

The Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan

GLWCAP

Update

The Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan (GLWCAP) plays a key role in ensuring the conservation of Great Lakes wetlands through coordinating, implementing and reporting on wetland activities of both government agencies and non-government organizations in Ontario. When it began in 1994, GLWCAP was a new way of doing business through agreeing on priorities and the aggressive pursuit of wetland conservation opportunities under existing programs, rather than a new program with a designated or collective pool of resources. It remains that way today.

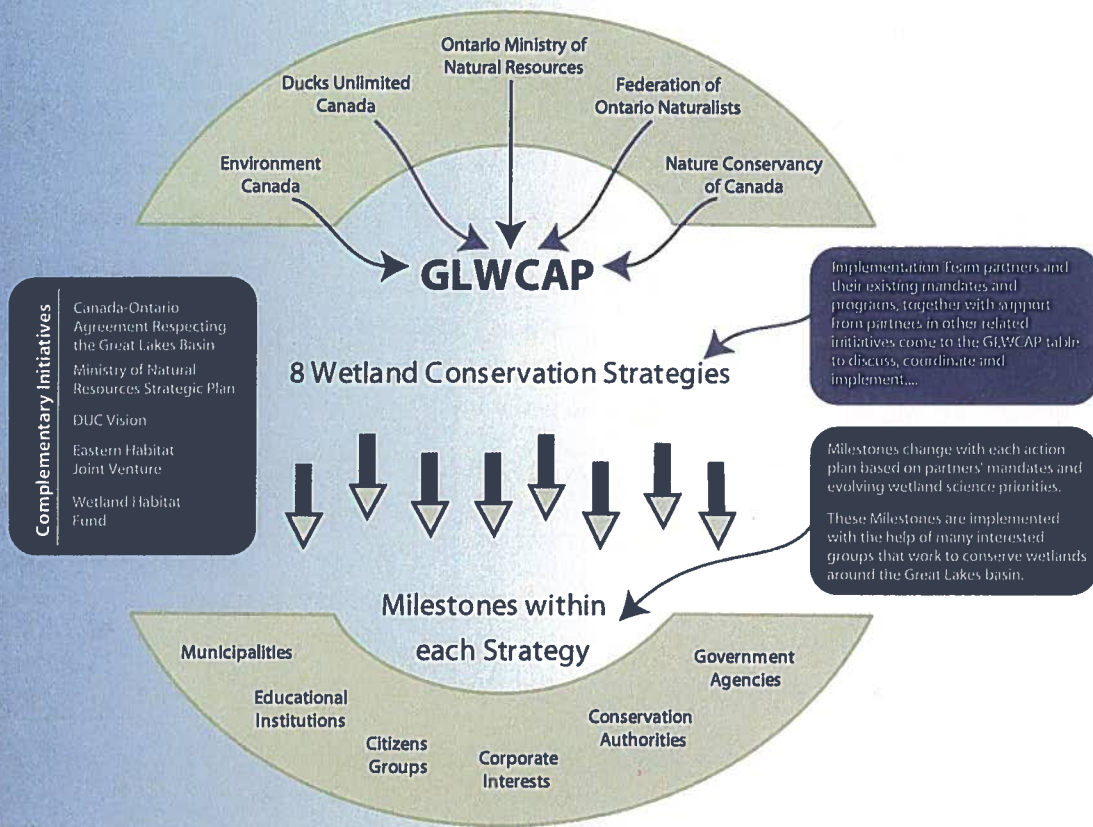
GLWCAP is organized into eight long-term strategies that encompass all aspects of wetland conservation – from physical protection and rehabilitation, to periodic reviews and improvements to wetland legislation, policies and guidelines, and increasing awareness of wetland functions and values. Within each strategy are a series of milestones, or specific actions that when completed, represent continued progress toward GLWCAP's wetland conservation goals.

The overall direction and coordination of GLWCAP is overseen by an Implementation Team including representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Environment Canada (EC), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). These organizations along with other GLWCAP partners, including a variety of agencies, interests and community stakeholders, take responsibility to collectively deliver distinct projects, milestones and strategies that best complement their strengths and interests.

GLWCAP Strategies

1. Increase Public Awareness and Commitment to Protecting Wetlands
2. Improve Wetland Science, Data and Monitoring
3. Secure Wetlands
4. Create, Reclaim, Rehabilitate and Manage Wetlands
5. Strengthen Legislation, Policies, Agreements and Compliance
6. Strengthen Local Planning and Commitment to Wetland Conservation
7. Improve Coordination
8. Evaluate the Program

GLWCAP - A Model of Cooperation



Why Wetlands?

Many Great Lakes residents have gained appreciation for the importance of wetlands simply by spending time in them. Quietly observing wetland wildlife in a local marsh or swamp evokes tacit understanding of some of the functions and values that wetlands contribute to the quality of life of humans and other living creatures.

Unfortunately, in spite of their recognized values, wetland loss and degradation across the Great Lakes basin continues at an alarming rate. Scientists, educators, naturalists, and policy makers must coordinate efforts to ensure that wetlands are protected well into the future.

Wetland Functions and Values

- habitat for fish and wildlife, including species at risk
- flood attenuation
- erosion control
- base flow maintenance
- carbon storage
- water quality improvement through nutrient cycling and filtration of sediments
- recharge of groundwater supplies
- recreation - canoeing, fishing, hunting, bird watching, hiking
- harvesting - hunting, fishing, forestry, nut, berry and grain collection

Highlights of GLWCAP Phase One (1994 - 2000)

GLWCAP partners:

- produced and distributed numerous fact sheets, brochures and manuals to promote wetland conservation;
- recommended a suite of coastal wetlands health indicators through the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference;
- secured 5,000 hectares of wetland through acquisition;
- rehabilitated/created over 6,000 hectares of wetland;
- incorporated wetland conservation and protection in Remedial Action Plans prepared for the 15 Canadian and binational Great Lakes Areas of Concern, where possible; and
- documented progress and released two well-received GLWCAP Highlights Reports, in 1997 and 2000 (www.on.ec.gc.ca/wetlands/onlinepublications-e.cfm)



GLWCAP incorporated in the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA)

The COA represents a commitment by the governments of Canada and Ontario to restore and protect the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. Renewed in 2002, the current Agreement outlines how the two governments will cooperate and coordinate their efforts to achieve this commitment.

The Agreement includes an overarching agreement to stand in perpetuity, along with four annexes, each of which specifies five-year goals for the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. The Lakewide Management Annex includes a commitment for Canada and Ontario to "implement the Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan". GLWCAP Phase Two will follow the lifespan of this COA Annex – beginning in 2002 and wrapping up in 2007.



GLWCAP Timeline

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| 1991 | Release of the Federal Wetlands Policy |
| 1993 | Launch of the 25-year Strategic Plan for Wetlands of the Great Lakes Basin |
| 1994 | Endorsement of the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) by the federal and provincial governments |
| 1994 | Announcement of GLWCAP through the signing of COA |
| 1994 | Initiation of GLWCAP Phase One implementation |
| 1996 | Release of the Natural Heritage Policies under the Ontario Provincial Policy Statement |
| 1997 | First GLWCAP Highlights Report |
| 2000 | Evaluation and wrap-up of GLWCAP Phase One |
| 2000 | Initiation of planning for GLWCAP Phase Two |
| 2000 | Release of Ducks Unlimited's Vision |
| 2000 | Second GLWCAP Highlights Report |
| 2001 | Release of the Report of the Auditor General containing positive review of GLWCAP |
| 2002 | Renewal of COA, with the inclusion of GLWCAP |
| 2002 | Finalization of Milestones for GLWCAP Phase Two |
| 2003 | Third GLWCAP Highlights Report |

GLWCAP Phase Two

In 2000, the first Action Plan wrapped up while planning for a second Action Plan began. Development of GLWCAP Phase Two involved evaluating the previous Action Plan to assess progress towards the completion of each milestone (see GLWCAP Highlights Report (1997-2000)). The relevance of each milestone in today's wetland conservation environment was also considered, given changes in policy and scientific understanding since the writing of the first GLWCAP work plan. Phase Two does not present new strategies, as there will always be work to be done to further wetland conservation under these broad areas. It does present new and modified milestones to guide continued progress under each strategy.



Fragrant White Water Lily, Canadian Wildlife Service

Highlights of GLWCAP Phase Two Milestones:

- Continue to publicize wetland values to society, to water, and to wildlife in order to encourage wetlands conservation.
- Investigate the science of wetlands including: the relationship between wetland hydrology and groundwater discharge/recharge, features that define faunal habitat preferences, wetland function within a landscape mosaic considering hydrology, connections to uplands and buffers, exotic species, species at risk, toxicology, sensitivity to climate change, relationship between wetlands and water quality, and economic values.
- Promote and facilitate responsible wetland protection and management on private lands by landowners through extension and stewardship programs.
- Strengthen and enhance wetland rehabilitation and management expertise through training and technology transfer to rehabilitation practitioners.
- Influence Official Plans through stewardship and other efforts to promote that wetlands be designated and zoned for conservation in local planning documents. Provide information to municipalities to facilitate planning.
- Coordinate binational Great Lakes wetlands meetings to complement initiatives such as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Great Lakes Conservation Blueprints and State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference.

A complete list of the GLWCAP Phase Two milestones is found in the GLWCAP Highlights Report (2000-2003), available on request (see below).



Red-winged Blackbird, Walter B. Fechner

For more information

If you have any questions or comments or would like to receive any GLWCAP publications, please contact any of the GLWCAP Implementation Team organizations directly, or the GLWCAP Secretariat at:

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Green Frog, Walter B. Fechner

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