

**MANITOBA CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS PROGRAM
2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT**



**MINISTER
OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

Her Honour the Honourable Janice C. Filmon, C.M., O.M.
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba
Room 235
Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Your Honour:

As Minister of Sustainable Development, I have the privilege of presenting the Annual Report of the Conservation Districts of Manitoba for the year ending March 31, 2018, including the audited financial statements for the same period.

The Manitoba Conservation Districts Program is one of the most successful land and water programs in Canada. 2017-18 was a momentous year with the introduction of Bill 7 – The Sustainable Watersheds Act and continued implementation of projects resulting in measurable improvements to watershed health and resiliency. Conservation districts continue to be a leader in watershed management planning, with 22 plans completed to date, to improve water quality, enhance surface water management, safeguard drinking water sources and protect sensitive wildlife and aquatic habitat. The future is bright as we continue to work with conservation districts to modernize the program.

Respectfully submitted,

original signed by

Rochelle Squires



THE MANITOBA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

Manitoba's Conservation Districts Program creates healthy and sustainable watersheds through land and water stewardship programs and partnerships. With funding from the Manitoba government and municipalities, locally-appointed conservation district boards make planning and management decisions to improve watershed health across most of municipal Manitoba.

VISION

The Conservation Districts Program will strive to create healthy watersheds to support watershed residents, the environment, and the economy for the present and the future.

MANDATE

Conservation districts lead integrated watershed management planning and play a key role in plan implementation. Through a shared governance model and citizen engagement, conservation districts deliver local solutions to complex issues—contributing to healthier, more resilient watersheds.

PRINCIPLES

The Conservation Districts Program:

- functions as a partnership between levels of government and engages local citizens
- is cost-shared by provincial and municipal government partners
- is incentive-based and not regulatory
- relies on local decision-making through conservation district boards and subdistricts with support from technical experts to solve local issues
- uses watershed management planning to guide decision-making and programming

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

CONTACT INFORMATION

PROVINCIAL GRANTS

Alonsa	204-767-2101	manager@alonsacd.com	\$293,000
Assiniboine Hills	204-535-2139	ahcd.mgr@mymts.net	\$316,000
Cooks Creek	204-777-2223	cccd_manager@mts.net	\$310,000
East Interlake	204-642-7578	abelanger@eicd.ca	\$300,000
Intermountain	204-742-3764	imcdmgr@mts.net	\$268,000
Kelsey	204-623-3353	kelseyacd@mts.net	\$155,000
Lake of the Prairies	204-564-2388	lpcd@mymts.net	\$200,000
La Salle Redboine	204-526-2578	j.reid@lasalleredboine.com	\$200,000
Little Saskatchewan River	204-566-2270	lrscd.mgr@mts.net	\$200,000
Pembina Valley	204-242-3267	pwwd.mgr@gmail.com	\$359,500
Seine-Rat River	204-326-1030	manager@srrcd.ca	\$378,000
Swan Lake Watershed	204-734-9550	manager.slwcd@mymts.net	\$225,000
Turtle Mountain	204-747-2530	tmcd.mgr@goinet.ca	\$303,000
Turtle River Watershed	204-447-2139	mgr.trwcd@mts.net	\$431,000
Upper Assiniboine River	204-567-3554	uarcd@mts.net	\$270,000
West Interlake Watershed	204-762-5850	admin.wiwcd@mts.net	\$200,000
West Souris River	204-877-3020	manager@wsrzd.com	\$203,500
Whitemud Watershed	204-476-5019	wwcdmanager@mts.net	\$700,000
			\$5,312,000

PROVINCIAL WATERSHED SUPPORT

The Watershed Planning and Programs Section of Manitoba Sustainable Development administers and manages the Conservation Districts Program under the authority of The Conservation Districts Act. The Section also coordinates and supports watershed management planning as outlined in The Water Protection Act. For more information, please visit manitobawatersheds.ca.

PROGRAM FUNDING

Provincial Grant: \$5,312,000

The Manitoba government provides an annual grant to each conservation district to implement watershed management plans in their local watersheds.

Municipal Levies: \$1,770,667

Participating municipalities match provincial grant contributions at a 3 to 1 ratio, meaning municipalities collectively provide a minimum of \$1 for every \$3 the province contributes. Municipalities appoint members to conservation districts to implement projects and programming relevant to their local watersheds.

Other Funding: \$3,160,014

Federal \$1,464,837
Additional municipal \$498,000
Additional provincial \$344,763
Non-governmental \$852,414

Additional funding is obtained from a variety of sources, including environmental organizations, industry, and government programs.



Total Program Funding: \$10,242,681

PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY

Conservation district programming reflects provincial and local priorities. Conservation districts design programming to meet goals, objectives and actions identified in their integrated watershed management plans. Although programming and project types vary between individual conservation districts, programming generally falls within five main categories:

Surface Water Management
63%

Includes water retention, erosion control, grassed waterways, wetland restoration and drain maintenance

Drinking Water Protection
14%

Includes abandoned well sealing and wellhead remediation

Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality
13%

Includes exclusion fencing, alternative watering systems and riparian buffer strips

Habitat Conservation and Enhancement
5%

Includes conservation agreements, habitat leases, tree planting and aquatic restoration

Watershed Awareness and Education
5%

Includes water festivals, producer workshops, tours and presentations

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

HEALTHIER,
MORE RESILIENT
WATERSHEDS

STRONG RURAL
COMMUNITIES



ENHANCED WATERSHED PLANNING

- Develops a shared vision and coordinated action for watersheds
- Provides funding for targeted, on-the-ground action to address local and provincial priorities
- Builds local capacity for cooperation, improved communication and local knowledge sharing
- Builds and strengthens local, provincial and federal partnerships



REDUCED IMPACTS OF FLOODING

- Targets and prioritizes water retention and peak flow reduction projects
- Identifies and co-ordinates surface water projects on a watershed basis
- Prevents and mitigates flood events
- Builds soil health and water retention capacity of soils
- Manages waterway networks to reduce flooding impacts, while considering the environment



IMPROVED LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Conserves and restores aquatic, riparian and prairie habitat
- Protects and enhances ecological goods and services
- Fosters linkages between land development planning and watershed planning



IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

- Implements projects to improve water quality and reduce nutrient loading
- Improves soil health and reduces over-application of nutrients on agricultural lands
- Fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local land managers to improve water quality
- Increases local capacity to monitor and understand trends in water quality



PROTECTION OF DRINKING WATER

- Conducts source water protection planning for public drinking water systems
- Provides recommendations and implements actions to improve local drinking water quality
- Implements projects to assess and protect drinking water quality
- Fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local people to monitor quality, assess issues and implement projects to protect groundwater sources



PROSPEROUS RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Provides direct injection of government funding into rural communities, increasing local ability to leverage additional sources of external funding
- Supports rural employment and local businesses
- Educates youth and local land managers
- Manages waterway infrastructure to support a productive agricultural landscape and rural development



- Five watershed plans in development and 22 being implemented across Manitoba
- One new watershed plan completed



- 38 water storage projects with 910 decametres (738 acre-feet) of storage created
- 141 km of drains maintained or reconstructed
- 203 crossings replaced or repaired



- 514 hectares (1,270 acres) of land protected through 16 conservation agreements
- 7 wetland reclamation projects established
- 62,145 trees planted
- 60 kilometres of shelterbelts established



- 24 erosion control structures established
- 22 grassed waterways created
- 9 gully stabilization and 17 streambank stabilization projects completed



- 116 surface water quality samples collected
- 1,060 private wells tested
- 197 abandoned wells sealed



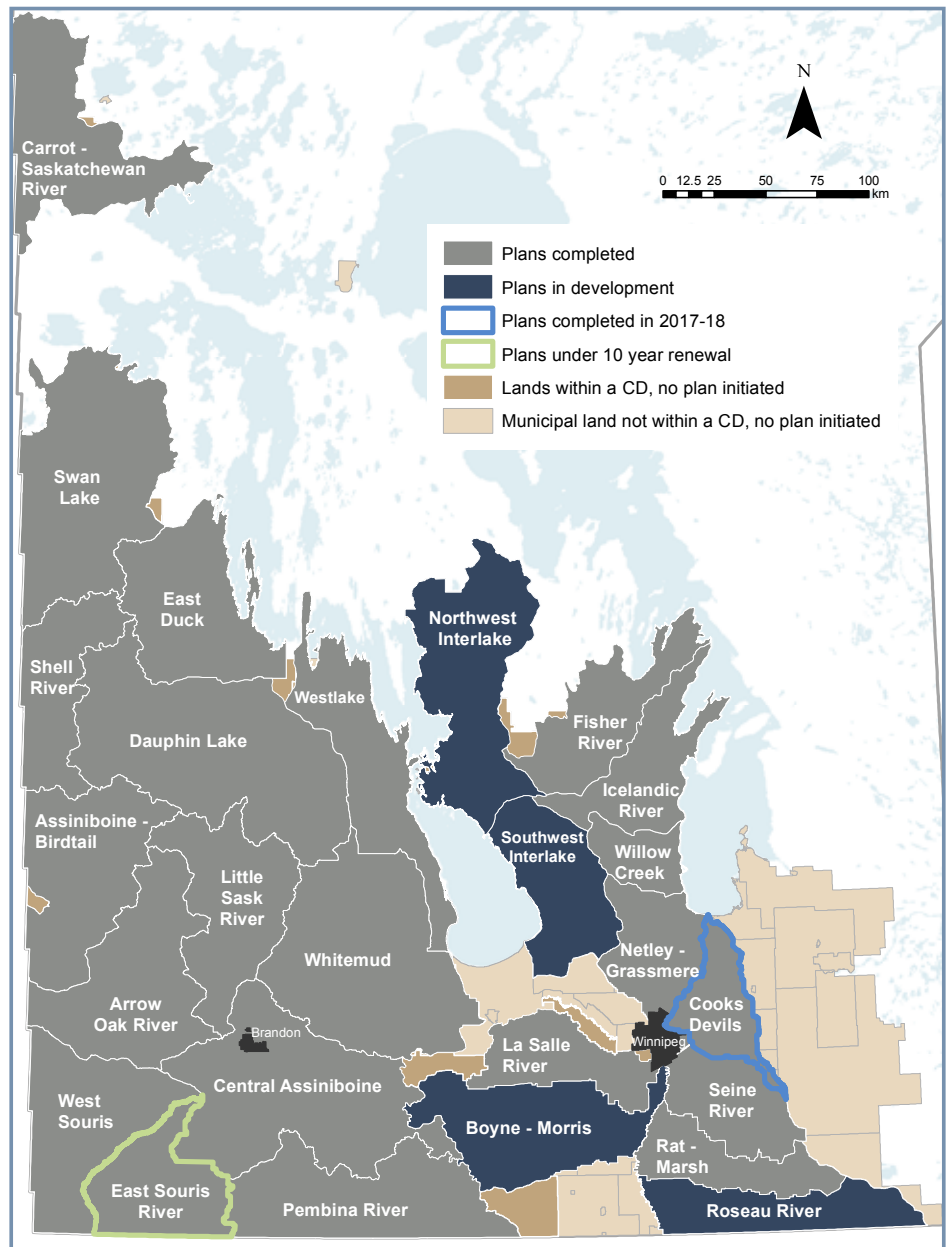
- 3,645 students attended water festivals
- 74 tours and demonstrations with 1,133 attendees
- 47 full-time and 46 part-time and seasonal staff employed

2017-18 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Watershed management plans provide a decision-making framework for the protection, restoration and management of water, aquatic ecosystems, and drinking water sources. The planning process engages watershed residents, stakeholders and government to identify and prioritize watershed issues, gather and analyze local, technical, and traditional knowledge, and develop recommendations to address priority issues in targeted areas. Plan implementation is shared by conservation districts, all levels of government, stakeholder organizations and watershed residents.

Conservation districts have initiated 27 integrated watershed management plans as of 2017-18, of which 22 plans are complete, four plans are at various stages of development, and one plan has begun its 10 year renewal process.



ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

Conservation districts play an important role in fostering partnerships on the landscape. Many of these partnerships have formed through involvement in watershed management plans. Opportunities for watershed engagement will be enhanced through Bill 7 – The Sustainable Watersheds Act, which amends The Conservation Districts Act. Under existing legislation, districts are limited to project partnerships on land located within district boundaries, which excludes federal lands. Once The Conservation Districts Act amendments are proclaimed, districts will be enabled to form partnership agreements with non-municipal entities, such as Indigenous communities, to implement watershed management plans. This new provision will support a truly holistic approach to watershed management.

CUMULATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Conservation districts have built 221 water retention projects since 2013 with 6,913 decametres (5,608 acre-feet) of water storage capacity. This is equivalent to more than half of the water storage capacity of Stephenfield Lake.



Since 2013, conservation districts have installed 170 km of riparian fencing and 162 off-site watering systems to exclude 41,794 cattle from riparian areas, improving water quality and riparian habitat.



Over the last 10 years, conservation districts have planted over half a million trees. Today these trees sequester over 3,000 tonnes of carbon per year. This is the equivalent of taking 750 cars off of Manitoba's roads every year.

Over the last five years, conservation districts have sealed 1,196 abandoned wells and conducted 4,505 drinking water tests to safeguard private drinking water sources.



To improve water flow and reduce flooding, four conservation districts with a waterway infrastructure management mandate have replaced 135 large culvert and bridge crossings since 2012.



In the past five years, conservation districts have held 106 producer workshops and tours, educating 2,892 participants on healthy soil and water management practices.

2017-18 PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Activity	Projects	Sites	Storage (dam ³)	Km	Hectare	Head of Cattle	Trees	Attendees
Surface Water Management								
Aerial surveys	12			18.75				
Beaver bounty incentives	1,086							
Beaver dam removal		205						
Beaver management		19						
Drainage licences reviewed	148							
Drop inlet	6		35					
Erosion control structures	24	22						
Grassed waterway	22				46.16			
Gully stabilization	9				4.26			
Hydraulic assessments	35	35						
Infrastructure brushing and mowing	239			1,394				
Infrastructure crossing maintenance	184							
Infrastructure crossing replacements and major repairs	19							
Infrastructure drain maintenance	129			221				
Infrastructure drain reconstruction	12			14				
Infrastructure inventory	22	5,844		500				
Streambank stabilization	17				114.72			
Surface water flow and retention assessment	130							
Urban rain gardens		7						
Water retention (<50 dam ³)	19		739.2					
Water retention project maintenance	30		3,451.80					
Weirs	1							
Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality								
Benthic monitoring	1	6						
Constructed wetlands	1		15		1			
Groundwater testing		110						
Livestock alternative watering systems	22					5,700		
Livestock crossings	15					4,315		
Livestock exclusion fencing	13			22		2,483		
Livestock pasture pipeline	7			8.8		1,050		
Livestock rotational grazing	3				136	185		
Soil health – forage seed	80				1,396.6			
Soil health – polycrop trials		1			31			
Soil health – salinity seed	21				102			
Soil health – soil testing		30						
Surface water testing		116						
Surface water testing in partnership with Manitoba Sustainable Development		53						

Activity	Projects	Sites	Storage (dam ³)	Km	Hectare	Head of Cattle	Trees	Attendees
Drinking Water Protection								
Abandoned well sealing	197							
Dormant well protection		3						
Drinking water testing		1,060						
Well establishment	12							
Well head remediation		4						
Well inventory		471						
Well shock chlorination		33						
Habitat Conservation and Enhancement								
Aquatic habitat creation	13				8.6			
Conservation agreements	16				514			
Conservation corridors	453				2,242			
Fish ladders	1							
Fish – lake aeration		9						
Habitat lease	7	27			42			
Land acquisition		2			1.85			
Nature trails	28			128				
Property maintenance	15							
Riparian and aquatic assessments	13	12		24.5				
Trees – community tree nursery	4						2,122	
Trees – field and property shelterbelts	54			59.6			10,402	
Trees – tree planting	472						23,443	
Trees – seedlings provided	226						28,300	
Wetland reclamation	3		21.25		16.5			
Watershed Awareness and Education								
Banquets and watershed functions	24							1,754
Beneficial management practices (BMP) research	4	65						
Brochures	72	29,403						
Composters	34							
Demonstration and tours	20							487
Eco-tourism	2							
Geographic information systems and aerial photos	1,777							
Project or interpretive signs	111							
Project tours	54							646
Rain barrels	71							
Strategic planning	1							
Video and documentary	1							
Water festivals	15							3,645
Water use conservation activities	4							
Website and social media	41							
Youth education	148							10,723

2017-18 PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Canada Revenue Agency
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Service Canada

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND CROWN CORPORATIONS

Manitoba Agriculture
Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation
Manitoba Hydro
Manitoba Sustainable Development

NON – GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Brandon University
Deerwood Soil and Water Management Association
Ducks Unlimited Canada
ECO Canada
Enbridge
Lake Winnipeg Foundation
Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association
Manitoba Conservation Districts Association
Oak Lake and Area, Reston and Area Inc., Virden Area,
and Thomas Sill Foundations
Royal Bank of Canada
Sunrise Credit Union
Tree Canada
Tundra Oil & Gas
Watershed residents and community groups

GROWING FORWARD 2

2017-18 marked the fifth and final year for the Growing Forward 2 – Growing Assurance Ecological Goods and Services (GAEGS) Program in Manitoba. The program was a five-year federal-provincial initiative funded by the Governments of Canada and Manitoba from 2013 to 2018. This program provided funding to conservation districts to help local producers implement beneficial management practices that conserved and enhanced the agricultural landscape. In 2017-18, a total of \$895,845 was approved for conservation district led projects under this program.



MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

105 MUNICIPALITIES ARE PARTNERS IN THE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM

VILLAGES

Dunnottar
St. Pierre – Jolys

TOWNS

Carberry
Carman
Minnedosa
Neepawa
Niverville
Ste. Anne
Stonewall
Swan River
Teulon
Virden
Winnipeg Beach

CITIES

Brandon
Dauphin
Morden
Selkirk
Steinbach

MUNICIPALITIES

Alonsa
Arborg
Argyle
Armstrong
Bifrost – Riverton
Boissevain – Morton
Brenda – Waskada
Brokenhead
Cartier
Cartwright – Roblin
Clanwilliam – Erickson
Coldwell
Cornwallis
Dauphin
Deloraine – Winchester
De Salaberry
Dufferin
Ellice – Archie
Elton
Emerson – Franklin
Ethelbert
Fisher
Gilbert Plains
Gimli
Glenboro – South Cypress
Glenella – Lansdowne
Grahamdale
Grandview
Grassland

Grey
Hamiota
Hanover
Harrison – Park
Kelsey
Killarney – Turtle Mountain
La Broquerie
Lakeshore
Lorne
Louise
Macdonald
McCreary
Minitonas – Bowsman
Minto – Odanah
Montcalm
Mossey River
Mountain
Norfolk – Treherne
North Cypress – Langford
North Norfolk
Oakland – Wawanesa
Oakview
Pembina
Piney
Pipestone
Portage la Prairie
Prairie Lakes
Prairie View
Reynolds
Riding Mountain West

Ritchot
Riverdale
Roblin
Rockwood
Rosedale
Rossburn
Rosser
Russell – Binscarth
Sifton
Souris – Glenwood
Springfield
St. Andrews
St. Laurent
Stanley
Ste. Anne
Ste. Rose
Stuartburn
Swan Valley West
Taché
Thompson
Two Borders
Victoria
Wallace – Woodworth
West Interlake
West St. Paul
Westlake – Gladstone
Woodlands
Yellowhead

TRANSITIONING TO WATERSHED DISTRICTS

PRIORITIES FOR MODERNIZING MANITOBA'S CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM

In August 2017, the Manitoba government released a discussion document entitled *Modernizing Manitoba's Conservation Districts Program*. The document outlined five key priorities to modernize the Conservation Districts Program.

PRIORITY 1: ALIGN TO WATERSHEDS

Conservation districts will evolve to become watershed districts, which includes realigning existing conservation districts to reflect watershed boundaries. Watersheds are the most ecologically appropriate unit for planning and managing land and water activities beyond the scope of a single jurisdiction.

PRIORITY 2: REFRESH THE PROGRAM MANDATE

Watershed districts will become the keystone of watershed management in Manitoba. New roles to be explored include delivering a new ecological goods and services program called Growing Outcomes in Watersheds, enhancing surface water management planning and coordination, and offsetting drainage activities with water retention.

PRIORITY 3: AMEND LEGISLATION

Bill 7 – The Sustainable Watersheds Act was introduced in 2017 and passed in 2018. The bill amends four pieces of legislation, including The Conservation Districts Act. It provides a comprehensive, watershed-based framework that will streamline and coordinate provincial water programs and policy in the context of watersheds.

PRIORITY 4: MODERNIZE FUNDING MODELS

Provincial grant funding to districts will be more targeted to achieve results on provincial and local outcomes in specific target areas using a three-tiered approach for provincial funding. Other improvements include enhanced flexibility in calculating municipal grant contributions and streamlined provincial reporting to reduce red tape and administrative burden to districts.

PRIORITY 5: ENHANCE WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Realigning district boundaries to watershed-based boundaries will enhance the development and implementation of watershed plans. New provisions under Bill 7 – The Sustainable Watersheds Act will enable districts to form meaningful partnerships with non-municipal entities, including Indigenous communities, to implement watershed plans.



THE PATH FORWARD

It is an exciting time for conservation districts as program modernization is underway. Realigning conservation districts on watershed-based boundaries is a critical first step in moving towards a truly holistic, watershed approach to water management in Manitoba. Conservation districts will evolve to become watershed districts and play a keystone role in watershed management. New opportunities are on the horizon for watershed districts including the future launch of the GRowing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) program – a made-in-Manitoba program, based on the Alternate Land Use Services (ALUS) model, to secure ecological goods and services on the agricultural landscape. Watershed districts will also be positioned to play an enhanced role in the planning and coordination of surface water management activities, supporting government's plans for watershed-based planning for water management and the no net loss of wetland benefits. For more information, please visit manitobawatersheds.ca.

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