Where we are headed is based on where we came from and what we have done. The story of TRCA has been one of continuous evolution and adaptation in response to changes in science, community demands, and public policy. The short history set out below illustrates how TRCA has evolved to become the inclusive, collaborative, regionally oriented organization it is today.

1946 - 1954 - 1957 - 1959

Following the devastation of Hurricane Hazel, four smaller Conservation Authorities are amalgamated to form Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) to manage flood control more effectively across the region.

Lands are acquired to protect environmentally significant natural heritage areas, to rehabilitate of degraded areas, and to provide relief from flood and erosion hazards. Since 1957, we have acquired more than 17,375 hectares (42,934 acres) of land in the watersheds of the Toronto region. The majority of the Toronto region’s extensive park and open space system is situated on Authority lands.

MTRCA’s Plan for Flood Control and Water Conservation calls for the construction of multi-purpose dams and reservoirs, engineered river channels, the acquisition of flood plain lands, and the creation of a flood warning system.

1960 - 1963 - 1967

Black Creek Pioneer Village opens. The village recreates community life in mid-19th Century Ontario and reflects TRCA’s ongoing commitment to preserving cultural heritage and building appreciation for the Toronto region’s agricultural, social and commercial past.

The Waterfront Plan for the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area introduces the new “integrated shoreline management” concept to limit shoreline erosion while creating a number of large parkland areas and public marinas connected by a waterfront trail system. The Plan launches a new era of public consultation.

TRCA is well positioned and uniquely qualified to plan, promote and coordinate the building of The Living City over the next 10 years and through the subsequent decades. We are building on our expertise in watershed management and land conservation, and moving beyond those traditional mandates, to achieve a broad, ambitious, positive vision for the Toronto region.
The Watershed Plan marks a shift from the structural engineering approach of the 1960s and 1970s in favour of an ecological approach to watershed management. Water quality and healthy aquatic life take on new importance.

Starting in the late 1970s, MTRCA undertakes a series of biological inventories leading to the identification of 126 environmentally significant areas in the Toronto region. The Greenspace Strategy asserts that natural lands play a vital role in flood and erosion control, groundwater recharge, and human health and well-being. It describes MTRCA’s ongoing work in land acquisition, archaeology, education, land use and waterfront planning, and recreation.

Ontario passes the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and Plan, followed by the Greenbelt Act and Plan (2005), the Places to Grow Act (2005), the Clean Water Act (2006) and the Green Energy Act (2009). Together with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) and the Provincial Policy Statement (2005), these initiatives begin to move society towards a “culture of conservation” and mark a renewed emphasis on renewable sources of energy, adaptation to climate change, sustainable growth through urban intensification, public transit, and water, waste, energy and cultural heritage conservation. Many of these themes are reflected in TRCA’s recent programs.

The Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy is used to identify the natural heritage system and to set targets for increasing natural cover within TRCA’s jurisdiction in order to maintain biodiversity, reduce flooding and erosion, and ensure the integrity of the ecological services the environment provides.

The Living City Policies are approved for municipal, public and stakeholder consultation. These policies guide the implementation of TRCA’s legislated and delegated roles and responsibilities in the planning and development approvals process over the next 10 years.

The cumulative impact of these evolutionary developments has led to the TRCA of today. The qualities that carried us through these developments – open-mindedness, a thirst for understanding, accountability, adaptability, responsiveness and commitment to community – have characterized TRCA from the beginning, define us today, and will continue to shape our contributions to the future of our region.