



**2023**  
ANNUAL  
WORK PLAN



**S**ince our formation in 1966, the RVCA has worked with our municipal partners to deliver programs and services that protect the Rideau watershed for the benefit of everyone. Our goal is to ensure actions upstream don't have detrimental impacts downstream.

Municipalities understand that it takes a healthy watershed to support local economies, protect public health, reduce flooding, droughts and erosion and help communities become more resilient to climate change. In 2023, we continue on this path as we work to conserve our shared watershed and ensure our future.

#### **OUR LEGISLATIVE MANDATE**

To provide programs and services designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in the Rideau watershed (Conservation Authorities Act).

#### **OUR VISION**

A thriving watershed with clean, abundant water, natural shorelines, rich forests and wetlands, diverse habitats and sustainable land use that is valued and protected by all.

#### **OUR MISSION**

To understand, manage, protect, restore and enhance the Rideau watershed through science, stewardship, education, policy and leadership.

#### **OUR PRIORITIES**

Our Strategic Plan outlines a number of key priorities. Many are now complete, while others will be achieved this year and are highlighted in our "Special for 2023" boxes.



# 2023 Budget

The RVCA’s proposed budget for 2023 is \$11.8 million. This will enable the RVCA to continue serving the needs of our municipalities and watershed residents while making progress on critical priorities outlined in our Strategic Plan. In the following pages of this work plan, you will see priority projects highlighted in boxes marked “Special for 2023.” These boxes highlight both capital projects and operational priorities.

Our proposed budget for 2023 can be broken down into three main expenditures:

- **\$1.02** million for Rideau River Ice Management
- **\$0.49** million for capital projects
- **\$10.28** million for operations to deliver all other programs and services

### Expenditures

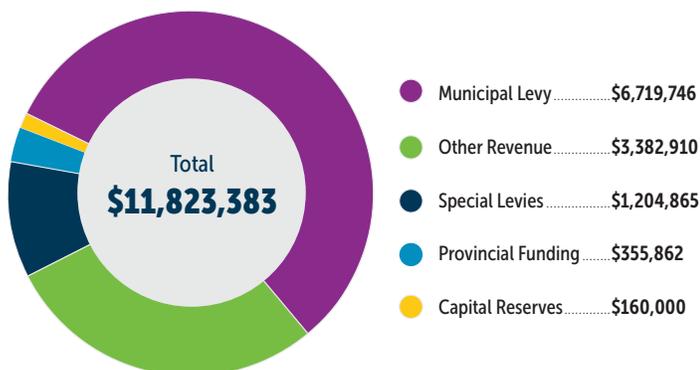
- Staff time has been reallocated among programs and departments for 2023 to best reflect workload, support the completion of strategic priorities and better serve our municipalities and watershed residents.
- An additional 2.94 FTEs have also been added to the budget to support the delivery of septic approval services to additional municipalities and to expand outdoor education and forest school programs to meet increased demand. Both programs are supported through user fees so this increase in staffing level does not impact the municipal levy.
- Following the completion of a number of key infrastructure projects in recent years, only a few modest capital projects are planned for 2023. RVCA’s contributions for these projects will be taken from reserves and will not put additional pressure on the municipal levy.

- Like our member municipalities, salary costs are an expenditure that increases annually. While benefit contribution rates and payroll taxes remained relatively steady over last year, OMERS now allows all non-full-time employees to join the pension plan as of January 1, 2023. This increase in contribution rates has been factored into the budget. RVCA’s budget also accommodates a cost-of-living increase of 3 percent. While this increase is below Ontario’s Consumer Price Index, it enables the RVCA to retain staff while remaining fiscally responsible.

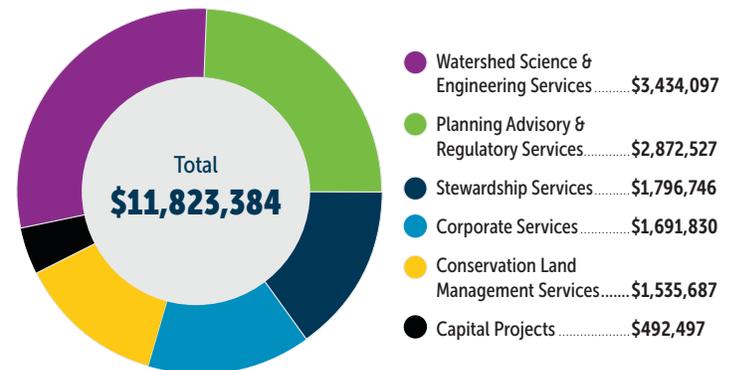
### Revenues

- Provincial funding will increase slightly over last year and is projected to be \$355,862 for 2023.
- Special levies to the City of Ottawa will decrease slightly and are set at \$1,204,865 for 2023.
- Self-generated revenue such as user fees, fundraising and grants is budgeted to decrease slightly and is projected to be \$3,382,910 in 2023 with an additional \$160,000 being transferred from reserves.
- The municipal levy will increase slightly to \$6,719,748 for 2023. This increase represents a 2.5 percent tax increase for municipalities as 1.5 percent will come from new assessment growth in the watershed. This proposed increase reflects the budget direction we received from our Board of Directors and is in keeping with budget direction from the City of Ottawa.

### WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?



### WHERE DOES THE INVESTMENT GO?



## Municipal Levy

Being a municipally-based organization, the foundation of our budget is the municipal levy. However, we are committed to minimizing pressure on the tax base, so despite record-high inflation the RVCA has kept its municipal levy increase to a 2.5 percent tax increase by reducing costs, finding efficiencies and maximizing other revenue sources. While the levy remains the foundation of our budget, other sources make up approximately half our revenue in any given year. This means that for every dollar invested through the municipal levy, the RVCA is able to double that investment to deliver a variety of programs and services in the Rideau watershed. Our other revenue sources include:

- Charging fees for education programs, conservation areas, permits and planning comments
- Getting grants for special projects, students and interns

- Fundraising through our Foundation
- Special levies for specific projects that benefit a particular municipality
- Joint programming and staff sharing with neighbouring conservation authorities
- Landowner contributions for services they receive

### Municipal Levy Apportionment

Based on assessment value, the City of Ottawa will pay almost 91 percent of RVCA's levy in 2023.

This amounts to 6.1 million leaving our other 17 municipalities to share the remaining \$616,000.

Levy costs for these municipalities range from \$1,900 to \$114,000 depending on their assessment.

 Through the RVCA, municipalities and residents have access to expert staff who develop a strong understanding of our local watershed and share their knowledge, expertise and skills with our partners.

## RVCA Services: Serving our Municipalities and Residents

RVCA staff work closely with municipal staff because our work is so interconnected. In fact, it's hard to find a municipal service that our programs don't support either directly or indirectly! For example, our work supports municipal development review, emergency management, water and sewage services, tourism and recreation and of course economic development. And the benefit of a conservation authority is that these programs are delivered consistently across the watershed at a fraction of the cost because our staff are shared among 18 municipalities and sometimes neighbouring Conservation Authorities. This saves money and avoids duplication. RVCA's programs also serve a wide range of public interests and needs benefiting local watershed residents from lake country to agricultural areas to urban communities.

Through the RVCA, municipalities and residents have access to expert staff who develop a strong understanding of our local watershed and share their knowledge, expertise and skills with our partners. In the following pages, you will find information about all of RVCA's programs and services organized into five key areas:

- Watershed Science and Engineering Services
- Planning Advisory & Regulatory Services
- Stewardship Services
- Conservation Land Management Services
- Corporate Services

## Watershed Science & Engineering Services

RVCA collects, monitors and analyses watershed data to gain a better understanding of natural hazards and the health of our watershed. This includes understanding local flood, erosion and slope stability hazards as well as the condition of local lakes and streams, forest and wetland cover as well as fish and aquatic communities.

This knowledge enables RVCA, municipalities and other partners to make informed decisions about how best to manage our shared natural resources, protect people and property from natural hazards and tailor programs and services to meet the evolving needs of our watershed. This information and data are shared with municipalities, partners and the public through online tools, maps, reports, presentations and other accessible means.



### SPECIAL FOR 2023

- Complete a report that evaluates the current condition of the Rideau watershed based on RVCA’s monitoring data and land cover analysis. This report will serve as the foundation of a new Watershed Plan that will identify priority actions to protect and enhance the Rideau watershed and help address the impacts of climate change
- Develop a modernized watershed model that will support flood forecasting and warning and enable climate change assessments of the watershed.
- Initiate a climate change assessment to better understand the impacts of climate change on both the local watershed and RVCA’s programs and services, and support municipalities with their climate change priorities
- Complete draft hazard mapping for the Rideau River (Burritts Rapids to Smiths Falls) and undertake public consultation
- Finalize a 10-year strategy for the completion of hazard mapping studies across the watershed

## WATERSHED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING SERVICES INCLUDE:

### Watershed Reporting

- Report on the health of the watershed through user-friendly, accessible analysis of the RVCA's extensive monitoring programs.
- Identify concerns, trends and priority areas for action at both a subwatershed and catchment scale.
- Engage with municipalities, watershed residents, NGOs and government agencies to focus watershed management actions where they are needed most.

### Drinking Water Source Protection

- Administer the province's Drinking Water Source Protection Program under the *Clean Water Act* in the Mississippi and Rideau watersheds.
- Help protect present and future sources of municipal drinking water from contamination and overuse.
- Work with municipalities, provincial ministries, property owners, businesses, health units and others to implement source protection policies.

### Surface Water Quality Monitoring

- Provide a consistent baseline dataset that can give a general indication of water quality in the watershed.
- Assess the contribution of tributary streams to loadings in the Rideau River and upper watershed lakes.

- Monitor ambient water quality conditions at locations on major tributary streams and watershed lakes.
- Involve local lake residents in monitoring to increase the extent of monitoring activities and provide training to develop consistent methods to ensure data integrity.
- Sample bottom dwelling bugs (benthic invertebrates) to determine water quality and habitat conditions using a biological method which complements water chemistry sampling programs.

### Hydrometric Monitoring and Forecasting

- Collect, manage, analyze and disseminate data and information about the abundance or scarcity of surface water resources within the watershed.
- Issue flood and drought advisories and warnings as needed.
- Expand data availability through the RVCA website.

### Flood and Hazard Mapping

- Study and map hazard lands as defined by the MNRF such as floodplain, steep slopes and unstable soils for effective administration and enforcement of regulations under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

 RVCA collects, monitors and analyses watershed data to gain a better understanding of natural hazards and the health of our watershed.





- Support municipalities with up-to-date mapping of hazard lands for Official Plan and Zoning By-law schedules.
- Refine RVCA's numerical watershed modeling system for use in floodplain hydrology and hydraulic analyses for ungauged watersheds and for investigating the potential impacts of land use and climate change on a watershed scale.

### **Aquatic & Terrestrial Habitat Monitoring**

- Collect information on the physical and biological attributes of surveyed creeks and streams (habitat surveys, fish sampling, thermal regime) through the Stream Characterization program.
- Inventory detailed land cover information to help facilitate land use planning and regulations, ecosystem management and conservation objectives for the RVCA and member municipalities.
- Collect field survey information to assist landowners and municipalities when attempting to understand flooding issues as a result of beaver dam activity.
- Collect information on headwater drainage features through a rapid assessment method characterizing the amount of water, sediment transport, and storage capacity within headwater drainage features.
- Undertake Ontario Stream Assessment Protocol at special Habitat Restoration project sites as a tool for post effective monitoring.

### **Habitat and Wetland Restoration**

- Create, restore and/or enhance fish and wildlife habitats in the watershed.
- Use watershed monitoring data to identify opportunities and at-risk areas.
- Partner with like-minded organizations to secure funds and complete restoration work.
- Conduct post-construction monitoring for five years to measure project success.

### **City Stream Watch**

- Monitor, record and report on the health of five creeks and streams within the City of Ottawa.
- Gather information using a robust network of trained volunteers.
- Collect information about the physical and biological characteristics of creeks and streams following rigorous protocol.
- Use data to guide rehabilitation and enhancement projects.

### **Water, Flood and Erosion Control Structures**

- Operate and maintain water, flood and erosion control structures (berms, dams and weirs).
- Determine whether to maintain, rehabilitate or decommission existing structures.
- Work with municipalities interested in constructing or replacing structures to alleviate flooding or erosion concerns.

## Planning Advisory & Regulatory Services

RVCA plays a key role in development review to help municipalities and the province meet their legislative responsibilities of providing safe drinking water, protecting people from natural hazards and protecting important natural features. Our role includes providing comments to municipalities on *Planning Act* applications and municipal planning documents; issuing permits for development in areas vulnerable to flooding, erosion or unstable slopes or near wetlands, shorelines or watercourses; issuing approvals for septic systems and re-inspecting lakefront septic systems in some municipalities; and regulating activities near sources of municipal drinking water. Staff provide a comprehensive streamlined service to municipalities and applicants that brings together local watershed

knowledge and provincial policies to reduce municipal liability, avoid delays and unnecessary expenses for applicants, and create safe sustainable communities.

**Our role includes providing comments to municipalities on *Planning Act* applications and municipal planning documents.**

### SPECIAL FOR 2023

- Provide septic approval services to seven new municipalities in partnership with MVCA
- Complete updated development review policies for Planning and Section 28 applications
- Work with municipalities to further improve and integrate development review processes and promote pre-consultation with applicants
- Update policies, procedures and guidelines to address any legislative changes
- Bring back information days for municipalities, consultants and developers to discuss development review processes and emerging issues
- Update the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Plan and Technical Assessment Reports



**PLANNING ADVISORY & REGULATORY SERVICES INCLUDE:**

**Site-Specific Plan Review**

- Review planning applications on behalf of the Province and municipalities.
- Provide comments to municipalities on natural hazards (floodplains, steep slopes, unstable soils), natural heritage (wetlands, significant woodlands, significant valley lands) and surface and ground water quality and quantity.
- Staff work closely with applicants to discuss concerns and alternatives and prepare recommendations to the municipal approval authority.
- RVCA’s review and recommendations brings local watershed science, provincial policies and guidelines, and individual municipality needs together to ensure sustainable development.

**Non Site-Specific Plan Input**

- Provide input to municipalities on official plans, comprehensive zoning by-laws, environmental assessments and other special studies in an effort to identify natural hazards and protect and enhance surface and groundwater quality and quantity, wetlands and other natural features.
- Participate on technical advisory committees that oversee the preparation of master servicing studies, community design plans, subwatershed studies and environmental management plans.
- Sharing watershed knowledge and expertise with municipalities through these processes helps build sustainable communities.

**Section 28 Regulations**

- Regulate development, interference with wetlands and alterations to shorelines and watercourses as mandated by the *Conservation Authorities Act*.
- Mapping is prepared to show where development is regulated including hazard lands such as floodplains, steep slopes and unstable soils.
- Staff work closely with property owners to guide them through the permitting process and encourage pre-consultation to avoid unnecessary costs and delays.
- Staff also work with property owners to resolve issues of non-compliance and violations outside of the legal system wherever possible.

**Septic Approvals**

- Provide full review and approval services for private septic systems under Part 8 of the Ontario Building Code. This service is available to interested municipalities and is currently provided in the

City of Ottawa, Tay Valley Township, Town of Carleton Place, Town of Smiths Falls, Township of Beckwith, Township of Lanark Highlands, Township of Mississippi Mills, Township of North Grenville and Village of Westport in partnership with our neighbouring Conservation Authorities.

- Staff work closely with local septic designers and installers as well as property owners when delivering this service.

**Septic Re-Inspection**

- Provide mandatory and discretionary inspection programs for existing private septic systems under the *Ontario Building Code*.
- This service is available to interested municipalities and is currently provided in the Township of Central Frontenac, Township of North Frontenac, Township of Rideau Lakes and Tay Valley Township.
- Staff work closely with property owners, lake associations and other local partners when delivering this service.

**Source Water Regulations**

- Act as Risk Management Inspectors and Officials on behalf of 12 municipalities in the Mississippi and Rideau watersheds. This service implements policies in the *Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Plan* under Part IV of the *Clean Water Act*.
- Screen development applications within vulnerable drinking water areas on behalf of municipalities.



# Stewardship Services

RVCA provides technical and financial support to landowners and other partners to help them undertake projects on private and public property that will improve watershed health. Projects include tree planting, naturalizing shorelines, managing runoff, enhancing habitat and upgrading wells and septic systems. Staff work closely with private landowners, municipalities, lake associations, NGOs, community groups, businesses, government agencies and the public to complete these important on-the-ground projects. Information from RVCA's science and monitoring programs help target areas and projects that provide the most benefit. Completing landowner stewardship projects across the watershed helps improve water quality, increase forest and wetland cover, reduce flooding and erosion and increase climate change resiliency.

## STEWARDSHIP SERVICES INCLUDE:

### Tree Planting

- Deliver a quality, full-service tree planting program to rural landowners that plants more than 200,000 trees a year on private land.
- Provide significant cost subsidies through external funding.



- Provide technical advice on woodlot management and best practices for landowners.
- Review conservation areas' coniferous plantations for thinning opportunities and potential revenue generation.

### Butternut Recovery

- Help butternut persist on the landscape through the development of healthy, disease-tolerant seedlings.
- Locate healthy, disease-tolerant butternuts on private lands.
- Collect seeds to grow seedlings for distribution to landowners free of charge.
- Give away up to 2,000 seedlings per year to landowners.





## SPECIAL FOR 2023

- Celebrate the planting of our 7 millionth tree through our tree planting program
- Plant our first trees under Canada’s 2 Billion Tree Program
- Officially launch the Lanark chapter of ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) in partnership with the County of Lanark and Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority
- Work with the Motts Mills Steering Committee to restore and enhance a second section of the provincially significant Hutton Marsh located upstream of Motts Mills Conservation Area
- Help municipal partners recover from the 2022 Derecho storm by planting trees and shrubs where directed
- Acquire new lands to deliver additional Species at Risk projects
- Complete shoreline naturalization project at Last Duel Park in partnership with the Town of Perth

### Rural Clean Water

- Provide financial and technical assistance to farmers and rural landowners undertaking projects to protect and improve water quality in the watershed.
- Address erosion control and reduce the amount of nutrients, bacteria and microorganisms entering groundwater and surface water.
- Provide financial support through cost-share grants.
- Promote and support best management practices that address both surface and groundwater issues.

### Shoreline Naturalization

- Increase the amount of natural shoreline cover across the watershed.
- Provide a simple and affordable option for landowners to complete naturalization projects on their shoreline by providing free advisory site visits, customized planting plans, subsidized native trees and shrubs, project management and monitoring and assistance with planting installation.
- Work closely with municipalities, Parks Canada and RVCA regulatory staff to facilitate planting requirements for planning and permit applications when needed.
- Fundraise for special large-scale projects and stewardship targeting.

### Beaver Management

- Track nuisance beaver calls, distribute beaver management information to landowners and municipalities and assist with advice on managing beavers and dams
- In certain circumstances, provide monitoring and coordinate trapping and dam breaching for municipalities addressing wide-spread beaver activity causing flood damage.

### Ontario Rural Wastewater Centre

- Develop and teach courses for septic installers, designers and regulators looking to advance their knowledge of design, inspection, and repairing on-site systems.
- Ensure best practices, technology and innovations are being used across the industry.
- Manage and maintain a demonstration site at Baxter Conservation Area that provides hands-on learning through displays of a wide variety of wastewater treatment technologies.



## Conservation Land Management Services

RVCA accepts land donations to protect valuable features like forests, wetlands and shorelines in perpetuity. Staff manage these properties so natural features are left to perform natural functions like slowing runoff, filtering pollutants, reducing flooding and erosion and providing habitat. Some properties are developed into public conservation areas to encourage residents to spend time outdoors and develop an

appreciation for nature. Two conservation areas also offer outdoor education programs to get children outside and teach them about the importance of our natural environment and the need to protect it for future generations. RVCA's conservation areas are valued by local communities and municipalities as they provide affordable recreation, tourism and education for local residents and visitors.

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**CONSERVATION LAND MANAGEMENT SERVICES INCLUDE:**

**Conservation Lands**

- Accept land donations to protect high-quality natural areas in perpetuity for their invaluable environmental and ecological services and public benefits.
- Manage 67 properties (8,300+ acres) of critical green infrastructure.
- Develop management plans for each property to ensure strategic land use planning and efficient use of resources.

**Conservation Areas**

- Welcome more than 270,000 visitors annually to 11 public conservation areas.
- Provide nature-based recreation and visitor experiences through trails, picnic shelters, beaches, boat launches, docks and lookout points.

- Connect people to nature and ensure people of all backgrounds, abilities and circumstances can access natural areas and the Rideau River system.

**Outdoor Education**

- Deliver high quality, curriculum-based education programs, forest schools, day camps and group programs that promote the values of conservation and environmental stewardship.
- Maintain quality facilities and interpretive centres at Baxter and Foley Mountain Conservation Areas where these programs and camps are offered.
- Incorporate new technology into education programs to enhance learning experiences.
- Encourage families and children to be active in outdoor play all-year-round.

**SPECIAL FOR 2023**

- Retrofit Interpretive Centre washrooms at Baxter Conservation Area to make them more accessible
- Complete a new boardwalk bridge at Baxter Conservation Area that prioritizes inclusive accessibility features
- Celebrate the completion of a new accessible pedestrian bridge at Chapman Mills Conservation Area
- Incorporate Forest School permanently into the outdoor education programs at Baxter and Foley Mountain Conservation Areas
- Install permanent story trail signs at Baxter and Foley Mountain Conservation Areas
- Complete Conservation Area Management Plans for four new properties donated to the Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation



# Corporate Services

The RVCA is a public sector body committed to operating in an open, accountable and transparent manner. Working with all levels of government, residents, businesses and community partners the RVCA delivers programs and services that conserve, restore and responsibly manage land and water resources while balancing human, environmental and economic interests. As the needs of our watershed change, RVCA remains agile in the face of increasing growth pressure, fiscal constraints and climate change impacts. Through strategic planning, program reviews and consultation with partners and stakeholders, the RVCA is focused on modernizing our programs to ensure they are effective and cost-efficient at meeting the current and future needs of our watershed.

## CORPORATE SERVICES INCLUDE:

### Management, Finance & Human Resources

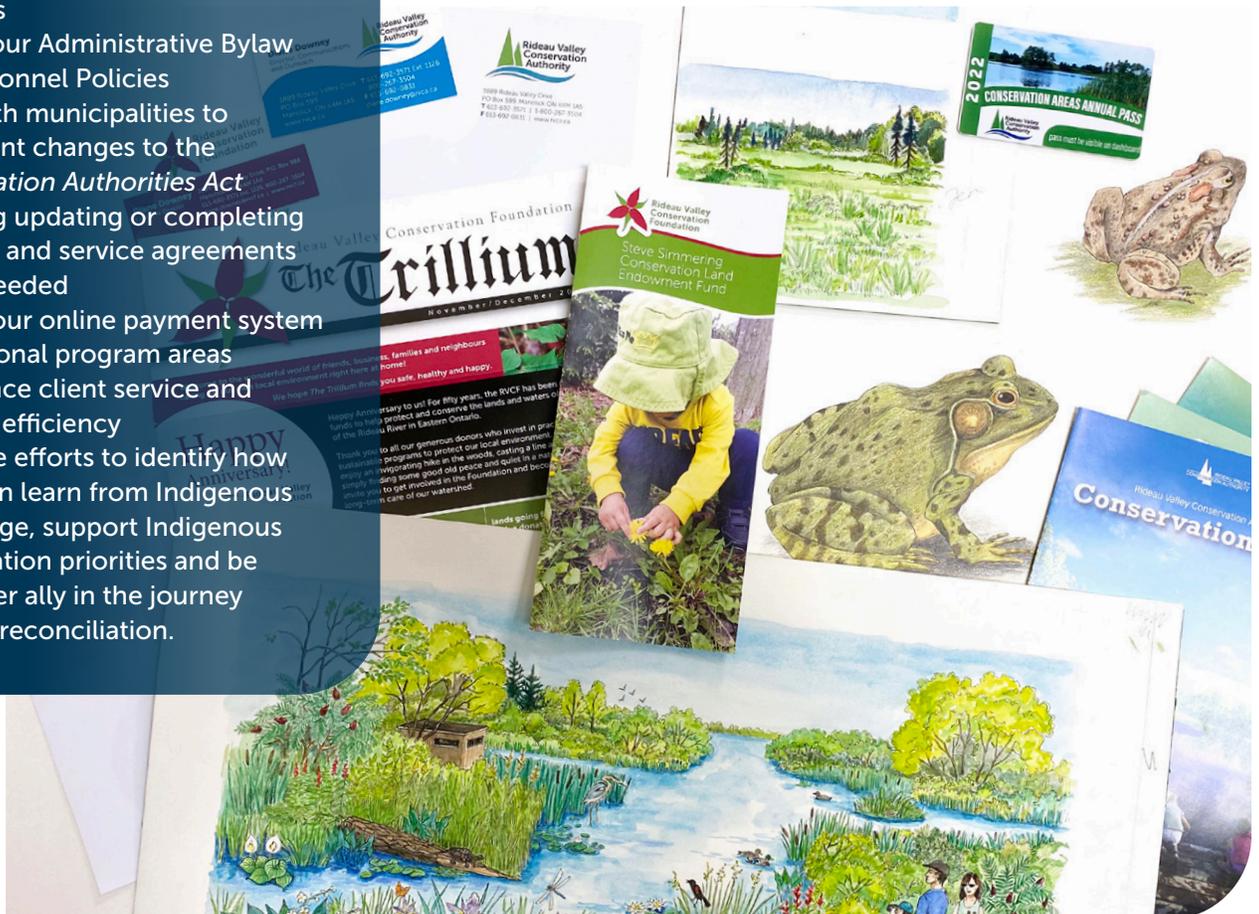
- Provide overall management of the RVCA through work planning, budgeting, financial reporting, policy development, issues management, municipal and government relations, partnership development, employee management and payroll.
- Serve the needs of the Board of Directors (training, meetings, agendas and minutes).
- Operate the RVCA efficiently, effectively and safely for staff and patrons while providing excellent customer service.

### Communications and Outreach

- Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of RVCA services, programs and initiatives.
- Build effective relationships with municipal, provincial and federal levels of government as well as other stakeholders and partners.
- Maintain a positive, proactive relationship with watershed media to ensure a high level of accurate, comprehensive regional media coverage.

## SPECIAL FOR 2023

- Provide orientation and training to our newly appointed Board of Directors
- Update our Administrative Bylaw and Personnel Policies
- Work with municipalities to implement changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* including updating or completing program and service agreements where needed
- Expand our online payment system to additional program areas to enhance client service and increase efficiency
- Continue efforts to identify how RVCA can learn from Indigenous knowledge, support Indigenous conservation priorities and be a stronger ally in the journey towards reconciliation.



- Provide communication support through communication planning, media relations and plain language services.
- Distribute corporate information through annual reports, *Around the Rideau* newsletter, municipal information sheets, program brochures, displays, media releases, website, social media and public events/workshops.

**GIS and Information Management**

- Create and manage high-quality databases of watershed data and provide high-quality technical mapping to help staff make sound and informed watershed decisions.
- Support flood and hazard mapping studies, analysis and delineation as well as the development of catchment and subwatershed reports.
- Create tools to ensure the data is readily accessible to staff, consultants and the public.

**Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation**

- Support the RVCA in its conservation efforts by raising much-needed funds for conservation programs and services.
- Solicit donations from corporate and private donors, manage multiple special fundraising campaigns, apply for grants and administer compensation projects.
- Focus efforts on raising funds for land care, river care and conservation education.

As the needs of our watershed change, RVCA remains agile in the face of increasing growth pressure, fiscal constraints and climate change impacts.





## QUESTIONS?

Sommer Casgrain-Robertson, General Manager

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