



Hamilton Conservation Authority STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 – 2018



Introduction

The Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) is a watershed based organization established under the provisions of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. A watershed is an “an area of land that is drained by a river and its tributaries”.¹ “Watersheds cross municipal, provincial and even international borders and they come in all shapes and sizes and can vary from millions of acres, such as the land that drains into the Great Lakes, to a few acres that drain into a pond.”²

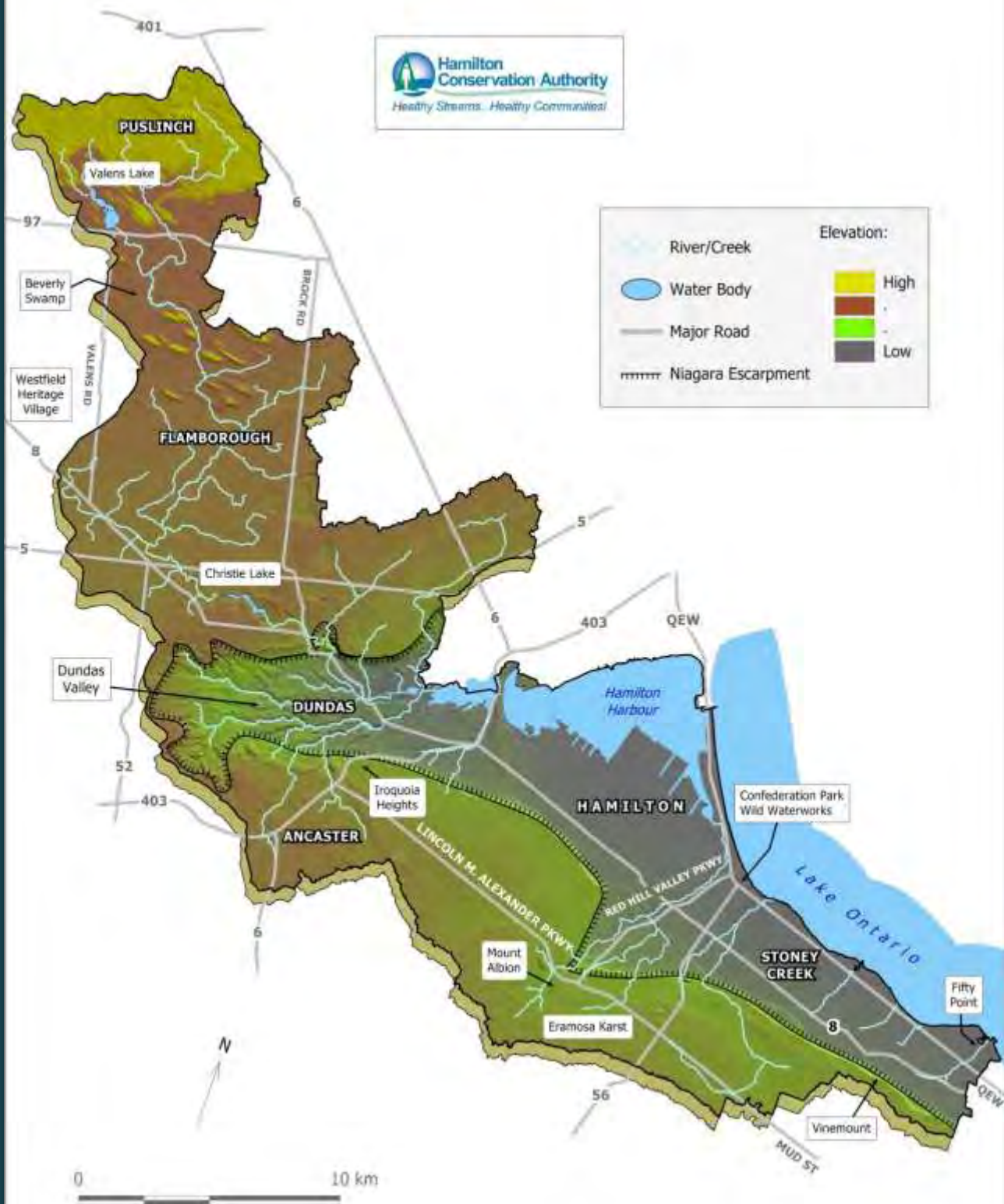
The HCA watersheds drain from above the Niagara Escarpment across the City of Hamilton, as well as the wetland areas of Flamborough and Puslinch to Hamilton Harbour and Lake Ontario. Within our watersheds, we implement programs to protect people and property from flooding and erosion hazards, manage water levels for low flow augmentation, conserve aquatic and natural heritage features and administer monitoring programs to gauge changes in our environment. HCA also owns and manages over 4,400 hectares of conservation areas for conservation, public education and enjoyment. The Hamilton Conservation Authority has been operating for over 55 years and we have grown and expanded over the years based on community needs and in response to changing environmental, social and economic conditions.

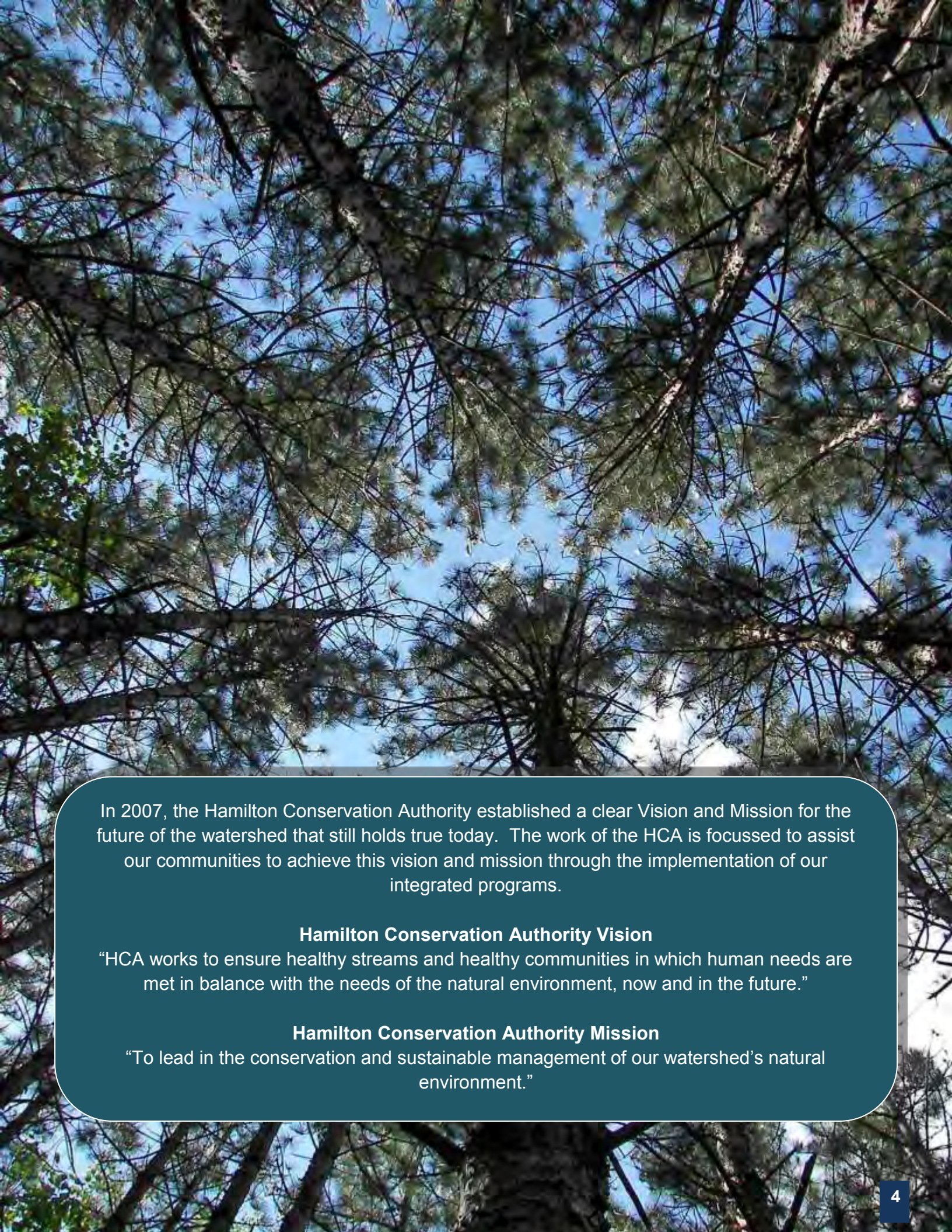
The Hamilton Conservation Authority has a strong community reputation for responding to new challenges. In an era of reduced funding and economic changes, we have continued our work for the conservation of the watershed’s water resources and natural environment, and to provide for the enjoyment of our conservation areas by our watershed residents and the people of the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. Through the efficient operation and marketing of our programs and facilities, the impact on the local tax base is reduced. We have also nurtured a charitable foundation, the Hamilton Conservation Foundation, which encourages citizens and businesses to contribute to environmental conservation.

Our past successes have not come without planning. This current 5-year strategic plan builds on the progress made by the HCA through its’ last strategic plan, **Leading Conservation Forward**. This strategic plan charts our course for the next 5-years in order that the HCA may continue to safeguard and enhance our water, natural environment and recreational facilities for the benefit of the City of Hamilton and Township of Puslinch’s long term environmental, social and economic prosperity. We remain committed to the forward-looking goals and ideals we have pursued for the past 55 years as well as the new ones incorporated into this Strategic Plan.

1. Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 2. Conservation Ontario Website







In 2007, the Hamilton Conservation Authority established a clear Vision and Mission for the future of the watershed that still holds true today. The work of the HCA is focussed to assist our communities to achieve this vision and mission through the implementation of our integrated programs.

Hamilton Conservation Authority Vision

“HCA works to ensure healthy streams and healthy communities in which human needs are met in balance with the needs of the natural environment, now and in the future.”

Hamilton Conservation Authority Mission

“To lead in the conservation and sustainable management of our watershed’s natural environment.”

Strategic Goal # 1 – Water Management

The HCA continues to protect the watershed for people, property, flora and fauna and natural resources through flood and erosion control, water quality programs, low flow augmentation and adaption strategies to adjust to changing climatic conditions.

Strategic Objectives

- Maintain and enhance our flood control infrastructure to minimize flooding and augment low flow conditions.
- Minimize the impacts of erosion and sedimentation on watershed streams, creeks, rivers and receiving water bodies.
- Maintain and enhance surface and ground water quality from the headwater source to Hamilton Harbour and Lake Ontario.
- Monitor and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and the implications to our watershed.

Examples of programs and initiatives that address the above noted objectives include continued implementation of the flood forecasting and floodplain management program, low water response program, flood control projects and watershed studies, programs supportive of the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Program, plan review and regulation program, watershed stewardship program, stewardship action plans, continued implementation of provincial/HCA/City supported monitoring programs, implementation of the HCA Climate Change Strategy and by collaboration with the City of Hamilton, academic institutions, First Nations, agricultural community, government agencies, and industry.



Strategic Goal # 2 – Natural Heritage Conservation

The HCA conserves, restores, and enhances watershed natural areas and ecological systems.

Strategic Objectives

- Maintain and enhance a natural heritage inventory.
- Maintain an active land acquisition program focused on natural heritage properties.
- Maintain and enhance environmental monitoring programs for HCA conservation areas and public and private watershed lands.
- Promote the value of natural heritage lands on private and public property.
- Maintain and enhance the natural heritage features of HCA lands and manage these lands on an environmentally sustainable basis.
- Minimize the impacts of urban and rural land uses on natural heritage features.

Examples of programs and initiatives that address the above noted objectives include updates to the Natural Areas Inventory, continued work and collaboration with the City of Hamilton, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, academic institutions, First Nations, agricultural community, government agencies and industry, HCA's Aquatic Resource Monitoring Program and Terrestrial Resource Monitoring Program, implementation of the HCA's Land Securement Strategy and collaboration with watershed landowner's and the Hamilton Conservation Foundation, plan review and regulation program, HCA's water quality monitoring program, watershed stewardship program, stewardship action plans, public outreach, and education, including natural heritage information as the basis for conservation area master plans and addressing species at risk and invasive species.



Strategic Goal # 3 – Conservation Area Experience

The HCA provides customers high quality, diverse conservation areas to promote outdoor recreation, health and well-being, strengthening public awareness of the benefits of being in or near our conservation areas.

Strategic Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance conservation area infrastructure and natural heritage features within the context of approved master plans.
- Maintain and enhance the financial sustainability of our conservation areas.
- Focus marketing activities to attract visitors to conservation areas.
- Develop and explore new revenue generating opportunities.
- Conserve cultural heritage assets on HCA lands in a sustainable manner.

Examples of programs and initiatives that address the above noted objectives include the HCA conservation area master planning process, tactical land acquisition as per the Land Securement Strategy, capital budget and funding programs, management agreements, focussing on revenue generation and cost efficiencies, partnering with public and private sector on recreation initiatives and marketing and communication.



Strategic Goal # 4 – Education and Environmental Awareness

The HCA provides active outdoor learning experiences for students, teachers and the community, increasing knowledge and awareness of the value of our environment and heritage.

Strategic Objective:

- Maintain and enhance the education programs and infrastructure relating to natural and cultural heritage.
- Collaborate with agencies and organizations to promote the importance and value of the watershed environment.

Examples of programs and initiatives that address the above noted objectives include collaboration with the stewardship programs, foundations, partnering with agencies, First Nations, agricultural community, organizations and institutions in the development and implementation of environmental and heritage education and stewardship initiatives.



Strategic Goal # 5 – Organizational Excellence

The HCA ensures its corporate and financial viability and its community relevancy.

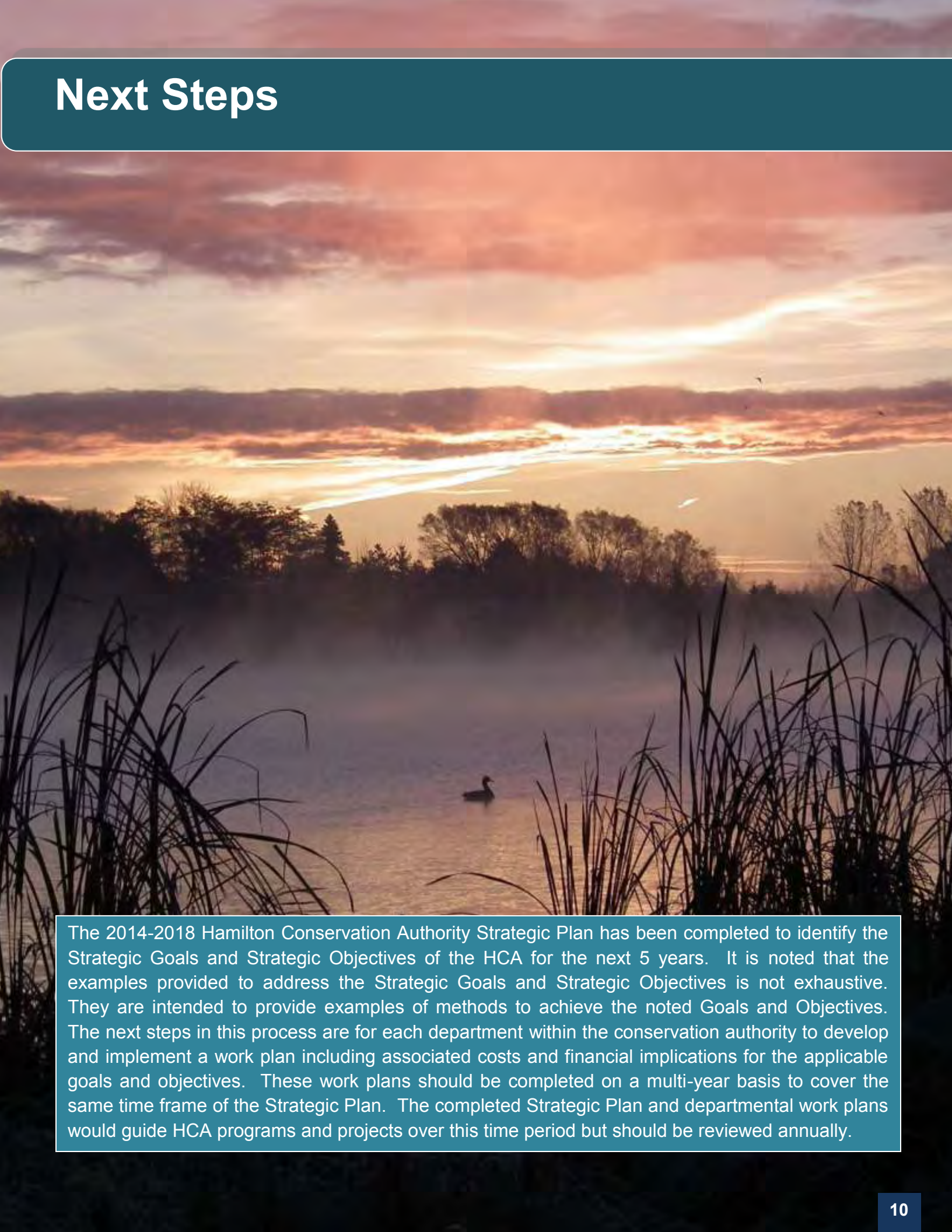
Strategic Objectives:

- Maintain and provide a safe working environment for both employees and visitors.
- Promote a positive and engaging work environment to encourage staff continuity, growth and development.
- Maintain and enhance a corporate philosophy focussed on cost control, sponsorship, revenue generation, sustainable municipal funding and, customer service.
- Promote the leadership, mandate and responsibilities of the Board of Directors, their committees and advisory boards.
- Lead by example in the environmentally sustainable management and maintenance of the organization.
- Maintain and enhance our relationship with the City of Hamilton regarding the management and operation of Confederation Park, Westfield Heritage Village and program service delivery.
- Promote the role and mandate of the Hamilton Conservation Authority, and the services we provide, to the public and our partner organizations.
- Continue our strong relationship and shared objectives with the Hamilton Conservation Foundation.

Examples of programs and initiatives that address the above noted objectives include the continued implementation and development of our budget process, development of reserves, preparing departmental work plans, cost forecasting, an “environment first” philosophy, education, training and recognition, team building, sharing of knowledge and relationship building.



Next Steps



The 2014-2018 Hamilton Conservation Authority Strategic Plan has been completed to identify the Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives of the HCA for the next 5 years. It is noted that the examples provided to address the Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives is not exhaustive. They are intended to provide examples of methods to achieve the noted Goals and Objectives. The next steps in this process are for each department within the conservation authority to develop and implement a work plan including associated costs and financial implications for the applicable goals and objectives. These work plans should be completed on a multi-year basis to cover the same time frame of the Strategic Plan. The completed Strategic Plan and departmental work plans would guide HCA programs and projects over this time period but should be reviewed annually.