



Administrative Report

Office of the Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Melissa Ryan, CPA
Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Date: Wednesday, December 06, 2023

Subject: Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)
Request for Funding of Coastal Resilience Plans

Report #: 2023-1206-FIN-R023-MR

Purpose

This purpose of this report is to explore a County funding option to assist the Essex County Conservation Authority (ERCA) in supporting Coastal Resilience Plans.

Background

The Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities (CRCC) Program, funded by a federal grant through the Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Division of Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN), is a significant initiative poised to support 20-25 projects with a total budget ranging from \$25 to \$30 million. These projects are scheduled to run from April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2027. The primary objectives of the CRCC funding encompass facilitating collaborative efforts among communities at a regional scale to address climate change risks in coastal regions, such as changes in lake levels, coastal erosion, storm surges, and flooding. Additionally, the program aims to promote systems-based approaches involving various stakeholders, including governments, Indigenous rights-holders, communities, businesses, academia, and others. Projects under the CRCC Program only necessitate 25% local matching funds, with NRCAN contributing up to 75% of a project's costs, maintaining a maximum 3:1-dollar ratio. Notably, projects seeking CRCC funding must have a minimum cost of \$300,000.

On November 27, 2023, the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) commenced discussions with County Administration to evaluate prospective projects under the CRCC program moving towards the application stage.

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Their purpose was to explore financial assistance from the County for two projects within the region. This engagement unfolded within a time-sensitive framework, given that the applications for these projects are required to be submitted by December 13, 2023. The timeline constraints require Council's prompt consideration.

Discussion

The Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) is presenting two distinct projects for consideration under the CRCC funding framework. The initial project entails the Lake St. Clair Resilience Plan (North Shore), encompassing 44 km of shoreline within Essex County, while the second project is the Lake Erie Resilience Plan (South Shore), covering 89 km of shoreline within Essex County. The total requested funding from the County for both projects is a maximum of \$200,000 over the term of the projects. The primary goal is to seek funding to effectively address local challenges and fortify our region's resilience against environmental changes.

Both project's overarching objectives involve collaborative efforts through committees and extensive public engagement throughout the study. It aims to leverage and review previous background materials and technical studies. The focus includes conducting vulnerability and risk assessments for both public and private infrastructure, with a specific emphasis on ecological assets like coastal ecosystems. The project intends to provide policy recommendations for long-term land use planning, existing development, and emergency response. Additionally, there's a focus on reviewing sediment movements and challenges related to coastal structures and harbors, optimizing sediment bypassing to downdrift beaches where feasible. The overarching goal is to develop adaptation approaches that increase the resilience of public infrastructure, such as county and municipal roads, to coastal hazards and the broader impacts of climate change. Lastly, these projects aim to actively implement pilot adaptation projects to enhance coastal resilience in practical terms.

The Lake St. Clair Resilience Plan (North Shore)

The Lake St. Clair Project constitutes one of the five 'subprojects' overseen by Conservation Ontario. Pooling these projects enhances the likelihood of securing funding. Each of the five projects is assigned its own Project Manager to effectively tackle local challenges and issues.

The Lake Erie Resilience Plan (South Shore)

The leadership of the Littoral Cell Resilience Committee will drive this project, leveraging existing partnerships with Federal Departments, Upper Tier Municipalities, Local Municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Provincial Representation, and Private Shoreline Associations.

Outlined in the Integrated Littoral Cell Resilience Plan are five key steps: Engagement & Assessment, Plan Development, Action Implementation, and Outcome Evaluation. With the acquisition of additional funds, this project is poised to realize its complete potential.

Financial Implications

Administration proposes annual funding for each project over the time period of the projects commencing in April 2024 and ending in December 2027. While the 2024 County budget does not allocate specific funds for these projects, the proposal suggests utilizing the rate stabilization reserve for funding in 2024 until December 2027. Importantly, this approach avoids impacting the levy but does draw on the reserves.

Lake St. Clair Resilience Plan (North Shore)

For this project, the proposed partner contributions include:

3 Conservation Authorities: \$60,000

County of Essex (with Council Support): \$50,000

Chatham-Kent (with Council Support): \$25,000

Other Partners: \$53,000

The collective partner contribution amounts to \$188,000, constituting 25% of the total project cost. To enhance funding, ERCA is actively exploring a partnership with Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) with the potential for a 75% match, translating to an additional \$564,000.

Considering these partner contributions and the potential NRCAN match, the total project cost is estimated at \$752,000.

Lake Erie Resilience Plan (South Shore)

For the Lake Erie Resilience Plan, proposed partner contributions include:

Essex Region CA: \$10,000

County of Essex (with Council Support): \$150,000

Other Confirmed Partners: \$195,000

Tentative Contributions: \$100,000

This collaborative effort results in a Total Partner Contribution of \$455,000.

Breaking down partner contributions:

Partners (Approximately 30%): \$455,000

Potential NRCAN (Approximately 70%): \$1,000,000

This project strategically aims for a competitive ratio of approximately 2.2:1 (around 70%) to align with NRCAN's potential matching of up to 3:1.

The Total Project Cost is \$1,445,000.

The overall request is \$200,000 for the projects over the term of the CRCC funding (April 2024-December 2027). The actual funding contribution is contingent on the approval of each project. If only one project receives CRCC funding approval, partial funding will be required. If no CRCC funding is approved, no required contribution from the County will be necessary.

Consultations

James Bryant, P.Eng. Director of Watershed Management Services, ERCA
Rebecca Belanger, Manager, Planning Services

Recommendation

That Essex County Council authorize a maximum funding commitment of \$200,000 for ERCA, to be drawn from the County's rate stabilization reserve funds, over the term of the projects, in support of the Coastal Resilience Plans, as described in Report 2023-1206-FIN-R023-MR, contingent on the successful approval of each project through the Climate-Resilient Coastal (CRCC) application process.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Ryan

Melissa Ryan, CPA, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Concurred With,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
N/A	N/A