



Some of our efforts on watershed security in Ontario include:

**Watershed Management in South-central Ontario:**

Found on our home page under Recent Key Documents, this drawing depicts the province's six different approaches to watershed management, just in South-central Ontario. The need to changing this fragmented approach is one reason for the effort below.

**Ontario Needs An Outcomes-based Framework for Watershed**

**Security:** As the OHI perceives that the province's varied approaches to waterside management have become diluted, fragmented, and ineffective, we recommend that Ontario shift to an outcomes-based framework for watershed security.

Not only would this safeguard our watersheds, biodiversity, and public health, it would deliver what the Ontario government has been talking about since 2018: stream-lined, more effective environmental management.

An introduction and links to a series of papers recommending specific actions can be found on our homepage.

We are available for presentations on any aspect of the framework to agencies, community groups, and businesses.

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

The Ontario Headwaters Institute is a provincial 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, is best protected by revitalizing provincial legislation and its implementation, integrating land use and watershed planning at the municipal level, and revitalizing the roll of conservation authorities.

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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## About Watershed Security

While watershed security is the basis of regional ecological integrity, current reports indicate that it 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:

- Restoring the provincial vision to protect our watersheds;
- Integrating Land Use and Watershed Planning at the municipal level; and,
- Reaffirming a revitalized and expanded role for conservation authorities.

## Watershed Security starts in our Headwaters

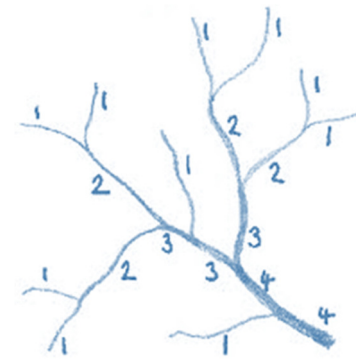
While the Headwaters Institute is a full-watershed organization, we retain our initial passion for headwaters as they and their catchments:

- 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.