



Environment

Niagara is known for its unique geography and environment. To ensure a sustainable future, it is essential for residents to see their role in protecting and restoring our natural assets; in reducing and recycling household waste; and in responding to climate impacts.

Happening Now

- Through development of Niagara's new Official Plan, the Niagara Region is examining climate change effects in Niagara, and policies to support mitigation and adaptation in our community. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) is at the table, and similarly is looking at climate effects in policy and planning.
- The Mood Walks program promotes the role of parks and recreation in mental health and well-being. It is led by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Ontario, in partnership with Hike Ontario, Conservation Ontario, the provincial government and local social service agencies. Local Mood Walks participants include CMHA Niagara Branch, the Niagara Bruce Trail Club, the Niagara Region Mental Health Program, and Brock University.
- Through Geospatial Niagara, members of the Niagara community have submitted an expression of interest to the Canadian National Committee for Geoparks for Niagara to establish itself as a UNESCO Global Geopark. The proposed name, Ohnia:kara is the Mowhawk word for 'neck between two bodies of water'. Already, across all 12 municipalities of the region, 78 geosites of geological, environmental, or cultural interest, have been identified.
- The Niagara River offers several ecological, recreational and economic beneficial water uses, such as power generation, tourism, recreation; is a source of drinking water; and supports over 1200 species. The work of the Niagara River Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan (RAP) is progressing. Significant improvements have been made in water quality, habitat, and the clean-up of contaminated sediments.
- The Niagara River Ramsar Binational Steering Committee is pursuing a transboundary Ramsar Site designation. This would commit, under the global Ramsar Convention, Canada and the US to continue to work together to ensure advancement of environmental progress achieved in the past 50 years. In October, 2019, the Niagara River (US) Corridor was officially designated as a Ramsar Site (Wetland of International Importance).

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What's Emerging

- Understanding is increasing about the important role Conservation Authorities play in Ontario, regarding protection of watersheds and their natural features. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) encompasses the entire Niagara region, 21% of the City of Hamilton and 25% of Haldimand County. The Niagara Peninsula is one of the most complex watersheds in the province. Its climate, biodiversity and growing zones are unique in North America. The Peninsula includes lands drained by the Niagara River, Twenty Mile Creek, the Welland River and the Welland Canal; is nestled between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario; and is traversed by the Niagara Escarpment.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the connection between mental wellness promotion and people in our community having access to enjoy outdoor spaces.
- Support continues to grow for monitoring and supporting restoration improvements in Niagara River Remedial Action Plan beneficial use impairments, in the areas of: restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption; degradation of fish and wildlife populations; beach closings; and degradation of benthos (benthic invertebrates, a source of food for fish and aquatic birds).
- The Niagara Food Security Network is building its foundation, with over 100 individuals and community organizations working together to make Niagara more food secure for everyone. A Food Resources in Niagara webpage and Niagara Food Assets map are now available.
- Taking a smart growth approach to engaging the community in land use planning in Niagara is being encouraged. The intent is to balance perspectives and enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of the process.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Encourage residents in Niagara to better appreciate green spaces and nature-based solutions for their value as green infrastructure, which is part of a healthy and sustainable community.
- Engage residents in local planning for improved resource management and green space protection and restoration. This will lead to improved decision-making that is based on diverse ideas and opinions.
- Inspire more citizen science in Niagara, in order to build base awareness, a feeling of ownership, and to complement local decision-making.
- Share knowledge, and build consensus about the state of the environment in Niagara.

Indicators Measures for these indicators can be found at: www.livinginniagarareport.com

- Air
- Biodiversity

- Climate Impacts
- Land

- Waste
- Water