The Freshwater Connection

Publication of the Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition – Summer 2025

Summer 2025
Tree Planting / Phragmites / Books

Tree Planting - Municipal Parks

"Thank You" to everyone involved in getting trees planted in Central Algoma's Municipal Parks. CAFC provided 10 trees in 2022 and 9 trees in 2025 through grants. To date 19 - 5-to-8-foot native Red Maple have been planted in 8 Municipal Parks (many of which lost Ash trees due to an invasive insect, the Emerald Ash Borer) in 6 municipalities.
This year trees were planted by the Municipality of Huron Shores and the Town of Bruce Mines.
"Thank You" also to Harvest Algoma for delivering the trees to the municipalities.

Invasive Phragmites in the Algoma Region

By Daniel Featherstone

A Growing Threat

Invasive Phragmites australis subsp. australis or Common Reed —not to be confused with the native Phragmites australis subsp. americanus is a relatively new arrival to the Algoma Region. Often described as bamboo-like due to its height and density, this aggressive grass has already caused widespread damage in Southern Ontario. To prevent a similar outcome in Algoma, Lake Huron North and its partners have established the Algoma Region Phragmites Working Group to coordinate early detection, rapid response, and long-term management.

How Did Phragmites Arrive in Algoma?

The invasive subspecies of Phragmites was first introduced to North America via ornamental plant trade and ballast water discharge. Valued for its height and aesthetically pleasing seed heads, it was commonly planted around ponds and wetlands. However, it quickly escaped cultivation, spreading across natural ecosystems throughout the northeastern United States and eventually into Southern Ontario.

In Ontario, its spread has largely been driven by the movement of contaminated soil containing rhizomes or seeds—via off-road vehicles, boats, and construction equipment. In Algoma, it is believed that Phragmites primarily arrived through contaminated construction machinery, as it is frequently found along roadways.

The Impacts of Invasive Phragmites

- Loss of Biodiversity:

Invasive Phragmites forms dense monocultures that crowd out native plants, reducing habitat quality for birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and insects. This is particularly damaging in wetland ecosystems—some of the most biologically diverse areas in the region. In Ontario, Phragmites is estimated to negatively impact 25% of species at risk.

- Habitat Degradation:

Native wildlife that relies on wetlands for nesting, feeding, and breeding are significantly affected. The tall, dense stands of Phragmites restrict access to open water and limit space for native vegetation critical to healthy ecosystems.

- Alteration of Wetland Function:

Phragmites disrupt water flow, increase sedimentation, and alter nutrient cycles. Its dense root systems can even form soil banks in shallow streams, blocking migratory fishlike salmon, trout, and walleye from reaching their spawning grounds.

- Increased Fire Risk:

Phragmites accumulates a high volume of dry, dead stalks, which are highly flammable and elevate the risk and severity of fires—especially in areas adjacent to infrastructure.

- Socioeconomic Costs:

In agriculture, Phragmites clogs drainage systems and invades fields, leading to yield loss and increased management costs. In recreational areas, its spread diminishes property value and obstructs activities like swimming, fishing, boating, and hunting. In small shoreline communities where outdoor recreation and tourism are vital industries, invasive phragmites can be especially devastating.

Regional Response Efforts

The Algoma Region Phragmites Working Group, led by Lake Huron North, includes local municipalities, Invasive Species Centre, First Nations communities, CAFC, private landowners, and government agencies. In 2024, the group:

- Mapped thousands of kilometers of roadway from Blind River to Sault Ste. Marie, Wawa, and Chapleau to document Phragmites spread.
- Developed a Field Maps data-sharing app to streamline population reporting between partners.
- Held a training workshop on plant identification and control methods.
- Conducted DNA analysis to confirm difficult-to-identify patches.
- Planned a strategic, region-wide control initiative focusing on leading-edge populations and ecologically sensitive areas.

What's Next in 2025?

This year, the initiative is scaling up:

- Expanding mapping efforts to include coastal wetlands along the North Channel, Lake Superior's bays, and the Goulais River.
- Hosting new training sessions with Garden River and Batchewana First Nations.
- Starting active management with selective backpack spraying in high-priority locations.
- Hiring a summer student to assist with treatment and monitoring.
- Conducting mechanical control at Sagamok First Nation.
- Performing follow-up treatments in Blind River and near the Goulais River.

What You Can Do to Help

Protecting Algoma's wetlands from invasive Phragmites is a shared responsibility. Community members play a vital role in detection, prevention, and control. Here are a few ways you can help:

- Report Sightings:

If you spot invasive Phragmites, report it on iNaturalist or contact Lake Huron North's Project Coordinator directly at dfeatherstone@ssmic.com. Photos and location information are extremely helpful.

- Learn to Identify It:

Familiarize yourself with the key differences between native and invasive Phragmites. Invasive types grow in dense, tall stands (often over 5 meters), with stiff stems, tan or grayish seed heads, and a lack of biodiversity underneath. https://www.opwg.ca/phragmites/native-vs-invasive/

- Avoid Spreading It:

Refrain from driving off-road vehicles, ATVs, or heavy machinery through stands of Phragmites. Seeds and rhizome fragments can stick to tires and equipment, leading to accidental spread.

- Clean Equipment Thoroughly:

After working, hiking, or driving near infested areas, clean boots, vehicles, and tools to prevent spreading fragments to new locations.

- Don't Plant It:

Avoid planting ornamental grasses unless you're certain they are native or non-invasive. Invasive Phragmites is still sometimes sold under misleading names.

- Spread the Word:

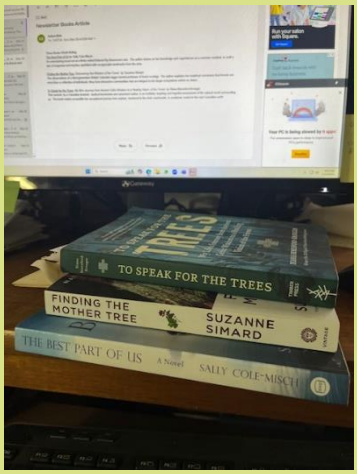
Share information with your friends, neighbours, and local community groups. The more people who can identify and report invasive Phragmites, the better our chances of eradicating it from the region.

Looking Ahead

Lake Huron North and its partners are increasing public awareness, expanding control efforts, and continuing to host working group planning meetings. The goal: to eradicate invasive Phragmites from the Algoma Region by 2030, transitioning to long-term monitoring to prevent invasive phragmites from establishing future footholds in the Algoma Region.

Three Books Worth Noting:

By Bob Kellum



The Best Part of Us by Sally Cole-Misch

An entertaining novel set at a thinly veiled fictional Big Basswood Lake. The author draws on her knowledge and experiences as a summer resident, to craft a tale of suspense and mystery sprinkled with recognizable landmarks from the area.

Finding the Mother Tree, Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest, by Suzanne Simard

The observations of a third generation British Columbia logger turned professor of forest ecology. The author explains her empirical conclusion that forests are more than a collection of individuals; they form interactive communities that are integral to the larger ecosystems which we share.

To Speak for the Trees, My life's Journey from Ancient Celtic Wisdom to a Healing Vision of the Forest, by Diana Beresford-Kroeger.

This memoir, by a Canadian botanist, medical biochemist and seasoned author, is an inciteful, inspiring and hopeful assessment of the natural world surrounding us. The book makes accessible her exceptional journey from orphan, mentored in the Irish countryside, to academic rooted in the vast Canadian north

SUSTAIN ALGOMA EXPO 2025

PRESENTED BY: The Kensington Conservancy

Saturday June 14th 9am - 2pm

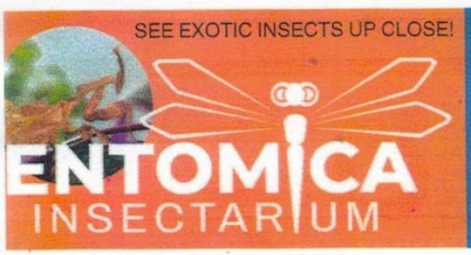
Johnson Township Community Centre

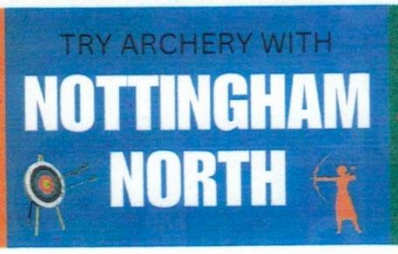
1 Cameron Drive in Desbarats, Ontario

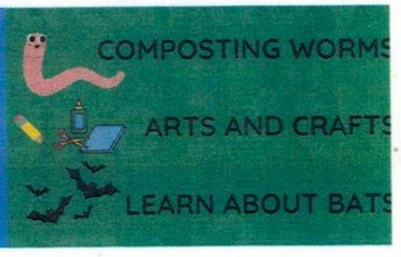
FREE ADMISSION

DONATIONS WELCOME

DOOR PRIZES







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North Channel Heating & Air Conditioning Inc.

Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition

St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan
Our Water • Our Future

Join us for a fun family event that promotes sustainable living in the Algoma District!

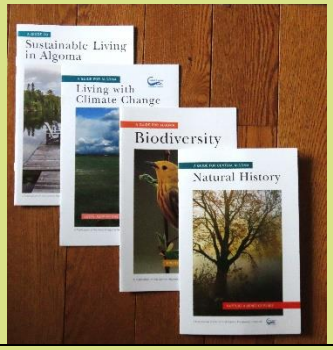
INTERESTED IN BEING A VENDOR OR EXHIBITOR?
THERE'S STILL TIME TO APPLY!

705-782-2200

WWW.KENSINGTONCONSERVANCY.ORG/SUSTAIN-ALGOMA-EXPO

DON'T FORGET THAT THE JOHNSON FARMERS' MARKET WIL BE OPEN FOR THEIR REGULAR SATURDAY HOURS TOO!

2025 Vendors and Exhibitors: Algoma Public Health • B & T Pet Treats • Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition • Clean North • Coureur de Bois • Entomica Insectarium • Ev's Crochet Corner • Garside Gardens • Harvest Algoma • J Crochet Designs • Johnson Township Recreation • Junk Jam Studio • Lavish Linx • Lake Huron North • Maple Leaf Facility Solutions Inc • NORDIK Institute • North Channel Heating and Air Conditioning • Nottingham North • Northern Workshop • Pearl & Moss Botanicals • Pure & Simple - dōTERRA • Red Roof Honey • Reenie Beenie Jewellery and Surprise Bags • Regen Natural Resources Ltd. • Renewable energy Solutions • Rural Agri- Innovation Network • St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan • Scentsy • Smith Soaps • Stokely Creek Naturals • Sweetened Chocolate & Confectionary • The Kensington Conservancy • The Valley of Angels • The Wooden Wick Candle Co. • Thinking Rock Community Arts •



NEW - Natural History of Central Algoma

CAFC has a new publication - Natural History - A Guide to Central Algoma - Nurture A Sense of Place - available on our website now at https://www.centralalgomafreshwatercoalition.ca/reports-1
Booklets will be available at the Sustain Algoma EXPO.

Become a member

Your annual membership fee will provide a base budget for work of CAFC and demonstrate the commitment of local partners working towards a common goal. A strong diverse group is an essential component in meeting the goals of the Central Algoma Region.

Support us at https://www.centralalgomafreshwatercoalition.ca

Photo : Little Thessalon River below McCreight's Pond