DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION
Our Actions Matter

LAKE ERIE SOURCE PROTECTION REGION

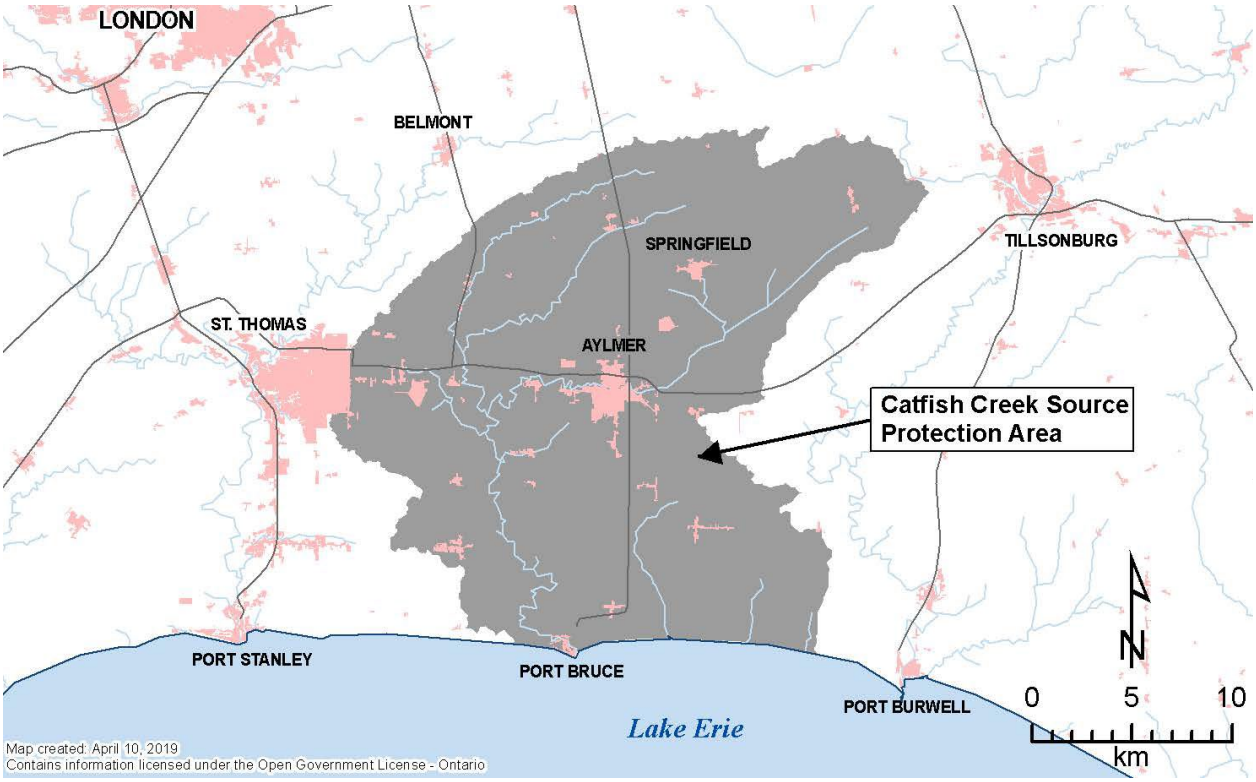
Catfish Creek Source Protection Annual Progress Report 2023

I. Introduction

This annual progress report outlines the progress made in implementing our Source Protection Plan for the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area, as required by the *Clean Water Act, 2006* and its regulations.

The Source Protection Plan is the culmination of extensive science-based assessment, research, consultation, and collaboration with local stakeholders and the provincial government. When policies in the plan are implemented it ensures that activities carried out near municipal wells and surface water intakes will not pose significant risk to the sources of our drinking water.

We acknowledge and recognize the efforts made by our local municipalities, stakeholders, and Source Protection Committee in the development and implementation of the Source Protection Plan.



II. A message from your local Source Protection Committee

P: Progressing Well/On Target – The majority of the source protection plan policies have been implemented and/or are progressing.

All legally-binding plan policies that address significant drinking water threats are implemented and 100% of significant threats have been addressed.

At the time the Source Protection Plan came into effect in 2015, 19 significant drinking water threats were identified in the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area. Since then, field verification has reduced that number to 14 significant threats, all of which have been addressed as of 2021.

III. Our Watershed

The Catfish Creek Source Protection Area (watershed) includes Catfish Creek and its tributaries. These watercourses drain an area of about 490 square kilometres in Elgin and Oxford Counties before entering Lake Erie at Port Bruce.

Much of the land of the Catfish Creek watershed is used for agriculture. The City of St. Thomas and the Town of Aylmer are the major urban areas, with other settlements at Springfield and Port Bruce.

The watershed has one municipal drinking water system in the village of Brownsville in the Township of Southwest Oxford. The system is comprised of two wells serving about 500 people. The Elgin Area Primary Water Supply System also provides municipal water to a number of communities in the watershed, including the Town of Aylmer and Port Bruce and Copenhagen in the Township of Malahide.

IV. At a Glance: Progress on Source Protection Plan Implementation

1. Source Protection Plan Policies and Addressing Significant Risks

P: Progressing Well/On Target

All of the legally-binding policies (100%) that address significant drinking water threats are implemented.

2. Municipal Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

P: Progressing Well/On Target

One municipality (Oxford County) in the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area has vulnerable areas where significant drinking water threat policies apply. Oxford County completed the review and update of their Official Plan in 2022 to ensure it conforms to the Catfish Creek Source Protection Plan.

3. Septic Inspections

P: Progressing Well/On Target

In the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area, there are nine on-site sewage systems that require inspections every five years in accordance with the Ontario Building Code. None of the systems were due to be inspected by the local municipality during 2023.

4. Risk Management Plans

P: Progressing Well/On Target

One risk management plan has been negotiated in the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area since the Source Protection Plan came into effect in 2015. There are currently no risk management plans needed or pending.

In 2023, four inspections were carried out for activities prohibited under section 57 of the Clean Water Act. One inspection was carried out for an activity requiring a Risk Management Plan under section 58 of the Clean Water Act. All activities inspected were found to be in compliance with Part IV policies.

5. Provincial Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

P: Progressing Well/On Target

Ontario ministries are reviewing applications for new or amended and previously issued provincial approvals (e.g. Environmental Compliance Approvals issued under the Environmental Protection Act) where they have been identified as a tool in our plan to address activities that pose a significant risk to source water.

The Province has established Standard Operating Policies to ensure that approvals take into account the science generated through the Drinking Water Source Protection Program and policies in the Source Protection Plan. Provincial approvals are issued, denied, amended, or revoked to conform to plan policies.

Where necessary, conditions are added to approvals to ensure that the activity does not pose a significant threat to sources of drinking water.

The Catfish Creek Source Protection Plan set out a timeline of 3 years to complete the review and make any necessary changes to previously issued approvals. The Ministries have reported 100% completion of previously issued Provincial approvals in the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area.

6. Source Protection Awareness and Change in Behaviour

There have been no measurable or quantifiable outcomes reported for the 2023 annual reporting period.

7. Source Protection Plan Policies: Summary of Delays

Not applicable to the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area.

8. Source Water Quality: Monitoring and Actions

No issues have been identified in the local science-based assessment report regarding the quality of the source(s) of municipal drinking water in the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area.

9. Science-based Assessment Reports: Work Plans

An order was received from the Ministry on July 22, 2019 providing for a comprehensive review and update to the Catfish Creek Assessment Report and Source Protection Plan under Section 36 of the Clean Water Act. The tasks identified in the order were incorporated into an update that was submitted for approval to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in May 2023.

10. More from the Watershed

To learn more about the Catfish Creek Source Protection Area, visit the Lake Erie Source Protection website.