

Phase 2: FOCA Expanding Community-Led Source Water Protection

To follow up on the pilot project on Crego Lake, in 2025 the MECP requested a deeper exploration of how Best Practices could be implemented, this time using only volunteer community contributors.

After a competitive selection process, three FOCA member associations were chosen to undertake this work. Each group committed not only to completing the process, but also to sharing their findings within their communities and across the broader lake association network.

The three participating groups were:

- Little Silver and Rainbow Lakes Property Owners Association
- Halls and Hawk Lakes Property Owners Association
- Lake Bernard Property Owners Association

These communities, located across south and central Ontario, brought strong local knowledge and commitment to the project.

The Process

Each group followed a structured approach to better understand and protect their drinking water sources:

- **Characterizing drinking water use:** Identifying who relies on which water sources
- **Identifying threats:** Using the established threat list under the Clean Water Act
- **Assessing vulnerability:** Determining where risks to water quality and public health are greatest

Community Impact

Over the past year, these volunteer-driven teams dedicated themselves to learning and applying the process of threat evaluation and risk assessment. Drawing on their local expertise and deep connection to the land and water, each group developed:

- A comprehensive overview of their community
- Practical, forward-looking action plans to protect drinking water

Their work demonstrates that committed volunteers can play a leading role in preventing contamination and safeguarding water resources for future generations.

Why This Matters

The pilot projects undertaken by FOCA member groups over the past two years offer powerful models for source water protection.

By identifying risks early (whether from agricultural runoff, aging infrastructure, or other stressors) and by taking a thoughtful, methodical approach to assessing threats, communities can become effective and vigilant stewards of their drinking water.

Key Takeaways

As we wrap up, a few important themes stand out:

- **Every community is unique**
Local hydrogeology, land use, and stressors vary; making locally developed Source Water Protection Plans essential.
- **This work takes time**
These pilot groups took about a year to complete their plans, even with technical support. It requires data gathering, surveys, mapping, and careful analysis (but it is absolutely achievable!).
- **The real work begins now**
The next step is action. Findings must be clearly communicated:
 - Residents need accessible information
 - Property owners must understand their role
 - Municipalities should integrate protections into planning tools like Official Plans

Learn More

If you're considering undertaking this work in your own community, we encourage you to review the pilot reports below. They offer practical lessons and guidance, even for communities not yet ready to complete a full plan.

Pilot Project Reports:

- [Little Silver & Rainbow Lakes Report](#)
- [Halls & Hawk Lakes Report](#)
- [Lake Bernard Report](#)