

# Conservation Areas Master Strategy 2018-2028

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# Credit Valley Conservation Authority

## Who we are

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) restores, conserves and responsibly manages the land and water of the Credit River Watershed. The jurisdiction of CVC includes the Credit River and its tributaries, 14 Lake Ontario tributaries and the shoreline of Lake Ontario (see map page 7), collectively referred to as the Credit River Watershed. We are a local conservation authority established in 1954 by the Ontario government in partnership with local municipalities. We're a partner in conservation and protector of local communities from natural hazards.

After 60-plus years we've grown into an innovative leader, championing community collaboration, outreach and learning. We're a strong advocate for healthy environments and sustainable communities.

Our member municipal partners include: Region of Halton, Region of Peel, County of Dufferin, County of Wellington, City of Brampton, City of Mississauga, Town of Caledon, Town of Erin, Town of Halton Hills, Town of Mono, Town of Oakville, Town of Orangeville, Township of Amaranth and Township of East Garafraxa.



A woman with a green headband is looking down at two children who are sitting at a wooden table. The children are wearing baseball caps and are focused on a project they are working on. There are various art supplies like markers and pencils on the table. In the background, there are some stuffed animals and a wooden structure. The scene is outdoors, with trees visible in the background.

## Our Promise

*At Credit Valley Conservation, we create **connections** between people and nature, knowledge and action. We **lead** the protection, restoration and enhancement of our local natural environment, and we **inspire** a deep appreciation for the role of nature in keeping us connected, healthy and happy.*



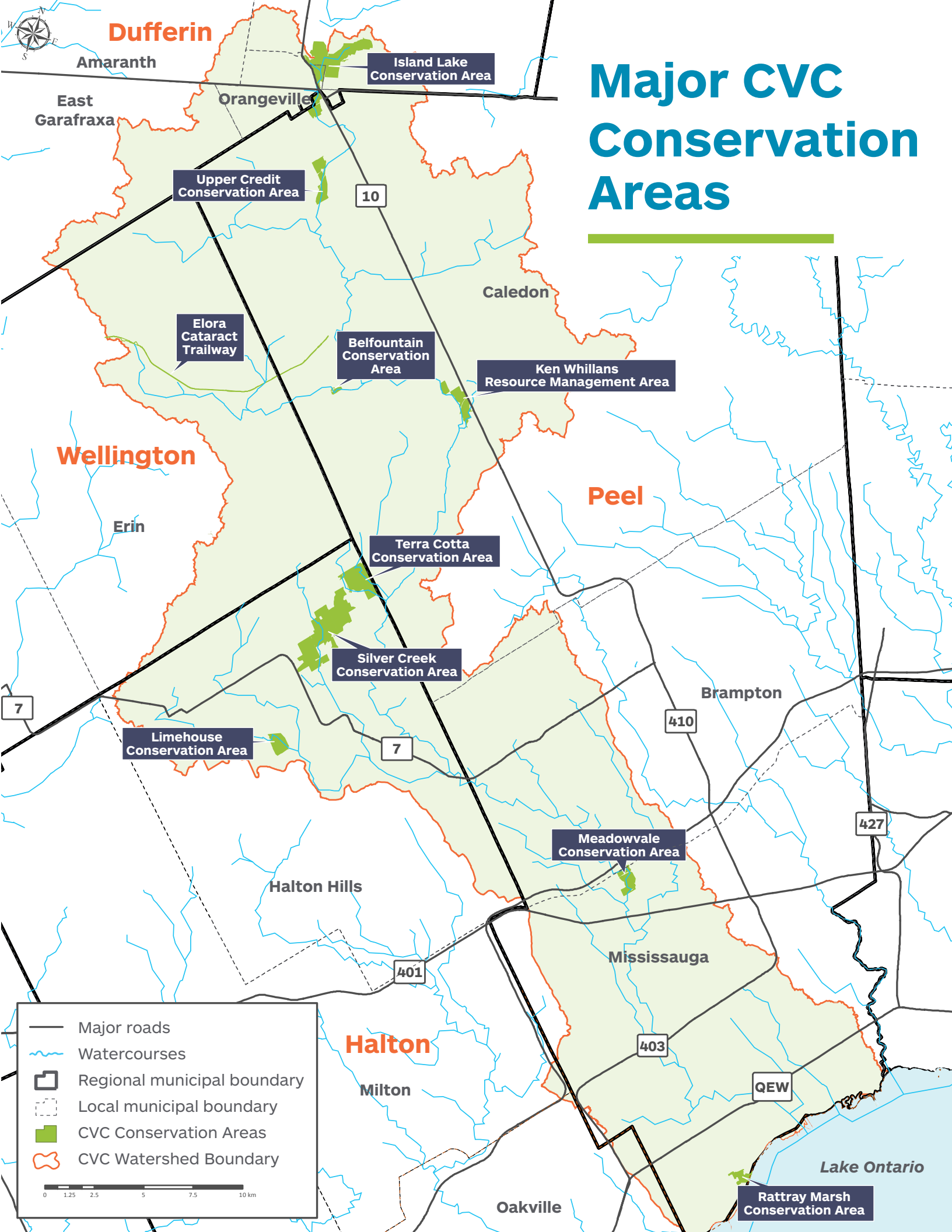


# Our Conservation Areas

CVC operates a system of 61 conservation areas that stretch from the shores of Lake Ontario north to the headwaters in Dufferin County. We offer visitors options that **deliver** a wide range of programs and recreational opportunities to explore. Whether you're fly fishing for brown trout, paddling a canoe or enjoying the splendour of nature on foot, bicycle or snow shoes, each of our conservation areas has **experiences** to offer. Conservation areas also support active lifestyles that promote physical and mental well-being. These in turn contribute to broad community and public health. In addition, the natural environmental systems in conservation areas help to clean water, sequester carbon, provide habitat and mitigate the impacts of severe weather events resulting from climate change. All conservation areas in our watershed allow visitors the opportunity to **connect** with nature. We are a public steward of environmentally significant properties on land and in water that we **protect** for future generations.

## CVC Conservation Areas (CAs):

Belfountain CA, Elora Cataract Trailway, Island Lake CA, Ken Whillans Resource Management Area, Limehouse CA, Meadowvale CA, Rattray Marsh CA, Silver Creek CA, Terra Cotta CA, Upper Credit CA. We've embarked on realizing our long-held dream of the Credit Valley Trail, a continuous 100 km pathway from the Headwaters in Orangeville to Lake Ontario in Port Credit. We're creating a new naturalized conservation area along the shores of Lake Ontario called Jim Tovey Lakeview CA.









# Conservation Areas Master Strategy 2018-2028

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Currently, CVC has been operating under the **Conservation Areas Strategy for the Credit River Watershed** completed in 1994. In 2007 the CVC Board reconfirmed the objectives and principles of the 1994 strategy and introduced the concept of Core 10 Areas.

## Then

The Core 10 model identified 10 key properties of focus for public access to conservation lands. We still operate under this model today. The 1994 strategy and companion 2007 update have served us well for nearly 25 years, however much has changed during this time. The strategy needed to be revisited.

## Now

Our watershed has seen significant population growth, urbanization and demographic changes. At the same time recreational, tourism and leisure trends have been shifting. We must consider new and emerging impacts of climate change and other pressures on the natural environment as we work to protect the overall health of the Credit River Watershed.

# The Framework

We are the public stewards of over 2,800 hectares (7,000 acres) of natural space. We provide visitors with unique experiences in nature, supporting healthy communities and a sustainable natural environment.

This strategy identifies the outcomes, directions and deliverables needed over the next 10 years to sustain those natural spaces and create high-quality recreational, cultural and educational experiences that meet

visitors' needs today and into the future. The Conservation Areas Master Strategy (CAMS) is a deliverable of CVC's Strategic Plan 2015-2019 and supports our ongoing operational planning processes as set out below (See Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1 - HIERARCHY OF STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING WORK STREAMS**



**This strategy is a framework that is both outward facing and inward looking. It:**

- is the basis for multi-year business plan and annual work plans
- builds capacity for performance and risk management
- features five-year outcomes and directions with clear deliverables

CVC's **Vision, Mission** and **Values** are set out in our 2015 Strategic Plan. This Conservation Areas Master Strategy is based on those principles. It is a guiding document for our conservation areas, directing business planning, project planning, employee objectives, workforce planning and budgeting. It guides us, yet provides flexibility to meet changing needs. It ensures we remain accountable to our partners, donors, taxpayers, and above all, to the environment.





# The Context

The Conservation Areas Master Strategy recognizes that there are four key **Change Agents** at work impacting our conservation areas. In many respects, these forces are beyond our control. This strategy uses a lens that considers both the opportunities and pressures created by change agents when addressing each strategic deliverable. **Our Commitment** must be a reflection of both who we are as an organization and what our responsibility is as a public agency.



## Change Agents...

**Strategies are not static. They must adapt to the changing world in which they operate. We recognize the importance of all societal changes and more specifically the following change agents impacting conservation areas for which CVC is the steward:**

**Science:** Our evolving understanding of the environment and its stressors.

**Technology:** Advancements in tools that allow us to work more effectively and efficiently, and provide opportunity for improved connection and experiences for partners, residents and visitors.

**Climate Change:** New realities that call for greater resilience, mitigation measures, public education and adaptive management.

**People:** The impacts of increasing urban density, resulting in smaller living spaces and a shift in our visitors, require that our services and spaces evolve to meet increased demand and ever-changing public expectations.





## **Our Commitment...**

### **To Stewardship of Land and Water**

We are thoughtful and principled stewards of Credit Valley Conservation's publicly held land and water.

### **To Accountability**

We are accountable to the residents of the Credit River Watershed, conservation area visitors, donors, our partners and above all to the environment.

### **To Indigenous Communities**

We are committed to partnering with Indigenous communities to advance the goals of truth and reconciliation along with the sharing of traditional knowledge and culture with our visitors.

### **To Service**

We are dedicated to providing our visitors with customer focused services that connect people with nature through recreation, education, culture and tourism.







# The Direction

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## Our Principles

1

### Protect

**Protect** the natural and cultural heritage assets within our conservation areas.

2

### Connect

Develop and nurture relationships with all who seek to **Connect** with the land and water.

3

### Experience

Ensure that visitors to our sites **Experience** a wide range of recreation opportunities, health benefits and tourism options.

4

### Deliver

**Deliver** services to our residents, visitors, stakeholders and partners that reflect our commitment to quality, accountability, fiscal responsibility and the natural environment.

# PRINCIPLE #1





# Protect

Protect the natural and cultural heritage assets within our conservation areas

## Outcomes

- Conservation areas that are accessible natural spaces with unique environmental opportunities to appreciate nature.
- Leading and partnering for sustainable natural and cultural assets within our conservation areas.
- Enhancing the environment through restoration, management and appropriate use of conservation areas land and water.
- Healthy and resilient conservation areas achieved through effective restoration, management and appropriate use.

## Directions

- Protect and restore the existing public land and water that CVC stewards.
- Identify key lands for acquisition to support the protection and growth of regional green space for recreation, trails, tourism, environmental restoration opportunities, centres of biodiversity and hazard lands to address public safety.
- Work with Indigenous partners to provide opportunities to honour the peoples, land and water.
- Incorporate natural heritage features and functions while considering cultural heritage assets within all management plans.
- Ensure effective and efficient park planning processes that consider both environmental and visitor needs.

## Deliverables

- **Land Acquisition Plan** to identify key properties that support the protection of Natural Heritage Systems embodied in Regional Official Plans, centres for biodiversity, cultural heritage assets and hazard lands. Provide an expanded land and water base for outdoor recreation, nature appreciation, connections and environmental education.
- **Land Classification Report** to guide land care and inform program delivery and services on the public lands we are entrusted to care for as public stewards.
- **Green Space Study** to holistically look across the watershed to identify longer range land securement opportunities supporting expansion or connections between green spaces.
- **Conservation Areas Framework** to collaboratively seek input from internal and external experts to support decisions related to caring and protecting the land and water we steward.

## PRINCIPLE #2





# Connect

Develop and nurture relationships with all who seek to  
Connect with the land and water

## Outcomes

- Partnerships and programs that enhance environmental literacy for residents and visitors.
- System-wide natural and cultural heritage visitor interpretation programming.
- Greater public access to our conservation areas including more accessible infrastructure and programs to reduce inclusion barriers, where feasible.
- Health-based programs that promote nature as a vital source of personal well-being and happiness.
- Conservation areas reflecting a strong sense of place that spark an enduring love for our beautiful environment as a point of pride in our communities.
- Credit Valley Trail is recognized as the key connecting link to conservation areas, regional green space and between communities.

## Directions

- Foster engagement strategies and develop a centralized 'Friends of' network with individual site specific chapters under the leadership of the Credit Valley Conservation Foundation.
- Build relationships with Indigenous partners towards a better mutual understanding of shared goals and opportunities to improve cultural competency.
- Develop integrated natural, cultural and Indigenous interpretation plans for the Credit River Watershed.
- Identify opportunities to improve physical, economic and cultural accessibility.
- Support the ongoing implementation and management of the Credit Valley Trail on CVC lands.
- Develop a partnership framework for program and service delivery.
- Support an adaptive visitor management plan approach.

## Deliverables

- **Indigenous Engagement Plan** to identify, in direct consultation with Indigenous peoples, what roles we can play in supporting the 'calls to action' identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Report.
- **Interpretation Report** to define the stories of key natural heritage features, cultural assets and other points of interest that showcase our conservation areas.
- **Visitor Study** to analyze and track the characteristics, carrying capacity, trends and geodemographic profiles of conservation area visitors to identify and respond to their needs and expectations.
- **Partnership Framework** to engage with local and regional champions in support of conservation areas, trails, events and programs in the Credit River Watershed.

## PRINCIPLE #3





# Experience

Ensure that visitors to our sites Experience a wide range of health benefits, recreation options, and tourism experiences.

## Outcomes

- Our conservation areas are seen as destinations of choice for outdoor experiences.
- Tourism and recreation destinations that serve as opportunities for business partnerships and support economic development.
- Current and emerging trends in recreational activities for visitors and local communities are implemented where appropriate and feasible.
- Healthy and resilient communities supported through innovative partnerships and programs.

## Directions

- Deliver high-quality events highlighting the best natural and cultural elements the Credit River Watershed has to offer.
- Establish cultural experiences on land and in water for visitors and our partners.
- Provide a range of recreation opportunities informed by a site's management plan.
- Develop and maintain awareness of existing and future recreational trends through education and engagement with broader sector stakeholders.
- Promote the benefits of experiences in nature through partnerships, conservation area business development and marketing.
- Survey members, visitors, partners, conservation area neighbours and the general public regarding our programs and services.

## Deliverables

- **Recreation Study** to identify the range of programs, activities and events we will provide to our visitors based on current and emerging trends.
- **Tourism Study** to identify our role among private and public partners to promote and develop a robust tourism industry.
- **Cultural Study** to identify and manage key cultural assets in our holdings where possible and to document the story of these sites.
- **Sector Framework** to sustain and grow strong connections with all our partner agencies.

## PRINCIPLE #4





# Deliver

Deliver services to our residents, visitors, stakeholders and partners that reflect our commitment to quality, accountability, health and safety and the natural environment

## Outcomes

- An engaged, well-trained and well-prepared customer and client-focused workforce.
- High level co-ordination between various CVC programs to deliver work plans.
- Technology solutions that engage staff and visitors alike, based on current and future needs.
- Capital assets that are well-managed and support our programs.
- Programs and services that align with our corporate strategy, that are cost effective and contribute to the financial sustainability of CVC conservation areas.

## Directions

- Operate conservation areas that support success and enable people and programs to grow.
- Engage local businesses in mutually beneficial partnerships through our operations and programming.
- Conduct ongoing reviews to ensure program effectiveness and efficiency.
- Provide high quality customer service with every experience.
- Broaden business planning processes to include marketing, tourism, program innovation and diversification to support long-term financial sustainability.
- Ensure assets remain in a state-of-good repair.

## Deliverables

- **Visitor Experience Plan** to set the bar for high quality customer services in operations, programs and events. This work will be informed by deliverables previously set out under other Principles including Culture, Recreation and Tourism Studies along with an Interpretation Report (see Figure 3).
- **Marketing Plan** to identify the most strategic methods of promoting and advertising our conservation areas as reflected through the Visitor Management Plan and the Visitor Experience Plan.
- **Business Plan** that supports programs and services contributing to long-term financial sustainability of conservation areas.
- **Business Framework** to support the growth of local business and economic development in the communities we serve.

# The Next Steps

The 10-year strategy will be implemented by requiring a mid-strategy review. This will ensure an opportunity to refresh aspects of the strategy as may be required or to course-correct for emerging or unforeseen issues from the time the strategy was adopted.

The identified **Deliverables** that fall under each of the four **Principles** represent both existing work that requires **Review** as well as identified **New** work to set future direction and to address gaps (See Table 1).



**TABLE 1 – SUMMARY OF DELIVERABLES ALIGNED BY THE FOUR PRINCIPLES**

Protect	Status	Experience	Status
Land Acquisition Plan	Review	Recreation Study	New
Land Classification Report	Review	Tourism Study	New
Green Space Study	New	Cultural Study	New
Conservation Areas Framework	New	Sector Framework	New

Connect	Status	Deliver	Status
Indigenous Engagement Plan	New	Visitor Experience Plan	New
Interpretation Report	New	Marketing Plan	Review
Visitor Study	Review	Business Plan	Review
Partnership Framework	New	Business Framework	New

Note: **Asset Management Plan** development is underway as a corporate initiative for the identification, assessment, monitoring, repair / maintenance and eventual replacement of our capital assets.

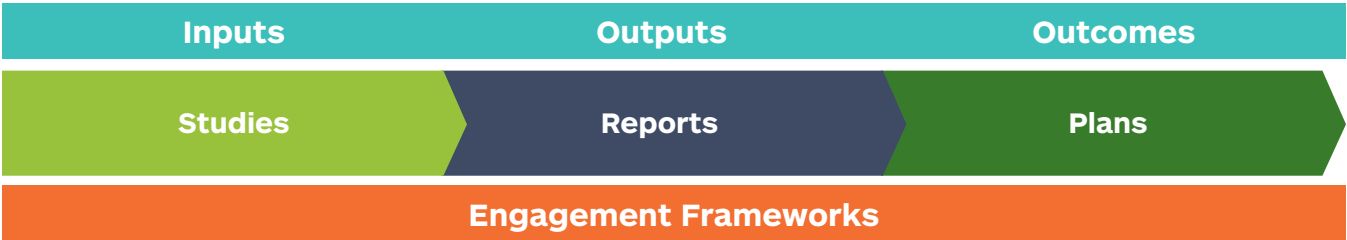




Implementing the Conservation Areas Master Strategy (CAMS) will draw on existing work or work that already exists or is in progress. This includes, but is not limited to, the Corporate Strategic Plan, the Watershed Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Credit Valley Trail Strategy, Corporate Marketing Communication Strategy, Digital Strategy, Natural Heritage System, Asset Management Plan, Forest Management Plan, Corporate Social Responsibility Plan and Customer Service Standards. Alignment with the related corporate work already completed or underway will both support and advance the CAMS work in a cohesive and responsive way.

The implementation model will prioritize the **Deliverables** based on the classification of the work inputs and outputs. A **Study** or a **Report** will be an input to a **Plan**. The outputs from the Plans will action the outcomes of the CAMS. Each of the four Principles will be supported by a **Framework** that will be established to formalize consultative processes. The Frameworks will ensure that internal and external stakeholders are engaged through interdisciplinary teams. This approach will ensure stakeholders have a forum to contribute to and support the implementation of the CAMS (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2 – CAMS DELIVERABLES**



# The Implementation

Completing deliverables for the CAMS will occur over the next three years. To ensure a fully integrated strategy each of the five identified plan deliverables (see Figure 3) will abide by Our Promise, consider the impact of the Change Agents, incorporate Our Commitments and address the relevant Outcomes and Directions set out under the Principles.

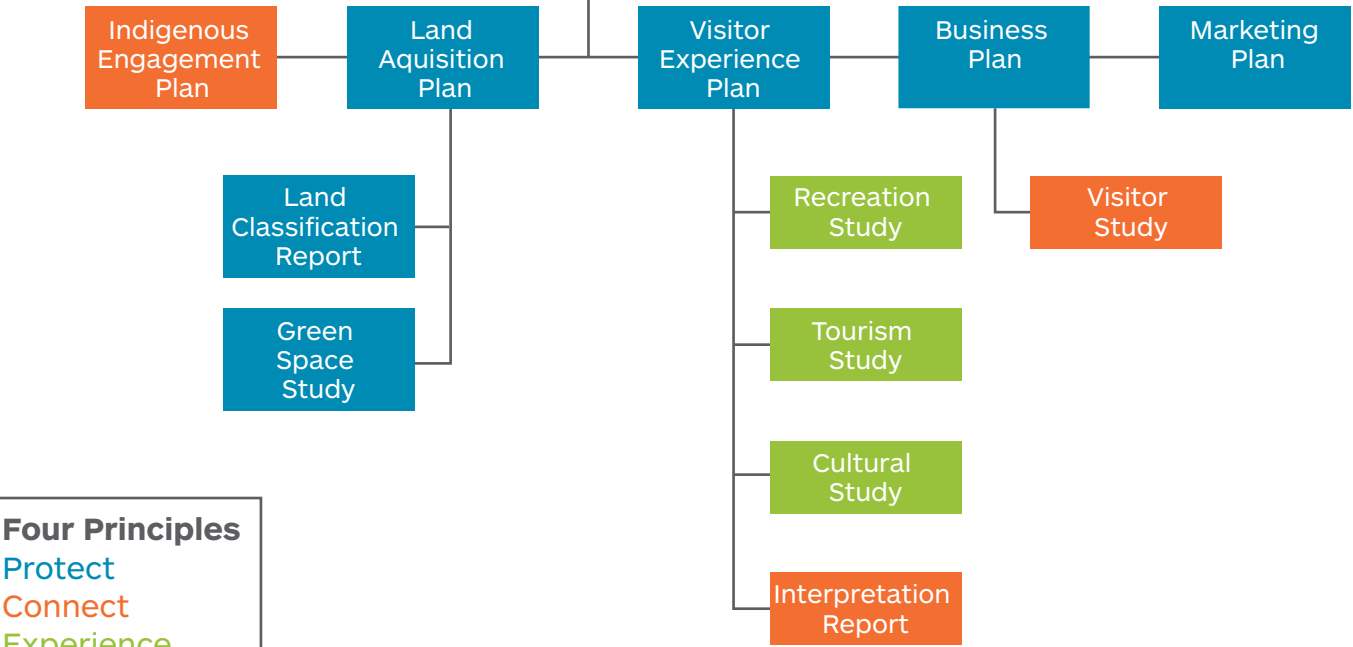
Oversight of the work will be consolidated within the PARCS Land Planning team; this will further support a focused and cohesive strategy implementation. The result will be a clear strategic course for CVC conservation areas for the next 10 years. The following, Figure 3, shows the relationship between the deliverables.

**FIGURE 3 – CAMS RELATIONAL LINKAGES BETWEEN DELIVERABLES**

**Strategy Level**



**Deliverables Level**



**Four Principles**

Protect

Connect

Experience

Deliver



# The Message

It is important that the Strategic Direction set by the Conservation Areas Master Strategy (CAMS) is clearly and easily understood by a diverse range of audiences including our partners, stakeholders, funders, visitors, residents, donors, staff and the Board of CVC. Often Strategies are complex wordy documents that do not resonate outside the organization nor easily translate for frontline staff.

To support how we implement and operationalize CAMS, we've created a graphic visualization of the strategy. This helps clearly convey the key elements of the strategy including: the four Change Agents;

the four Commitments; and the four Principles. At a glance our visitors and staff alike will be able to see what our strategic direction is, what we value and the challenges we expect to face over the life of the strategy.



**Please direct comments and inquiries to:**

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**Credit Valley  
Conservation**  
inspired by nature