

And the most recently established group, the Ontario Water Resources Commission of the Department of Municipal Affairs, has wide powers in the study and control of water problems and is concerned at the present time very actively with sewage disposal problems and municipal water supplies.

Considering the scope of conservation covered by these four departments—and some of them are quite large, Lands and Forests, for example, including permanent and seasonal help has a staff of 4,200—one may reasonably wonder why the Government of Ontario as recently as sixteen years ago in its wisdom decided to establish still another department to plan and co-ordinate conservation schemes. The answer is that this was an entirely new approach in conservation activities directed to assist the municipalities primarily in Southern Ontario.

THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT

The Conservation Authorities Act was passed by the Legislature in the spring of 1946. It required that all municipalities in a watershed—cities, towns, villages and townships (not counties)—be included in the body corporate.

The first step in establishing a Conservation Authority is undertaken by all the municipalities wholly or partly within a watershed. Two such municipalities must first by resolution petition the Minister of Commerce and Development to call a meeting for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not it is desirable that an Authority should be established. Two-thirds of the number of representatives which the municipalities are entitled to appoint (on a population basis) must be present to make the meeting legal. If two-thirds of those present vote in favour, a resolution is forwarded to the Minister requesting that an Authority be established. The Authority is then made legal by an Order-in-Council and under the Act becomes a body corporate with representatives from all the municipalities in the watershed, including those, if any, which voted against its establishment.

Thus from the above it will be seen that the establishing of a Conservation Authority is a simple legal matter. At the preliminary meeting the presiding officer is a senior civil servant, who together with a secretary chosen at the meeting forwards a report with the resolution to the Minister of the Crown. In some cases small adjustments have been made in the area under consideration before the Order-in-Council is presented for approval, but since the inception of the work not one request for establishing an Authority has been refused.

The number of Authorities, including a Conservation Commission, which was formed before 1946, is 30. The area covered is 19,671 square miles; the number of municipalities 434, and the total membership 695.

The Authorities vary greatly in size, from the smallest with an area of 86 square miles and 8 members to the largest with 2,614 square miles and 78 members, the length of the smaller one being 20 miles and the largest one 118 miles.

THE CONSERVATION REPORT

While most of the early Authorities were brought into being because of flooding, all were aware of the necessity of carrying out such supplementary measures as improved methods of land use, reforestation, proper woodlot management, prevention of pollution, investigation of underground water supplies, fish and wildlife studies and recreation. But the Authorities were not equipped to carry out the extensive investigations that would indicate where such work should be done. Consequently the Conservation Branch of the Department of Commerce and development undertook to carry out, at no expense to the Authority, preliminary investigations as a service to the Author-