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TO: Chair and Members of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
DESTINATAIRE : Président et membre du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

FROM: Will McDonald, Director, Climate
Change and Resiliency, Strategic
Initiatives Department [Click here to enter
text.](#)

Contact : Tara Redpath, Planner III
(Acting), Climate Mitigation
613-580-2424 x16822
Tara.Redpath@ottawa.ca

EXPÉDITEUR : Will McDonald,
Directeur, Services des changements
climatiques et de la résilience, Direction
générale des initiatives stratégiques

Personne ressource : Tara Redpath,
Urbaniste III (par Intérim), Atténuation
des changement climatiques
613-580-2424 poste 16822
Tara.Redpath@ottawa.ca

DATE: October 3, 2024

3 octobre 2024

FILE NUMBER: ACS2024-SI-CCR-0017

SUBJECT: **Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program – 2023 Annual Report**

OBJET : **Programme d'assainissement de l'eau en milieu rural d'Ottawa – Rapport
annuel 2023**

PURPOSE

This memorandum provides the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee with the 2023 annual report for the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program (ORCWP), which is a grant program administered by South Nation Conservation. The 20223 ORCWP budget was \$200,000 and funded through a conservation authority special levy.

BACKGROUND

The ORCWP provides cost-sharing grants to farmers and other rural property owners to adopt best management practices that protect Ottawa's streams, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. The program is required to report annually to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

In 2023, grants were available to support best management practices in five categories:

- Nutrient management
- Soil protection
- Water management
- Land stewardship
- Education and innovation

The program is delivered in partnership with the three local conservation authorities: South Nation, Rideau Valley, and Mississippi Valley. It is funded through a special levy from the City to South Nation Conservation to provide overall program coordination and grant payments. Interested farmers and rural property owners apply through the Landowner Resource Centre.

The Program Committee provides direction and advice to staff. Committee members also serve on watershed Review Committees to review and approve projects.

The 2021-2025 program renewal was approved by Council in May 2021, based on a review of the 2016-2020 Program [[ASC2021-PIE-EDP-0013](#)]. Conservation authority partners and City staff began implementing the recommendations from this 5-year review in 2022. Further program details can be found on ottawa.ca/cleanwater.

DISCUSSION

The ORCWP helps farmers and other rural landowners with cost-sharing grants to undertake projects that improve surface water and groundwater quality. Properties within Ottawa's urban boundary are eligible for agricultural, well decommissioning, and septic projects types. Applications were accepted starting in May and throughout the summer and fall of 2023.

The 2023 program was promoted through online and community newspaper advertisements, social media, e-newsletters, and by contractors and partner agencies. In-person public fairs and events began resuming following several years of COVID-19 pandemic-related event cancellations. Some events continue to be held online, and there remain fewer in-person options than in pre-pandemic years. The Program was promoted at the Ottawa Valley Farm Show held in Ottawa in March. The landowner stewardship update for South Nation Conservation's Municipal Day featured the ORCWP.

Summary of 2023 Grants

Funding for the ORCWP is provided to landowners upon project completion. In 2023, 55 projects were approved worth a total of \$140,848 in grants. Of these, 43 projects were completed in 2023, receiving \$66,614. An additional 13 projects that were approved between 2017-2022 were completed in 2023, receiving \$68,205 in grants. In total, 56 projects were completed in 2023 and awarded \$134,819 in grants (Table 1). Sixteen projects approved between 2017-2022 will be completed in 2024, worth a total of \$100,565 in grants (see Supporting Documentation Table 3).

The most popular project types in 2023 were related to forest management plans (24 projects approved), erosion control (12 projects approved), and watercourse buffers / natural windbreaks (10 projects approved). These projects received 83 per cent of the total grant funds awarded in 2023.

A new project type for wetland restoration was introduced in 2022 following the 2021-2025 program renewal. In 2023, two projects were approved to enhance wetland habitat near a tributary of Stevens Creek and in the Carp River watershed. The wetland designs for both projects were prepared by Ducks Unlimited Canada in consultation with the conservation authorities and the landowners.

All projects approved, or re-approved, in 2023 are in the City's rural Wards (Figure 1), representing farm and non-farm properties of a range of sizes. All projects were

identified and administered by the conservation authorities, with 10 projects approved in partnership with Green Acres, the City's rural tree planting program.

Table 1: Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program 2023 Summary

Project Type	Grants approved in 2023*		Grants completed in 2023**	
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount
Manure storage & treatment	0	\$0	0	\$0
Washwater treatment	0	\$0	0	\$0
Nutrient management / precision farming	1	\$2,000	2	\$4,000
Watercourse fencing	0	\$0	0	\$0
Erosion control	12	\$88,530	11	\$79,595
Tile outlet erosion control	0	\$0	0	\$0
Cover crops	1	\$900	1	\$900
Clean water diversion	0	\$0	0	\$0
Tile drain control structures	0	\$0	0	\$0
Chemical or fuel storage	0	\$0	0	\$0
Well decommissioning	5	\$11,175	2	\$3,375
Septic system repair or replacement	0	\$0	0	\$0
Watercourse buffers & natural windbreaks	10	\$13,705	13	\$25,610
Land retirement incentive	0	\$0	2	\$1,800
Forest and wetland management plans	24	\$14,539	24	\$14,539
Wetland restoration	2	\$10,000	1	\$5,000
Educational initiatives	0	\$0	0	\$0
Innovative projects	0	\$0	0	\$0
TOTAL	55	\$140,848	56	\$134,819

* An additional 13 projects approved between 2017-2022 were completed in 2023.

** Includes grants that were approved between 2017-2022.

Program Outcomes

As a result of the 56 projects completed in 2023:

- 270 metres of streambank were protected from erosion and an additional 3,710 metres have a new watercourse buffer;
- 30,104 trees were planted along shorelines or in natural windbreaks;
- 57 hectares of farmland have improved nutrient management using GPS precision farming techniques;
- 7.3 hectares of farmland have been protected from erosion through cover crops;
- 578 hectares of forest were protected through forest management plans;
- The risks of surface and groundwater contamination at 2 sites have been reduced through well decommissioning;
- 4.9 hectares of sensitive land have been retired from agricultural production; and
- 0.4 hectares of wetland has been restored and will contribute to reduced flooding and improved wildlife habitat.

In addition to the \$134,819 awarded in grants in 2023, landowners contributed \$155,687 for a total of \$290,506 invested in rural land stewardship.

Financial Overview

The budget for 2023 was \$460,795. This was funded by amounts carried forward from projects approved in 2022 and a \$200,000 special levy request made by South Nation Conservation Authority (Table 2).

Total expenses in 2023 were \$178,136, including grants and program delivery expenses. The remaining balance of \$282,659 includes \$173,365 encumbered to approved projects to be completed in 2024. The remaining surplus of \$109,294 is available for 2024 grants.

Table 2: Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program 2023 Budget

Revenue	
2022 Carry-forward	\$260,795
2023 Ottawa Special Levy	\$200,000
Total Revenue	\$460,795
Expenses	
ORCWP Grants – completed in 2023	\$134,819
Program Coordination, Communication, Administration	\$43,317
Total Expenses	\$178,136
Balance	\$282,659

CONCLUSION

The Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program benefits rural property owners and the environment. The program enables Ottawa farmers and other rural property owners to adopt best management practices that protect Ottawa’s streams, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. ORCWP benefits from the advice of representatives of agricultural organizations, provincial agencies and community members through the Program Committee, as well as ongoing staff involvement.

A total of \$290,506 was invested in the stewardship of rural land and water in 2023, through \$134,819 awarded in grants and an additional \$155,687 invested by landowners. Climate Change and Resiliency will continue to work with program partners to deliver the Grant Program in 2024 and will report back in 2025.

Will McDonald

Director, Climate Change and Resiliency

CC: Tara Redpath, Climate Mitigation Branch

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Table 3: Projects approved and completed in 2023

Project Type	Approved Grants (2023)		Approved Grants (2017-2022)		Grants Paid (2023)		Grants to be Completed in 2024	
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number	Amount
Manure storage & treatment	0	\$0	1	\$15,000	0	\$0	1	\$15,000
Washwater treatment	0	\$0	1	\$5,000	0	\$0	1	\$5,000
Nutrient management	1	\$2,000	3	\$4,800	2	\$4,000	2	\$2,800
Watercourse fencing	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Erosion control	12	\$88,530	16	\$120,000	11	\$79,595	17	\$127,500
Tile outlet erosion control	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Cover crops	1	\$900	0	\$0	1	\$900	0	\$0
Clean water diversion	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Tile drain control structures	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Chemical or fuel storage	0	\$0	1	\$1,000	0	\$0	0	\$0
Well decommissioning	5	\$11,175	2	\$5,260	2	\$3,375	5	\$13,065
Septic system repair or replacement	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Watercourse buffers & windbreaks	10	\$13,705	3	\$13,693	13	\$25,610	0	\$0
Land retirement incentive	0	\$0	2	\$1,800	2	\$1,800	0	\$0
Forest & wetland management plans	24	\$14,539	0	\$0	24	\$14,539	0	\$0
Wetland restoration	2	\$10,000	1	\$5,000	1	\$5,000	2	\$10,000
Educational initiatives	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
Innovative projects	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0
TOTAL	55	\$140,848	30	\$171,553	53	\$134,819	30	\$173,365

Figure 1: Projects approved, or re-approved, in 2023

