

Ontario Protecting the Health of the Muskoka River Watershed*Funding will support projects that reduce impacts of flooding***NEWS**

April 20, 2021

GRAVENHURST — The Ontario government is investing more than \$4.25 million to further protect the Muskoka River Watershed. The funding will support projects that will help safeguard the region from environmental pressures, such as severe weather and flooding, while also improving the health of the watershed, a key commitment in the [Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan](#).

“The Muskoka Region is one of Ontario’s crown jewels, and we want to ensure that we continue to protect its environment which is so important to the local economy and the great people who live there,” said Premier Doug Ford. “This investment will help protect this area known around the world for its spectacular lakes and rivers so it can continue to be a thriving hub for Ontario’s tourism industry.”

The Ontario government is funding [16 projects](#) led by the District of Muskoka and the Town of Bracebridge, as part of the province’s [initial \\$5 million commitment](#) to the Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative. Approximately \$750,000 will support other projects that are in development.

“We are protecting the Muskoka River Watershed while supporting the local economy and its \$400-million recreational and tourism industry,” said Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. “By funding these projects and working with the local community, we are supporting this vital region in Ontario and ensuring its water resources are protected now and for future generations.”

Following careful review and consideration of the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group’s [recommendations](#), the government selected projects that support the development and implementation of the Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative.

Some of these projects include:

- Developing an Integrated Watershed Management approach for the Muskoka River Watershed to help improve water quality and quantity management, including measures to help reduce the impacts of flooding.
- Mapping areas of shoreline erosion and fluctuating water levels throughout the entire Muskoka River Watershed to identify areas prone to flooding, which could inform local flood mitigation efforts.
- Developing watershed-scale health indicators that reflect environmental, economic and social goals to support evidenced-based decision making in the Muskoka River Watershed.
- Improving understanding of erosion and sedimentation in the Muskoka River Delta in order to develop a range of options which could improve navigation for boats.

Additional information regarding the funding of future projects through the Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative will be provided in the near future.

SUPPORTIVE QUOTES

“The Ontario government is making steady progress in implementing the province’s flooding strategy, which we released a year ago,” said John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. “Protecting and managing the Muskoka River Watershed is important and these funds will help ensure that everyone who lives, works and plays in Muskoka is better equipped and able to respond to potential flood events.”

“I am pleased our government is taking these steps to protect the Muskoka watershed,” said Norman Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka. “Our beautiful lakes and rivers are an important part of both the environment and the economy of Muskoka and these projects reflect both those priorities. I want to once again thank the members of the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group for their work.”

“We are thrilled the provincial government is making this financial commitment to support the development of a comprehensive approach to management of the Muskoka River Watershed,” said Mardi Witzel, Chair of the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group. “This funding will enable the research, planning and execution of key initiatives relating to water levels, water quality and terrestrial concerns. We look forward to continuing to work with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and with local community partners who are already doing vital work to protect the health of the watershed for the benefit of future generations.”

“Our natural environment is the cornerstone of our cultural and economic legacy and essential to the future vitality of the communities connected to the Muskoka River Watershed,” said John Klinck, Chair of the District of Municipality of Muskoka. “On behalf of Council, I would like to thank the Province for this important investment and extend our sincerest thanks to the Muskoka Watershed Council and the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group for their dedication and hard work that led to this announcement today. We look forward to working with our partners and communities to develop a more comprehensive approach to watershed management that will not only benefit the Muskoka River Watershed but can be shared with other communities in Ontario.”

“The Muskoka River is vital for the prosperity of Bracebridge and Muskoka,” said Graydon Smith, Mayor of the Town of Bracebridge. “The stretch from Bracebridge Bay to Lake Muskoka is a key transportation route bringing boaters from Lake Muskoka into the heart of our town. The collaborative approach between the Province of Ontario, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Town of Bracebridge will allow for more efficient and effective ways to ensure our watershed is well managed and preserved for now and the future.”

QUICK FACTS

- In August 2018, Ontario announced a \$5 million [Muskoka Watershed Conservation and Management Initiative](#) to better identify risks and issues facing the Muskoka Region.
- In August 2019, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks established the [Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group](#) to help identify risks and issues facing the watershed and to collaborate to protect the environment and support economic growth in the region.
- The Advisory Group provided advice on priority actions and projects to support the Muskoka initiative in their [report](#) to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in summer 2020. This advice was informed by input from over 60 different organizations.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry released [Protecting People and Property: Ontario’s Flooding Strategy](#) in March 2020 which outlines steps the Ontario government will take with its partners over the coming years to reduce flood risk and help people better prepare for flooding events. The Flooding Strategy also draws on the expert advice of Doug McNeil, Ontario’s Special Advisor on Flooding.

- The Muskoka River Watershed consists of 15 sub-watersheds, measuring about 62 km by 120 km, that discharges into the southeastern shores of Georgian Bay.
- Ontario invests approximately \$14 million per year in actions to protect and restore the Great Lakes, including projects that support commitments in Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy and the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [View further details about projects receiving Muskoka Watershed Initiative funding](#)
- Learn how we are [protecting the Muskoka River Watershed](#)
- Read the [Advisory Group report on protecting the Muskoka River Watershed](#)
- Read the [Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS

Andrew Buttigieg, Minister's Office,
andrew.buttigieg@ontario.ca
437-224-4599

Gary Wheeler, Communications Branch,
416-314-6666
Gary.S.Wheeler@ontario.ca

[Ontario.ca/environment-news](https://www.ontario.ca/environment-news)

Disponible en français