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Subject: Media Release: Tsunami of Enforcement Complaints Leads to Changes

Tsunami of Enforcement Complaints Leads to Changes
Conservation Authority encourages online form for submitting violation concerns

Lake Simcoe Watershed – May 3, 2022 – The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has seen a deluge in complaints about environmental malfeasance within its boundaries in the past two years. In response, they’ve implemented changes to how they receive complaints.

To put it in perspective, the complaints have more than doubled in the past two years since the pandemic began, from 145 complaints in 2019 to almost 400 complaints in 2021. “We’re struggling to keep up with the volume”, said Ashlea Brown, Director of Environmental Regulations at the Conservation Authority. “We had to think outside the box and find a way to ensure we review every complaint and prioritize the most serious issues,” she adds.

The Conservation Authority has developed an online form that requires complainants to submit detailed information to better assess the magnitude of the issue. It supports a "hit the ground running" approach by providing the information needed without a lot of back and forth.

The benefit for residents is that they can access the online form any time of the day or night, including submitting photos of the alleged violation. The web page introduction to the online form provides greater detail about what sorts of activities fall within the Conservation Authority's regulations.

Animals in distress, for instance, should be directed to local animal control or the province's animal welfare line. Cutting of trees is a local municipal by-law issue. Environmental spills are the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment through the Spills Hotline. Providing more detail up front is intended to help re-direct complaints to the appropriate agency, leaving more resources to address serious environmental issues such as wetland destruction and building in floodplains.

The conservation authority piloted the form in 2021, and so far it's helped gather better information, but many people are still submitting complaints that are not within the Conservation Authority's area of responsibility. They're hoping the additional up-front instructions, and a move away from phone complaints, will help.

The [online complaints form is available on the conservation authority's website](#).

Our mission is to work with our community to protect and restore the Lake Simcoe watershed by leading research, policy and action.

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