

Watersheds Canada to partner with Crowe Valley Conservation Authority to restore Ontario shorelines in 2024-2026

Watersheds Canada is bringing its flagship shoreline restoration and re-naturalize program, The Natural Edge, to the Crowe Valley Watershed in Ontario in 2024-2026. This program expansion is possible thanks to a new partnership with the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority and local community lake associations, and funding by Canada Water Agency through the Government of Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program.

Vegetated shorelines of at least 20-30 meters wide are shown to remove up to 90% of nutrients and pollutants by increasing soil porosity and physically reducing the speed of surface runoff before it can enter nearby waterbodies. Almost all species of fish and wildlife actively seek naturalized shorelands at some point in their lifetime as their preferred habitat compared to developed shorelines. These natural shoreline areas provide critical areas for food and water, shelter, and reproducing.

The Natural Edge is a shoreline naturalization program available to landowners, community groups, and municipalities that have properties that border a lake, river, tributary, creek, wetland, or other waterbody. Program participants are involved in every step of their restoration process, creating a custom plan on-site alongside a trained staff member. Restoration decisions are made based on the landowner's personal preferences and their property's conditions, such as sunlight availability and soil type. This real-time restoration plan creation is possible by using Watersheds Canada's custom iOS App which uses property photos and overlays them with selected plants so landowners can see what their restored shoreline will look like before planting actually takes place.

The two year project will regenerate and restore degraded shorelines through planting native species, while also providing meaningful opportunities for individuals living in and near the Crowe Valley Watershed to improve their community's resilience to climate change impacts and to safeguard wildlife habitat. This comes at a time when shorelines in Ontario are under considerable threat from climate change and increased development pressures and unsustainable land-use. Healthy shorelines are a vital part of the community in the Crowe Valley Watershed, and this project will ensure these areas are protected for generations of people and wildlife to come.

The Natural Edge is a program that eliminates identified barriers for people to restore their shorelines using nature-based solutions. While 98% of property owners were very concerned about their impacts on the natural environment before participating in the program, only 26% felt confident to carry-out restoration efforts on their own. Each landowner that participates in The Natural Edge receives full support, including an in-person site visit. To start, a site visit is booked to discuss questions and concerns, assess planting conditions, and get

recommendations. During the site visit, a personalized planting plan is created, including photos of selected planting areas and ideal plant species based on height and aesthetic preferences. Once planting takes place, property owners receive resources to ensure that the newly planted vegetation thrives in the first few years of establishment and growth.

Interested waterfront property owners, community groups, and municipalities located in or near the Crowe Valley Watershed should contact Watersheds Canada by emailing [naturaledge \(at\) watersheds.ca](mailto:naturaledge@watersheds.ca) to book a site visit. Please check [this map](#) to see if you are located in or near the Crowe Valley Watershed. Spots in the program are limited and are given on a first come, first serve basis. Plantings will take place in spring 2025 and fall 2025.

About Watersheds Canada

Watersheds Canada is a registered Canadian charity committed to providing programs to communities across the country to engage and help individuals enhance and protect the health of their lakes and rivers. Since 2002, they have delivered freshwater stewardship programming, shoreline naturalizations and assessments, and in-water habitat restorations. To learn more, visit Watersheds.ca

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