



February 2024 NEWSLETTER

NOTTAWASAGA RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM

Achievements, Volunteer Opportunities and More!

The Nottawasaga River Restoration Program (NRRP), coordinated by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and the Nottawasaga Futures – South Simcoe Streams Network (SSSN), was initiated in 2018 and is emerging as one of the largest river restoration and trout habitat improvement programs in southern Ontario. The river restoration has been achieved through a hybrid technique involving volunteer efforts supported by the work of a 20-tonne excavator machine. [Learn more about the hybrid technique here!](#)

In 2023, collaborative efforts resulted in:

- **Stabilizing 400 m of eroding stream bank** with woody trout habitats, floodplain construction and tree planting on two properties on Sheldon Creek (see Photo 1 below).

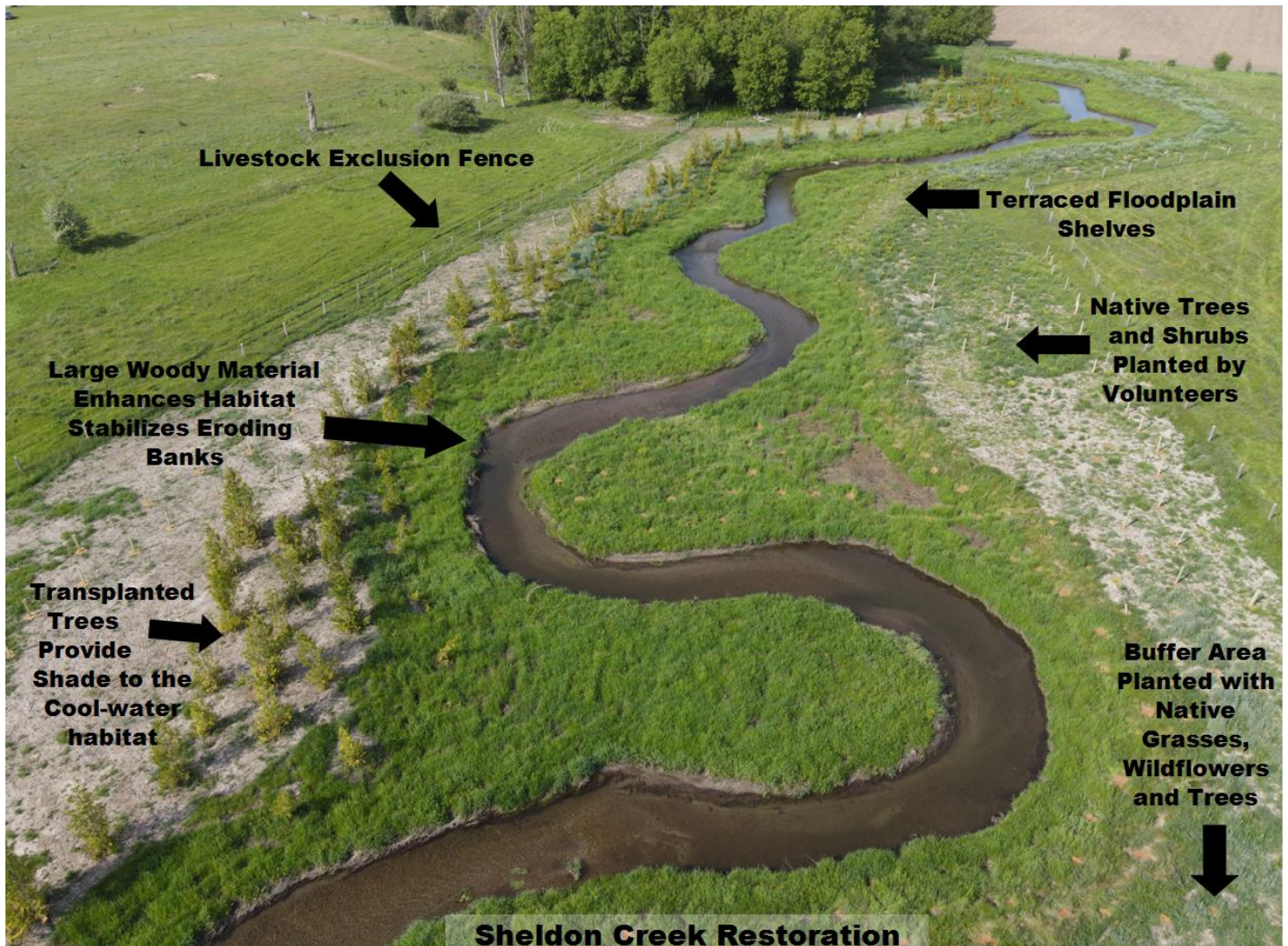


Photo 1 Restored reach of Sheldon Creek where eroding banks were stabilized, trout cover habitats were anchored, livestock fencing was installed, native trees were planted and floodplain shelves were constructed.

In 2023, collaborative efforts also resulted in:

- **Stabilizing an additional 150 m of eroding bank** with trout cover habitats on the Pine River. This is the second year of the emerging Pine River Enhancement Initiative.
- **Constructing a 40 m long vegetated rock bank stabilization wall** at the Carruthers Park as part of the new Mad River Enhancement Project lead by Friends of the Mad River.
- Planting **2,230 trees** in stream-side corridors.
- Installing **455 m of livestock exclusion fencing** along Sheldon Creek.
- Hosting **21 volunteer events** attended by **265 volunteers**.

These achievements were made possible thanks to our project funding partners who contributed **\$250,000** including Bass Pro Shops-Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Province of Ontario, World Wildlife Fund, Dufferin Simcoe Land Stewardship Network, H. John McDonald Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Thanks are also extended to participating landowners, community and school groups, Friends of the Mad River, Nottawasaga Steelheaders, Headwaters Streams Committee, Trout Unlimited Canada, Ontario Streams, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Rumball Excavation, GEO Morphix Ltd., Somerville Nurseries Inc., Townships of Adjala-Tosorontio, Mulmur and Clearview, Town of Mono and Credit Valley Conservation.

Background

The NRRP was developed with two major goals in mind:

- Optimizing the abundance of fish species supporting a recreational sport fishery including rainbow trout, brown trout and Chinook salmon (Photo 2) as well as native species at risk including lake sturgeon and northern brook lamprey.
- Improving water quality in the Nottawasaga River.

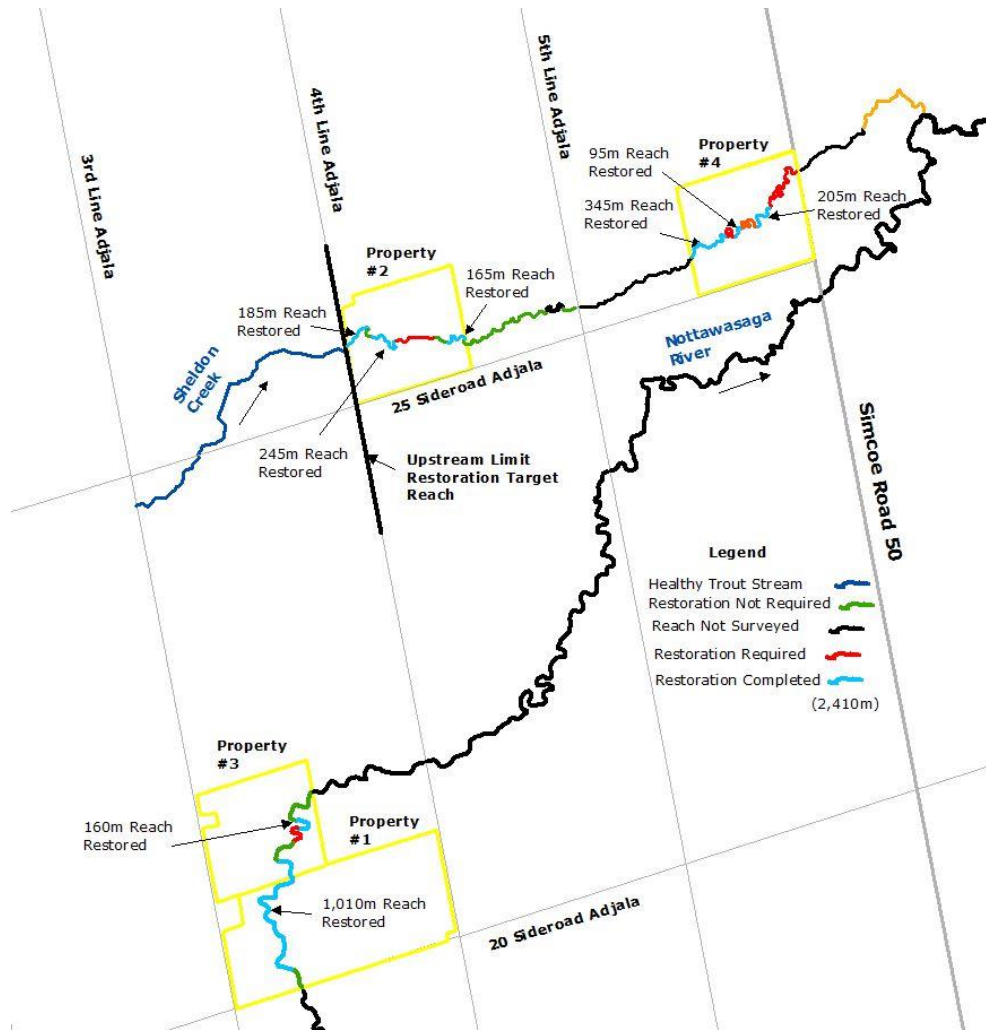


Photo 2 Wild juvenile Chinook Salmon from the upper Nottawasaga River.

These goals will be realized through extending the high-quality trout habitat in the Nottawasaga River at the Village of Hockley, downstream to the river's confluence with Innisfil Creek near Alliston. This objective will be achieved by restoring **10 km** of degraded habitat within 30 km of the Nottawasaga River and 5 km of its Sheldon Creek tributary.

Progress to Date and Future Targets

A total of **2.4 km** of river habitat has been restored (see light blue lines on map below) between 2019 and 2023 at 2 properties on the Nottawasaga River and 2 on Sheldon Creek. In 2023 we restored 0.4 km of stream which is less than the 0.8 km/year pace we were able to sustain between 2020 and 2022 thanks to support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We are working to engage new partners in order to access the funding needed to reestablish the 0.8km/year pace that will allow us to reach our target of 10 km of habitat restored by 2031.



Map of restoration sites on Nottawasaga River and Sheldon Creek

Our goal in 2024 is to finish restoration of all of the remaining **200 m** of Sheldon Creek at Property #2, complete an additional **300 m** of restoration at Property #4 and recruit new landowner partners on the main Nottawasaga River where we will be focusing work in 2025.

This past summer provided our second opportunity to collect follow-up fish community data at Property #1 on the Nottawasaga River, where habitat restoration was completed in 2022. Numbers of juvenile rainbow trout documented in 2023 were similar to the numbers in the pre-restoration baseline surveys completed in 2018 and 2019. We were however very pleased to see a significant increase in numbers of young of the year Chinook salmon (Photo 2) in 2023! These young salmon utilize woody cover in pools and likely took advantage of the root wad structures that were installed to stabilize the eroding banks and provide habitat on this property!

2024 Volunteer Opportunities

Tree Planting - Community participation in native tree and shrub planting provides an opportunity to help establish forest cover along the restored river banks. Visit our website at nvca.on.ca for all SSSN "Trees for Streams" and NVCA tree plants.

In-Water Bank Stabilization – Join us in the river in July and August as we step into chest waders and help protect the river bank from erosion. Cut coniferous trees will be secured to the bank using soil anchors.

Media - [Check out our short documentary on YouTube](#) that showcases how the restoration efforts enhance recreational fishing opportunities for rainbow trout, brown trout and Chinook salmon on the Nottawasaga River as well as in Georgian Bay at Collingwood and Wasaga Beach.



River-side Tree Planting



Bank Stabilization Volunteer Event

Contact Information

For more information about the NRRP, volunteering opportunities or financial contributions, please contact:

- Fred Dobbs, Manager of Stewardship Services, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (705) 309-0522 or e-mail fdobbs@nvca.on.ca
- Laura Wensink, River Restoration Technician, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (705) 309-0522 or e-mail lwensink@nvca.on.ca
- Theresa Parent, Environmental Project Coordinator, South Simcoe Streams Network - Nottawasaga Futures 705-440-9129 or theresa@nottawasaga.com