



## Administrative Report

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** Allan Botham, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services

**Date:** Wednesday, February 5, 2025

**Subject:** Phragmites Control Across the County

**Report #:** 2025-0205-IPS-R02-AB

---

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information to County Council regarding the current and varied practices in the region to manage phragmites.

### Background

In 2025 there is no doubt that phragmites, in particular, invasive phragmites remains and requires our attention. Invasive phragmites is “an aggressive plant that spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth of and kill surrounding plants. While it prefers areas of standing water, its roots can grow to extreme lengths, allowing it to survive in relatively dry areas.” (Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/phragmites-fact-sheet>)

Invasive phragmites grows in stands that can be extremely dense with as many as 200 stems per square metre, so dense it crowds out other species, and can reach heights up to 5 metres. (Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/phragmites-fact-sheet>)

As noted in correspondence received from the Town of Amherstburg, “Phragmites significantly threatens our local ecosystems, waterways, and infrastructure.” (Refer to **Appendix 1**) A coordinated approach to Invasive Phragmites is appropriate.

After conducting some research, and attending a local chapter meeting of the Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario (DSAO)—which includes all local Drainage Superintendents from Essex County and the City of Windsor, as well as local drainage engineers and contractors—Administration reports that:

1. Several Local Municipal Partners (LMP) actively manage and budget for phragmites control in roadside and municipal drains.
2. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has become a champion in the fight to manage phragmites across Ontario, and
3. The Essex Region Conservation Authority is leading a local NCC initiative against phragmites.

## Discussion

The approach, locally, is varied among the Region's municipalities. A number of municipalities, through their Drainage departments, have mapped phragmites and implemented annual programs of cutting and spraying. Others address concerns upon request or as needed. Table 1 provides a basic summary.

**Table 1**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Description of Phragmites Activities</b>
Town of Amherstburg	Map, spray and cut annually
Town of Essex	Map, spray and cut annually
Town of Kingsville	Map, spray and cut annually
Municipality of Lakeshore	Map, spray and cut annually
Town of LaSalle	Cut roadside areas, Cut municipal drains on request
Municipality of Leamington	Map, spray and cut annually
Town of Tecumseh	Cut roadside areas, Cut municipal drains on request
City of Windsor	Cut roadside areas on request (Parks Dept)
County of Essex	Spray and cut annually through LMP contracts

As owners and custodians of vast areas of land, NCC has considerable experience in fighting phragmites and become quite active in addressing phragmites in Ontario. As an example, NCC is currently working with 400

private landowners in Norfolk County on what is known as the Norfolk Private Lands program. The program has been running since 2019 and is continuing through March 2026 with over 400 participants, and over 80 sites. The initial work started in natural areas at Long Point and Turkey Point, and expanded from there.

NCC has now secured \$100,000 specifically for projects in Essex County through the Ontario Phragmites Action program (OPA). OPA is funded from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and implemented by a number of agencies including NCC. The Essex Region Conservation Authority has been named the lead agency, and will be supported by the NCC, and OPA in our region.

ERCA has and will continue to convene meetings of a working group with the purpose of bringing together phragmites partners on the local scale to: support a coordinated approach to phragmites control, identify existing actions, identify priorities moving forward, and identify funding opportunities.

The Manager of Operation & Maintenance, County of Essex, sits on this working group. The group will be supported by the NCC, and the Invasive Species Centre (ISC). NCC will continue discussions with other Associations with the intention of garnering/sharing/growing as much expertise as possible. Other Associations may include: the Ontario Vegetation Management Association (OVMA), Land Improvement Contractors Ontario (LICO) and Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA).

A local effort against phragmites is already underway. The local working group will consider authoring Best Management Practices and facilitating coordination efforts. A coordinated working group may lead to such things as:

1. Regional Best Management Practices to combat phragmites;
2. Regional mapping;
3. Sharing of data and successes;
4. Workshops regarding herbicides and techniques;
5. Combined efforts toward regional funding applications; and
6. Genetic testing and herbicide selection.

The County of Essex will continue to participate in and support the working group led by ERCA. Administration will provide updates, or facilitate delegations from ERCA to County Council on an as needed basis.

NCC continues on a provincial scale to promote awareness of phragmites and the need for coordinated management at events such as ROMA, AMO, and the DSAO/LICO conferences.

## Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

## Consultations

Preparation of this report included consultation with our Local Municipal Partners, ERCA and the NCC.

## Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation</li></ul>

## Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0205-IPS-R02-AB, Phragmites Control Across the County as information.

## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*Allan Botham*

Allan Botham, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services

Concurred With,

*Sandra Zwiers*

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

Appendix	Title
Appendix I	Letter from the Town of Amherstburg Re: Phragmites Control Across the County