



Some of our efforts on watershed security in Ontario include:

A Map of Watershed Management in South-central Ontario:

Found on our home page under Recent Key Documents, this map depicts that Ontario has about 40 different, competing, and inequitable approaches to watershed management that should be harmonized.

We Need to Talk about Watershed Security: This Discussion Paper, also found on our home page, outlines the history of how Ontario's approach to watershed management went from world-leading to being diluted and fragmented, and suggests 21 topics for extensive discussion on a new provincial direction for an Outcomes-based Framework for Watershed Security.

It also provides a draft **Municipal Charter for Watershed Security**, suggesting that municipalities are the best level of government to integrate land use and watershed planning. This is because separating them as we have in the past is a false distinction that has led to significant reductions in natural heritage, biodiversity, water quality, and overall watershed health and resilience, as well as increases in erosion, flooding, and economic risk.

**Water is Life.
Let's act like it.**

The Ontario Headwaters Institute is an Ontario corporation with charitable status whose mission is to promote watershed security.

Watershed security, the sound protection of our aquatic resources, safeguards regional ecological integrity, social wellbeing, and economic vitality, and is best protected by provincial legislation and its implementation, integrated land use and watershed planning at the municipal level, and sound stewardship practices.

Securing a watershed's core ecological features and functions, such as its natural heritage, flow characteristics, and water quality, maintains the ecological goods and services that in turn sustain us.

This extends from the undulating hues of our upland forests to our wetlands, meadows, lakes, rivers, agricultural lands, and receiving waters, including the Great Lakes.

We invite individuals and organizations to subscribe to our e-mail newsletter by e-mailing as us below.

Please visit our website for more information.

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What is Watershed Security?

While Watershed security is the basis of regional ecological integrity, current reports indicate that watershed security is deteriorating across much of the province, particularly in South-central Ontario.

Given increasing population and development, as well as the escalating climate and biodiversity crises, it may get worse before it gets better – unless we take action.

Key actions to protect and maintain watershed security include:

- Revitalizing Ontario's approaches to watershed management;
- Integrating land use and watershed planning at the municipal level; and;
- Embracing a commitment to sustainable development, including in our land stewardship practices.

Watershed Security starts in our Headwaters

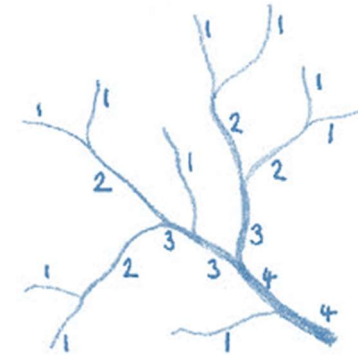
While we are a full-watershed organization, we maintain our initial focus on headwaters as they and their catchment areas:

- Drain the majority of the surface area of a watershed;
- Comprise the majority of stream length in a watershed;
- Contribute the majority of flow to most watercourses;
- Help regulate the flow of surface and groundwater, with implications for downstream erosion, flooding, & water budgets;
- Furnish key habitat for many species. In fact, more species require headwaters at some point than any other type of habitat; and,
- Nurture downstream ecosystems by providing significant portions of a watershed's nutrients, organic material, and sediment, thereby providing the base of a watershed's biodiversity and resilience.

What are Headwaters?

OHI defines headwaters as:

- Surface collection areas including ephemeral and intermittent streams, groundwater infiltration areas, and sub-surface flows;
- Areas of groundwater discharge and upwelling;
- Vernal ponds, spring-fed ponds, and wetlands; and,
- First, second, and sometimes third-order streams as shown below.



The Need for New Approaches

Across South-central Ontario, the area with most of Ontario's population, historic development tended to cluster near major bodies of water. As a result of that trend and past practices, the lower sections of many of the area's watersheds have become degraded, often leaving upland headwater areas as natural reservoirs of regional forests, wetlands, niche habitats, agricultural land, and water quality & quantity.

Now, as development intensifies in upstream areas, we need new approaches to provincial watershed management, to integrate land use and watershed planning at the municipal level, and a more enlightened approach to sustainable development, including for lands in private ownership.