderson's presentation was based on work by Dr. Lawrence P. Hildebrand for Environment and Climate Change Canada's Great Lakes Issue Management and Reporting Section.

Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor with Ausable Bayfield Conservation, introduced the speaker. "Through the years, I've seen how her quiet competency and leadership have really helped community groups around the basin achieve their own objectives," said Veliz.

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#### **CUTLINES:**

**Conservationist of the Year Award Winner – Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group:** The Conservationist of the Year Award was presented to Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group (LSPCG), an "enthusiastic, dedicated group of citizens in the Port Franks area." This group was formed in 2011 to address the invasion and spread of *Phragmites australis* (European Common Reed) in Lambton Shores. The Conservationist of the Year Award prize includes a limited-edition conservation print of the Latornell Tree, by Bonna Rouse, one of 310 made for a special edition by Conservation Ontario. Ausable Bayfield Conservation will also make a donation towards a tree and plaque at a Commemorative Woods site in the watershed. Shown in photo, from left to right, are Kate Monk, Manager of Stewardship, Land and Education, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA); Michelle Hay; Brian Horner, General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer, ABCA; Ray Horban; Derek Scott; Nette Pachlarz; Paul Petersen; and Nancy Vidler, LSPCG Chair. Missing from photo is Bill MacDonald. The award winners received scrolls of congratulations on behalf of Bev Shipley, MP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Monte McNaughton, MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Phragmites has a serious impact on shorelines, coastal wetlands, and rivers. It affects water quality, wildlife habitat (including species-at-risk turtle populations), recreation, and public safety.

**Guest speaker:** Janette Anderson, Great Lakes Program Coordinator, Environment and Climate Change Canada, was guest speaker at the Conservation Awards and partner appreciation ceremony hosted by Ausable Bayfield Conservation and held at Ironwood Golf Club, east of Exeter, on March 17, 2016. She presented on the topic of Collaboration Works: Lessons Learned from Global Review of Coastal Management. Anderson has worked on monitoring, protecting, and restoring the Great Lakes for her entire career beginning with water and sediment quality studies with Ontario's environment ministry and then moving to the federal environment department in 1990. The focus of Anderson's work evolved over time to ecosystem planning and management including the restoration of Areas of Concern and leading the development of lakewide management plans for Lake Ontario and Lake Huron. She is now helping to develop a nearshore framework for assessment and management of Great Lakes nearshore waters.

**Years of Service Awards – Staff:** Ausable Bayfield Conservation presented Years of Service Awards to several staff members at the March 17, 2016 Conservation Awards evening. From left to right are Bev Brown, Financial Services Coordinator, ten years; Donna Clarkson, Source Protection Technician, five years; Tim Cumming, Communications Specialist, ten years; Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist, ten years; Kari Jean, Aquatic Biologist, ten years; Kate Monk, Manager of Stewardship, Land and Education, 25 years; Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor, 15 years; Geoffrey Cade, Water and Planning Supervisor, ten years. Also receiving a Years of Service Award was Rob Carnegie, GIS Technician, five years.

**Board of Directors Years of Service Awards:** Burkhard Metzger, of the Municipality of Central Huron, Vice-Chair, received an award for three years of service on the board of directors of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA). Former ABCA Chair Dave Frayne, of the Municipality of South Huron and representing South Huron and Perth South on the ABCA board, received an award for nine years of service. Presenting the service awards, at far right of photo, was Brian Horner, ABCA General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer.