



Photo: Neil Hester

When creeks rise, Conservation Halton is there

When creeks rise to the top of their banks, especially in early spring, they sometimes overflow, causing floods. During these times, Conservation Halton is watching and issuing flood advisories as it has done for almost 50 years now.

Conservation Halton is responsible for flood control and warning in its watershed that includes Burlington, Oakville, Milton and parts of Halton Hills, Mississauga and Hamilton. Four water management reservoirs located at Kelso, Mountsberg, Scotch Block and Hilton Falls were built in the 1960s and 70s to reduce flooding. These

dams are operated to hold excess water at this time of year and to augment creek flows during dry periods.

The Halton watershed covers about 1,000 square kilometres of land drained by 17 creeks that flow into Lake Ontario. Conservation Halton monitors these streams closely during the flooding season by sending out river watch crews to selected creek locations that are more prone to flooding and advising municipal partners on the observed flood conditions. Conservation Halton issues flood alerts and warnings to municipalities, schools and the media so

emergency responses can be implemented quickly. Flood alerts often include warnings that rivers and creek banks are very slippery and when combined with cold, fast moving water can be quite hazardous to children.

The most severe flooding on record in Ontario occurred in 1954 when Hurricane Hazel passed through southern Ontario. Eighty-one people died and damages were estimated at over \$180 million in today's dollars. Following this, a flood forecasting and warning system was established in Ontario. The system is managed by a committee of representatives from the Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Conservation Authorities and Environment Canada. The committee monitors watershed conditions, as well as issues flood messages.

As major floods are reported world-wide, Conservation Halton continues to ensure that the hazards and risks of flooding are reduced. The local environmental agency also administers regulations that limit and control development on flood prone lands.

The public can participate by purchasing rain gauges and submitting rain logs. Conditions and more information are posted on the Conservation Halton Web site.

Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program helps protect our water sources

Since 1994, over 3,000 urban and rural landowners have shared information about their individual roles in the protection and enhancement of locally significant, wetlands, uplands and riparian areas.

Over 350 landowners have made verbal agreements to consider the effects of their land management practices on the health of the watershed.

By the end of 2003, over 300 landowners had become involved in various rehabilita-

tion projects, which include establishing riparian buffers, enhancing wetland and upland habitat, fencing cattle from creeks, constructing manure storage facilities, and controlling erosion.

Financial assistance for rehabilitation

activity may be available to landowners depending on the availability and source of funds. Approval of an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is encouraged and may be required depending on the source of financial assistance. To be eligible, landowners must enter into a 10-year written agreement.

For more information, please contact the Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program at (905) 648-4427 exts. 164, 165 or (905) 336-1158 ext. 263.

Before



After



The Grindstone Creek water quality project (before and after fencing and planting) is one of many rehabilitation projects achieved through the Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program.