

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### *Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority Working to Reopen Stoney Island Conservation Area As Trail Remediation Continues*

**ALL SAUGEEN WATERSHED MUNICIPALITIES** – Municipality of Arran-Elderslie, Municipality of Brockton, Township of Chatsworth, Municipality of Grey Highlands, Town of Hanover, Township of Howick, Municipality of Morris-Turnberry, Municipality of South Bruce, Township of Huron-Kinloss, Municipality of Kincardine, Town of Minto, Township of Wellington-North, Town of Saugeen Shores, Township of Southgate, Municipality of West Grey.

Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) is pleased to announce that the ash tree removal project at the 98-acre Stoney Island Conservation Area has been successfully completed. This critical work began in August of 2024, and was conducted to address the severe emerald ash borer infestation. The work supports the continued use of the Conservation Area as a recreational space.

While the project has significantly altered the appearance of the area, SVCA has already initiated the next phase: trail and forest remediation. Following large, mechanized work by SVCA, volunteers using non-motorized tools, have been working alongside the Kincardine Cross Country Ski Club to assist in trail clean-up efforts.

SVCA acknowledges that some visitors might expect all fallen wood to be cleared or chipped. However, this approach is not aligned with sound forest management practices: *“What may seem messy to the eye is actually very important for forest health. Fallen tops protect young tree seedlings from being eaten by deer until they are large enough to survive. They provide critical cover for wildlife and, as they decompose, enrich the soil with nutrients and organic matter. This natural process supports the long-term health of the forest.”*

- Donna Lacey, Manager of Forestry and Lands, SVCA

Looking ahead, SVCA is excited to announce a public tree-planting event in the spring, giving all interested parties an opportunity to actively participate in restoring the area’s beauty. Details about this event will be shared closer to the date via press release, SVCA’s social media channels, and the website.

Given the removal of 7,300 trees just this fall, it’s remarkable that Stoney Island Conservation Area is available for clean-up so soon—a testament to the hard work of the team of professionals committed to a timely reopening of this space for the community. While the start of the ash tree removal was delayed by the unusually warm winter of 2023/24 and the rainy spring that followed, the dry fall allowed the work to proceed quickly once initiated. However, the recent heavy snowfall has introduced additional challenges. We appreciate the community’s patience as we work through these natural delays—this process reflects the reality of working in partnership with the environment.

SVCA extends its gratitude to the community for their patience and understanding during this project and thanks the volunteers for their valuable contributions to trail restoration. Together, we are building a stronger and healthier future for Stoney Island Conservation Area.

**For more information, please contact:**

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