Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Pêches et Océans Canada

LAKE ERIE RESTORATION PRIORITIES

Ontario and Prairie Region, Integrated Planning:

What we Heard & Learned

Reviewing Phase Engagement Report

2025

Canada

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Disclaimer

This report provides a summary of key messages heard through written submissions and discussions held at virtual and hybrid sessions in January and February 2025. No personal information is disclosed in this report. All information collected stays anonymous outside of Integrated Planning Operations' (IPO) use. The high-level summaries presented in this report do not fully capture the richness of input received.

Introduction

Following the approach set out by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the Framework to Identify Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities, DFO's Ontario and Prairie Region is assembling fish and fish habitat restoration goals and actions for the Lake Erie Watershed to support the department's fish and fish habitat responsibilities as outlined in the Fisheries Act and Species at Risk Act. In 2023 and 2024 respectively DFO engaged on the concept of, and how to shape, restoration priorities. For this third phase of public engagement, DFO conducted a series of reviewing engagement sessions in early 2025 with participants, including Indigenous communities, government agencies, conservation organizations, and industry representatives. These sessions aimed to gather input on how to improve the Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD), identify new restoration actions and locations, and gather ideas on how to update restoration goals and actions, moving forward, to ensure their long-term relevance.
This report summarizes the key feedback received and highlights the common themes that emerged from discussions.

Engagement Approach

DFO, hosted multiple engagement sessions, facilitated by Neolé, including virtual and in-person meetings. Workshops were conducted separately with Indigenous, government agencies and non-Indigenous participants to ensure that culturally specific insights were appropriately captured. Additionally, written submissions were accepted to supplement the discussions.
The engagement process included:

- Facilitated brainstorming and discussion workshops.
- Written feedback through surveys and direct submissions.
- Focused engagement with Indigenous communities.

Feedback Analysis

All feedback gathered has been categorized into six key sections:

1. Common Themes
2. Feedback on Improving the Restoration Actions Dashboard (RAD)
3. Feedback on New Actions and Important Areas to be included in RAD
4. Feedback on Updating Restoration Goals and Actions to Remain Relevant
5. Feedback on Improving the Report
6. General Feedback

Feedback for the sections that received the most comments has been organized into themes to simplify review.

Feedback from Indigenous communities has been kept separate under each section to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, priorities, and considerations are clearly represented. This approach acknowledges the unique rights, stewardship roles, and knowledge systems of Indigenous communities. This ensures that their input is not generalized within broader participant feedback but is instead highlighted distinctly to reflect its significance.

Although feedback was not limited to the questions posed by DFO, comments outside the scope of Lake Erie Restoration Priorities development cannot necessarily be addressed. However, these comments may influence future DFO policy and program development.

Who We Learned From

Engagement workshops and feedback submissions included participation from:

- Indigenous communities and representatives
- Federal, provincial, and municipal government agencies
- Conservation authorities
- Industry participants (e.g., energy, construction, water management)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Academics and research institutions
- Community groups and local leaders

A full list of participating organizations is available in Annex A.

Common Themes

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) is recognized as a beneficial resource for tracking and communicating restoration efforts.	Continue to develop and finalize RAD.
The RAD should provide clear background information, user guidance, Indigenous land acknowledgments, definitions, and improved navigation for accessibility.	The RAD web landing page and RAD will provide clear background information, user guidance, Indigenous land acknowledgments, definitions, and improved navigation for accessibility within the technical limitations.
Restoration goals and actions must be regularly updated to align with evolving priorities and commitments under key agreements like the Canada-Ontario Agreement.	Develop a process for regular updates to restoration goals and actions, aligned with key agreements such as the Canada-Ontario Agreement.
Acknowledge that all ecosystem components (e.g. environmental, social, climate resilience, wildlife connectivity, access) are interconnected, while maintaining a clear focus on restoration efforts within DFO's mandate.	Where possible in RAD and the report, acknowledge that all ecosystem components are interconnected and clearly state that this initiative focuses on restoration efforts within DFO's mandate.
Long-term financial support is necessary for identifying, implementing, and monitoring effective restoration actions.	Acknowledge the need for long-term financial support to identify, implement and monitor effective restoration actions.

Feedback on Improving the Restoration Actions Dashboard (RAD)

Participants suggested several improvements to the RAD tool:

Feedback From Multi-Interest Holders

1. Navigation, Accessibility, and User Interface Improvements

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Add pre-populated help content and tips or instruction boxes (e.g., a FAQ section, and common dashboard questions).	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain a user guide and tutorial.
Include a disclaimer about missing projects on the main page.	The RAD web landing page will contain an introduction and disclaimers.
Improve filter usability: 1. Toggle layers on/off rather than using a bulky sidebar. 2. Use a shopping list-style selection for filters. 3. Include a filter for "Ongoing" vs. "New" projects. 4. Filters for specific funding/program requirements. 5. Enable search by year or house historical data in a separate legacy layer. 6. Include a field to indicate whether recent biological monitoring has been conducted.	Consider enhanced search functions within the technical limitations.
Improve icon visibility and functionality (location/overlap)	Consider improved functionality within the technical limitations.

Enhance map usability: 1. Increase pop-up box size for readability. 2. Allow toggling between different base layers (satellite imagery, Google Maps, and Google Earth layers). 3. Ensure browser resizing compatibility (currently cuts off content on smaller screens). 4. Improve mobile accessibility, if intended for mobile use. 5. Address accessibility issues (e.g., heading structure skips H2, filters lack keyboard support). 6. Consider removing duplicate legends to save screen space.	Consider enhanced map usability within the technical limitations.
Define terminology: ● "good/great" improvements to fish habitat etc. ● "Project Complexity" levels (e.g., Medium, High). ● Complementary Measures	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page and/or user guide will contain definitions where possible.
2. Enhancing Data Layers and Mapping Capabilities	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Expand geographic data: ● Add municipal, watershed, and sub-basin boundaries. ● Provide Conservation Authority (CA) boundaries as a togglable layer.	Consider including additional key context layers, where open data exists.
Improve project mapping methods: 1. Increase symbol placement accuracy 2. Use polygons instead of points for large-scale restoration projects. 3. Identify sub-watersheds for different themes 4. Direct users to relevant organizations.	1 & 2: Consider improved mapping within the technical limitations. 3. Restoration Goals were defined by the entire study area, not sub-watershed, as requested through engagement. 4. The organization that identified each restoration action is indicated.

Add external data integrations: 1. Integrate Canadian Great Lakes Baseline Coastal Habitat Survey data. 2. Include DFO's critical habitat for Species at Risk (SAR). 3. Leverage the Canadian Aquatic Barriers database for barrier removal projects. 4. Improve the Ontario Drains & Tiles layer by incorporating land use data (e.g., % agriculture, % urban). 5. Consider a landscape-level analysis using satellite imagery and aerial photography.	1. Consider including additional key data layers, where open data exists. 2. Included in draft 3. Included in draft 4. Consider including additional key context layers, where open data exists. 5. Consider including additional key data layers, where licensing permits.
Improve data ownership and privacy: ● Do NOT make the dashboard public if it contains projects from private landowners who have not consented. ● Clearly identify public landowners (e.g., city, municipality). ● Ensure landowner permission and consultation is explicitly mentioned where required.	Restoration actions identified are potential opportunities. Public or private land ownership is identified for each as an indicator of feasibility. Include disclaimers on the Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page.
Add details on regulatory requirements and permissions.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain an introduction and disclaimers.
Include project feasibility indicators to guide implementation steps.	Include the following feasibility indicators, project complexity, property ownership, size of restoration, likelihood of DFO regulatory review in the pop-up boxes.
3. Improving Project Submission and Tracking	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Include information on how to submit new actions or updates	Define a process for how to submit new actions or updates.
Enable bulk project uploads - Essential for large datasets.	Consider an approach to enable uploads for large datasets.
Improve project status tracking by adding fields to track project progress (e.g., "Proposed," "Ongoing," "Completed").	Incorporate project status for each restoration action.

4. Technical and Functional Enhancements

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Display links to data sources used.	Consider displaying data source links within the technical limitations.
Provide a total count of features and update it dynamically when filters are applied.	Consider providing a count of restoration actions within the technical limitations.

Feedback From Indigenous Communities

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Improve clarity in the mapping tool, with simplified pop-up information and downloadable reports.	Consider simplified pop-ups and downloadable reports within the technical limitations.
Add a user guide and built-in tutorial to improve accessibility.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain a user guide.
Include clear indications of when sites were last assessed and whether projects are completed.	Consider displaying dates within the technical limitations.
Better integration of treaty acknowledgments and Indigenous territories within the dashboard.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page and report will contain Indigenous acknowledgement. Consider including Indigenous territories data layers where open data exists.
Include an Indigenous consultation status for each restoration action, indicating whether nations in the area have been consulted.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain a statement regarding Indigenous consultation needs.
Provide contact information to Indigenous consultation teams directly in the mapping tool to ensure users know which Indigenous communities to consult in relation to a restoration project.	Consider providing contact information within the technical limitations.
More transparent permitting and approval processes could be reflected in RAD.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain an introduction and disclaimers regarding permitting.

Archaeological Assessments before digging: ● When restoration involves land disturbance, Indigenous communities emphasized the importance of considering potential artifacts. ● Suggestion to add a flagging system for projects requiring archaeological feasibility studies.	The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) web landing page will contain a statement regarding Indigenous consultation, planning and permitting needs.
Use original Indigenous place names for water bodies where possible.	Incorporate Indigenous place names where possible.
Go beyond stating project complexity—explain barriers to implementation, such as permitting challenges, funding gaps, or land access restrictions.	DFO permitting and land access information are provided for each Restoration Action.

Figure 1. ON_LE_002: Burgess Creek Perched Culvert where the recommended restoration action is to replace the perched culvert and improve physical in-water features for native species.

Feedback on New Actions and Important Places to be added to RAD

Participants identified additional restoration actions and critical locations that should be included in the RAD. DFO proposes to assess all proposed below feedback within DFO's fish and fish habitat responsibilities for possible inclusion in the Restoration Action Dashboard.

What We Heard/Learned From Multi-Interest Holders

1. Key Geographic Priorities and Actions for Inclusion

Major Water Bodies & Tributaries Identified:

- Thames River (West Delaware/Komoka PP to Lake St. Clair) – A major nutrient contributor with no projects currently mapped in the RAD.
- Grand River (Nith Watershed focus) – Identified in the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan as high-priority for fish, Unionids, and water quality.
- Mill Creek (Lower Grand River) – Significant coldwater restoration efforts underway (Brook Trout reintroduced).
- Kettle Creek, Catfish Creek, Big Otter Creek, Big Creek, Lynn River, Nanticoke Creek – Important for nutrient sequestration and wetland creation.
- St. Clair River (Mooretown → Port Lambton → Belle River) – High agricultural nutrient inputs affecting Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie.
- Sturgeon Creek (Essex County) – Active restoration by Caldwell First Nation and ERCA, with high SAR potential.
- McGregor Creek (Chatham) – Identified as a potential restoration opportunity.
- Dunnville Dam – Long-term reconnection project to restore 30 km of river habitat and coastal marsh ecosystems.
- Point Pelee National Park – In-water improvements, invasive vegetation management, and potential Hillman–Point Pelee reconnection.

Coastal and Nearshore Focus Areas:

- Hillman Marsh, Fox/Dolson Creek, Cedar Creek – Ongoing projects needing long-term commitment.
- Rondeau Bay – Significant wetland loss, and modeling suggests further decline under climate change.
- Lake St. Clair Coastal Wetlands – Identified as a priority for restoration.
- Connecting Channels (St. Clair, Detroit, and Niagara Rivers) – Important for shoreline and wetland restoration.
- Great Lakes Nearshore Waters – Currently underrepresented despite available assessment data.

Riparian Restoration:

- More riparian expansion and wetland creation along tributaries feeding Lake Erie's Central and Eastern Basins.
- Targeted nutrient reduction strategies should be prioritized in key watersheds (e.g., Thames, Maumee).
- Use Ecological Land Classification data to enhance restoration planning along the Lake Erie shoreline.
- Identify areas with low dissolved oxygen, high turbidity, and high nutrients as priority restoration zones.

Barrier Removal & Connectivity Improvements:

- Add pumps to the list of aquatic barriers.
- Reconnect Hillman Marsh and Point Pelee National Park to enhance fish migration and wetland health.

Coastal & Shoreline Enhancements:

- Address Rondeau Bay's eroding barrier beach to protect habitat and mitigate climate change impacts.
- Implement aquifer recharge and floodplain reconnection efforts to enhance ecological resilience.
- Restore sediment transport processes in Wheatley Harbor and other coastal areas.

2. Important Areas Data Layers

Improve Data Layers:

- Include Baseline Habitat Survey data (coastal habitat, barriers, riparian buffers, shoreline hardening, SAR info).
- Use the Great Lakes Nearshore Waters Assessment to better represent coastlines.
- Integrate watershed management plans (e.g., Thames River Shared Waters Approach).
- Include priority sub-watersheds for habitat protection and phosphorus reduction.
- Incorporate DFO's critical habitat for SAR.

What We Heard/Learned From Indigenous Communities

Long Point: Restoration should focus on natural shoreline stabilization instead of artificial barriers.

Pelee Island: Projects have been proposed for shoreline restoration and habitat protection—participants suggested following up with Caldwell FN for more details.

Thames River: Participants noted that there are no existing restoration actions on the Thames River in the RAD, despite significant degradation and opportunities for restoration.

Dunnville Dam and Marshlands: ● Participants suggested improving access to the public and Indigenous communities as a success measure for projects, ensuring the public can engage with these areas post-restoration.
Fish Passage and Habitat Connectivity: ● Recommendations included replacing hardened barriers with more natural materials. ● Many dredging projects were noted.
Removal of Phragmites and Transparency on Invasive Species Management Methods: ● Participants expressed a strong preference for physical removal over chemical methods. ● They suggested ensuring Indigenous consultation before permits for phragmites removal are issued.

Figure 2. ON_LE_039: Black Bridge Rail Dam where the recommended restoration actions are to rebuild the barrier to block Sea Lamprey passage, protect downstream conservation area from erosion due to dam failure, and to construct a fishway that allows for passage of species other than Sea Lamprey or Rainbow Trout.

Feedback on Updating Restoration Goals and Actions to Remain Relevant

To ensure the long-term relevance of restoration goals and actions, participants recommended:

Feedback From Multi-Interest Holders

1. Ensuring relevance of restoration goals

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
If goals are updated every five years they would reflect emerging priorities. More frequent updates might disrupt implementation.	Consider reviewing and updating restoration goals approximately every 5 years aligned with renewal of Canada-Ontario Agreement commitments where appropriate.
Try to align with broader regional and national conservation strategies, such as the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA).	Existing restoration goals have been reviewed to ensure alignment with COA and GLWQA. Consider reviewing and updating restoration goals approximately every 5 years aligned with renewal of Canada-Ontario Agreement commitments where appropriate.
Ensure an adaptive management approach such as incorporating feedback, new scientific data, and climate projections.	Consider incorporating into the restoration goal review process.
Suggestion to meet with stakeholders every 2-3 years and to prioritize engagement sessions over top of administrative calls	Consider incorporating meetings as part of the restoration goal review and update process.
Develop clear performance measures and benchmarks for assessing goal achievement over time.	Outside of scope for this restoration priority initiative. Consider performance measures for other DFO initiatives.
Consider the cumulative impacts of small-scale projects when evaluating long-term restoration goals.	Outside of scope for this restoration priority initiative. Consider performance measures for other DFO initiatives.
Allow flexibility to add new goals between formal update cycles if critical issues arise.	Consider as part of the restoration goal review and update process.

2. Ensuring relevance of restoration actions	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
If restoration actions are reviewed annually, it ensures they reflect ongoing needs and emerging opportunities.	Consider reviewing and updating restoration actions approximately every year to align with call for DFO Grant and Contribution applications.
Improve communication and collaboration with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and conservation authorities to verify the continued relevance of actions.	Continue to communicate and develop processes to collaborate with municipalities, Indigenous communities and conservation authorities to verify restoration actions.
Develop an automated notification system to remind project proponents and data providers to submit new actions and RAD updates.	Consider an automated notification system as part of the restoration action update process within the technical and resource limitations.
Incorporate climate adaptation strategies, ensuring that restoration actions support resilience against future environmental changes.	Add a statement regarding incorporating climate adaptation strategies into the design of restoration actions.
Encourage more comprehensive monitoring and reporting on past restoration actions to inform future decision-making.	Discuss this suggestion with the DFO program responsible for monitoring.

Feedback From Indigenous Communities	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Capacity funding is needed for Indigenous nations and community groups to engage in restoration planning and implementation. • Requests for long-term funding rather than one-off project grants, so communities can engage in continuous monitoring.	Acknowledge the need for long-term capacity funding.

Feedback on Improving the Report

Some participants provided feedback on how to improve the “Fish and Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities for Lake Erie Watershed” Report, including:

Feedback From Multi-Interest Holders

1. Improve Clarity, Structure, and Accessibility

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Reduce technical jargon to make the report more accessible to a broader audience by clarifying the following terms in an appendix.: ● complementary measures, ● nature-based approaches ● “indicator species” ● "on-the-ground" projects ● how "mutual benefits" are defined in restoration efforts. ● “fish”, to include mussels where relevant ● How “good/great” restoration actions are defined ● How project complexity is defined	Terms will be defined in the report and RAD, where possible. The final report will be reviewed by DFO Communications to ensure accessibility to a broader audience.
Clearly explain the report’s intent and purpose—the introduction should better define the audience, goals, and how the report aligns with DFO’s responsibilities.	Re-write and expand the report Introduction and Purpose section to better define the audience, goals and emphasize that this initiative aligns with DFO’s responsibilities.
Clarify how restoration projects align with funding opportunities, ensuring participants understand potential next steps.	Consider including an annex to outline possible implementation steps.
Include a hyperlink or footnote that provides easy access to the "What We Heard" reports.	Consider adding hyperlinks within technical limitations.
Clarify why aquatic invasive species (AIS) are categorized as "important" (i.e., due to their negative impacts).	Clarify inclusion of AIS control as an important restoration action.
Ensure DFO staff assessments of projects in the RAD are clearly stated (i.e., that projects were not vetted by other agencies).	Clarify wording regarding the assessments of restoration actions including alignment with other agencies priorities.

Clearly define "Ecosystem Functions", as the current definition is too broad. It should include water quality, flood attenuation, biodiversity, and fishery benefits.	Broader examples of ecosystem functions will be included in the report, however, for the purpose of the Restoration Priorities initiative the Ecosystem Function will limited to DFO's mandate.
Clarify whether "changes in water quantity" should be listed as a separate threat.	Threats have been identified in the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Policy. Water quantity related restoration goals and actions that align with DFO's Offsetting Policy will be incorporated. Many water quantity concerns are outside of DFO's responsibility.
Improve site selection explanations - clearly state why certain locations were prioritized and how new sites can be proposed.	Clarify wording regarding how restoration actions were assembled and how new sites can be added.
Reorder certain sections to improve flow: ● Introduce the Restoration Goals and Actions earlier in the report to provide better context before presenting specific site details. ● Species discussion should come before habitat areas. ● Summary of threats should come before listing specific threats.	Consider recommendations within the context of the prescribed report template.
2. Strengthen Data, Metrics, and Reporting	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Clearly define restoration outcomes by developing Lake Erie-specific thresholds and benchmarks to guide implementation.	Restoration goals and actions were assembled from others. Thresholds and benchmarks are outside of this restoration priorities initiative. Consider in other DFO initiatives.
Clarify why the top three threats were chosen for restoration priorities.	Clarify report wording that the top three threats are the ones within DFO's mandate
Ensure the report includes critical habitat data such as: ● Coastal wetland vulnerability ● Riparian buffer zones ● High-stress areas due to anthropogenic impacts ● Coastal wetland vulnerability	Consider incorporating links to open data for important areas provided by others.

Expand species coverage to include non-SAR species to prevent future species-at-risk listings.	All fish species are listed as important.
Include sensitive species lists, such as those from the DFO's "Classifying Ontario Municipal Drains v3.2" protocol.	Consider adding sensitive species from Ontario Municipal Drains into species lists.
Ensure nutrient loading concerns are more explicitly addressed in restoration actions.	Nutrient loading related restoration goals and actions that align with DFO's Offsetting Policy will be incorporated. Many nutrient loading concerns are outside of DFO's responsibility.
3. Minor Corrections	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Update organization names: Change "Trout Unlimited Canada" to "Freshwater Conservation Canada" (rebranded).	Incorporate revisions.
Ensure hyperlinks function properly, as some were broken in the reviewed draft.	Incorporate revisions.
Ensure consistency in terminology, species names, and classifications (e.g., correcting "Hckorynut" to "Hickorynut" and specifying "Rainbow Smelt" instead of just "Smelt").	Use consistent terminology and spelling throughout the report.

Figure 3. ON_LE_034: Ankney Pond where the recommended restoration action is to restore and protect the wetland as a refuge for species at risk.

Feedback From Indigenous Communities

1. General Improvements

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Use more infographics and visual elements Move away from a rigid hierarchical list and instead present a visual representation of how restoration goals and actions are interconnected or highlight relationships between different interventions (e.g., improving in-water habitat positively affects surrounding wetlands and fish populations).	Consider developing infographics and visual elements within the specified report template limitations.
Explicitly show how the mapping tool and report can be applied in real-world scenarios to inform project planning, funding applications, and community partnerships (e.g., present case studies: “Proponent A wants to restore a wetland. Here’s how they used the tool to identify priority areas and potential partners.”).	Consider including an annex to outline possible implementation steps.
Explain why specific restoration actions were chosen and clarify how restoration projects will be monitored and evaluated, including what “success” looks like for each initiative.	Document restoration action selection process in the report. Discuss the monitoring suggestion with the DFO program responsible for monitoring.

2. Strengthen Indigenous Representation and Acknowledgment

What we heard/learned	What DFO proposes to do
Acknowledge Indigenous stewardship/land acknowledgements throughout the report.	Incorporate Indigenous stewardship into the RAD landing page and throughout the report.
• Use original Indigenous place names for Lake Erie and other water bodies. • Consider language inclusivity—for example, translations of key sections into Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and other Indigenous languages.	Consider using Indigenous place names in addition to settler place names where possible.

Recognize Indigenous species of cultural importance that may not be included in Western ecological assessments.	Where provided, Indigenous species of cultural importance will be included.
Incorporate links to Indigenous-led water walks and restoration initiatives as additional resources.	Consider including links to water walks in the reference section.
3. Clarify Consultation and Partnerships with Indigenous Communities	
What we heard/learned	**What DFO proposes to do**
Include clear guidance on consulting with Indigenous nations before initiating restoration projects. ● Provide direct contact information for Indigenous consultation teams. ● Link to tools like Nations Connect so that project proponents can easily determine which communities should be involved.	Incorporate statement regarding the need to consult with Indigenous nations before initiating restoration. Defining the process for Indigenous consultation is outside scope of this initiative.
Ensure Indigenous priorities are reflected in how restoration actions are carried out, not just in the identification of restoration actions.	Incorporate statement regarding the need to consult with Indigenous nations before initiating restoration.

Figure 4. ON_LE_024: Charlie Creek Perched Culvert where the recommended restoration action is to remove the perched culvert and naturalize the stream.

General Feedback

Comments below are beyond what can be addressed through this initiative, but are recorded here for potential use in other initiatives or for providing to partners who may be able to benefit from them.

General Feedback From Multi-Interest Holders
What we heard/learned
Concerns about balancing economic development with environmental sustainability.
Suggestions for increased public education and outreach on conservation issues.
Balance regional-scale planning with local project opportunities: ● Short-term: Focus on local, opportunistic projects. ● Long-term: Align with larger regional restoration strategies.
Incorporate Expert Judgment in Decision-Making: ● Utilize expert-driven advice to prioritize where restoration actions will have the most impact. ● Recognize that certain areas provide greater ecological benefits than others. ● Ensure the co-benefits of multiple initiatives (e.g., offsetting, phosphorus reduction, habitat restoration) are fully integrated.
Engage Conservation Authorities, NGOs, and Indigenous groups to better define priority watersheds.
Recognize that smaller restoration actions can cumulatively provide large-scale benefits.

General Feedback from Indigenous Communities
What we heard/learned
There needs to be support for Indigenous land guardians and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) into decision-making.
Improve consultation processes so that First Nations communities are engaged earlier on in the engagement planning process.
Encourage broader agency collaboration—many environmental issues are interconnected, and agencies beyond DFO (such as Environment Canada) may need to collaborate more closely.
Concern about dredging and shoreline hardening impacting historical sites.
Recognition of past damages, such as sediment loss due to historical sand mining.

Next Steps

Later in 2025 DFO is planning to share information with Agencies, Indigenous groups and multi-interest participants about what was learned during the reviewing phase of engagement.

Input received during this phase of engagement will be used to finalize and publish the Restoration Actions Dashboard (RAD) and the Fish and Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities for Lake Erie Report by early 2026.

Conclusion

DFO appreciates the valuable contributions from all partners, participants and rightsholders who participated in this engagement process. The feedback received will inform the finalization of the Restoration Actions Dashboard (RAD) and the Fish and Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities for Lake Erie Report.

DFO learned:

- The Restoration Action Dashboard (RAD) will be a very useful product
- When RAD is available on the DFO website, it should include, the initiative background, possible users, an Indigenous land acknowledgement, definitions, a user guide, access to data, improved navigation and restoration action status.
- Restoration goals and actions need to be updated regularly to stay relevant and should be linked to DFO's commitments under the Canada-Ontario Agreement under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.
- The Fish and Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities for Lake Erie Report should clearly acknowledge that in the ecosystem context all things are connected, but this initiative addresses only those restoration goals and actions within DFO's mandate.
- Sustained funding to identify potential restoration actions, design and implement restoration, and monitor success of completed works is needed.

DFO is committed to ongoing engagement with Indigenous Peoples, agencies, partners and interest holders, striving for transparency and cooperation to build trusting, long-term relationships.

Annex A: Participating Organizations

A list of participating organizations will be included here.

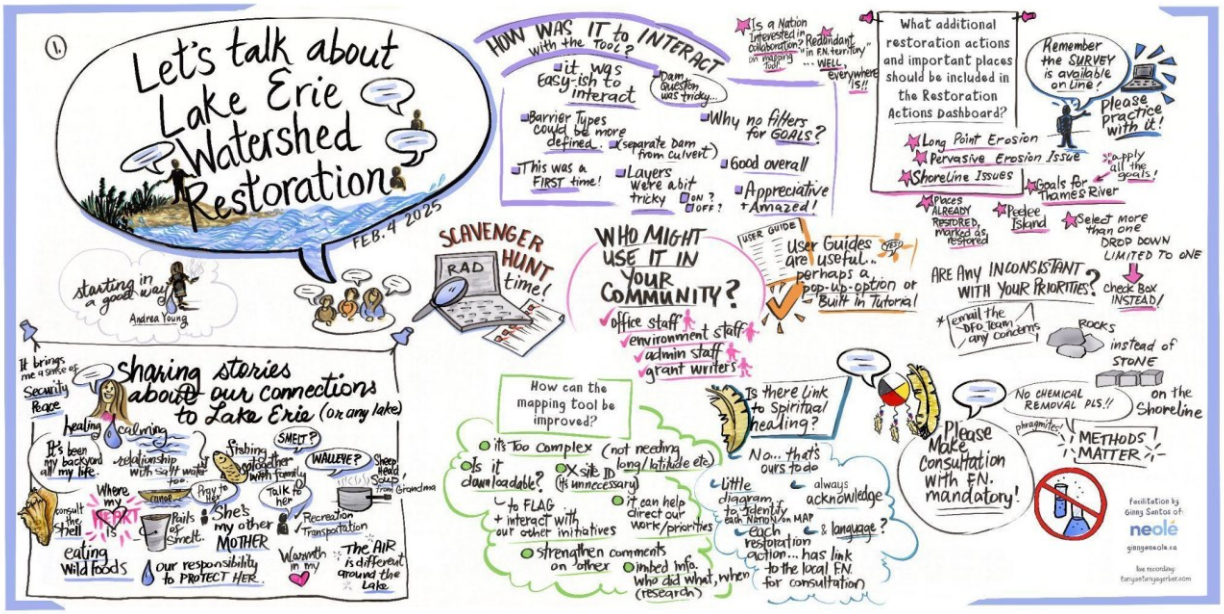
Type of Engaged Party	Name	Engagement Type
Indigenous	Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Indigenous	Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Indigenous	Caldwell First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Indigenous	Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Indigenous	Walpole Island First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Indigenous	Aamjiwnaang First Nation	Engagement Session: 4-Feb-2025
Municipal	Drainage Program at Norfolk County	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
NGO	Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Conservation Ontario	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Academia	University of Toronto	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Upper Thames River CA	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Kettle Creek Conservation Authority	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Essex Region Conservation Authority	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025

Type of Engaged Party	Name	Engagement Type
Conservation Authority	Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Conservation Authority	Grand River Conservation Authority	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
NGO	Freshwater Conservation Canada	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025 Smart Form
Municipal	Haldimand County Engineering Services	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
NGO	ALUS	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Municipal	Drainage Superintendent North Perth	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
NGO	Ontario Federation of Agriculture	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
NGO	Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025 Smart Form
Municipal	Elgin County	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Municipal	Municipality of Leamington	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Municipal	City of London	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Municipal	City of Windsor	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Municipal	Haldimand County	Engagement Session: 6-Feb-2025
Federal	Parks Canada	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025
Binational	Great Lakes Fishery Commission	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025

Type of Engaged Party	Name	Engagement Type
Provincial	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025
Provincial	Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025
Federal	Canada Water Agency	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025 Smart Form
Federal	Environment and Climate Change Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025
Federal	Canada Water Agency	Engagement Session: 7-Jan-2025 Smart Form

Annex B: Graphic Recordings

Graphic recording is a visual method of capturing and summarizing the key points, discussions, and ideas that emerge during a participant engagement meeting. This technique helps participants see the connections between ideas, facilitates understanding, and enhances engagement by providing a clear and memorable visual summary of the meeting. Comments from indigenous participants were recorded in the following real-time visuals:



Annex C: Acronyms

IPO	Integrated Planning Operations
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
RAD	Restoration Action Dashboard
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CA	Conservation Authority
SAR	Species at Risk
COA	Canada-Ontario Agreement
GLWQA	Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement
AIS	Aquatic Invasive Species
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge