



FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Exceptional Waters Program

Year 2 Report

December 2005

Exceptional Waters Paris to Brantford Year Two Report

December 2004-November 2005

November 30, 2005 marked the end of the original Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for the Exceptional Waters program. It has been a very productive second year. Due to a slight surplus from the original budget the community advisory committee proposed to complete the use of the committed funds by extending the coordinator's contract on a reduced hour's basis. This was approved by the OTF and accepted by the GRCA and the coordinator. The current position will now end on June 30, 2006. This extra time will accommodate merging the Exceptional Waters programming into appropriate partner's regular plans. This will provide a continuing focus on the value of the Exceptional Waters reach of the Grand River to its participating communities.

State of the Resource Report

A major program objective was reached upon the completion of the State of the Resource Report, authored by Bob Scott and Jack Imhof with contributions from staff of the GRCA and the OMNR. This report examines the current state of the Grand River and follows a path through the history of the area to trace the consequence of change to the health of the watershed. It is then able to follow the recovery from a very poor condition to its current state where it is becoming recognized as a river of choice for sport anglers and recreational water use. The report is posted to www.grandriver.ca/exceptionalwaters the GRCA website. It gives interesting perspectives on the Exceptional Waters reach.



River access signs can be found throughout the Exceptional Waters area. This one is at Penman's Dam in Paris.

Information Signage

The project to provide permanent signage at the Exceptional Waters river access landings was completed in early 2005. Signs were placed on kiosks at Penman's Dam, Bean Park, Brant Conservation Area and at the Cockshutt Bridge. These interpretive signs provide background on the Exceptional Waters Program and promote stewardship of the resource. The Brant Waterways Foundation provided the financial assistance to produce and install the signs.

An access signage project saw 26 direction signs placed to guide users to the public access points. More access signs will be purchased and installed as funding becomes available. Brantford Tourism, Parks and Recreation and the County of Brant Roads Department helped select sign locations.



Local dignitaries and river users were on hand for the official opening of the Cockshutt Bridge access area in May 2005.

Cockshutt Access Official Opening

May 20 saw the official opening of the Cockshutt Access. This project had been a long time goal of the Brant Waterways Foundation. Its realization has provided greatly improved parking and access to the river at the Cockshutt Bridge. This popular point for river users is well utilized, particularly for family angling and as a beginning or ending point for river excursions. The Brant Waterways Foundation partnered with SC Johnson, a Family Company and engineering firm, JH Cohoon to design and construct the new parking lot and provide a ramp to the river's edge. The Brantford Parks & Recreation Department provide on going seasonal maintenance.

efforts into garbage collection and removal. Local outfitters, Blue Heron Rafting, Grand Experiences, and Heritage River Canoe and Kayak provide on-going seasonal collection as well as supporting the clean-up days by providing canoes and rafts. The LCBO Employee's Association again selected the Brant area for their community environment project and managed to remove substantial large objects between Bean Park and the Brant Conservation Area. The Association and partners, Banrock Station Wetlands Foundation and the Grand River Conservation Foundation, combined to donate \$4000 to the Carolinian reforestation program as part of their weekend activities.



Students from Pauline Johnson Collegiate looking at benthic invertebrates to learn about aquatic environments and assess stream health.

The Pauline Johnson Environment Class continues a project initiated in 1990 to maintain and rehabilitate D'Aubigny Creek as trout habitat. This small tributary of the Grand is one of only two cold water streams in an urban area in south western Ontario that contain a native population of Brook Trout, the original trout species found in Ontario.

Benthic Studies

The health and variety of insects living in the river substrate is a key indicator of water quality. A study began in July 2004 to monitor the invertebrate population in the Exceptional Waters reach. There are seven monitoring sites covering key areas. Samples are collected in mid summer and late autumn. Three sets of samples have been collected to date. The results are very encouraging. Although more repetitions will be needed to provide a suitable baseline the initial analysis is looking very positive. It is helping us to understand the food source that is providing the incentive for popular aquatic and birds' species to return to the reach in substantial numbers. This series of tests will continue to monitor the benthic habitat. A key group of volunteers from the community advisory committee make up the sampling team.

Community Stewardship

Each spring and early summer a number of community groups organize river corridor clean-up events. This past year saw the Mohawk-Laurier Environment Club; the CELP Team from Paris District High School, Assumption College and Trout Unlimited, Middle Grand Chapter put strong



The area around Five Oakes is popular with anglers seeking rainbow trout in the spring and fall and smallmouth bass in the summer.

Promotion Activities

The committee supported displays at various local and regional activities in 2005. Table top displays were used at the Water Forum, Heritage River Workshop and Laurier Orientation. Partner organizations provided display space at the Spring Fishing Show, Outdoors Show, Sportsman Show, K-W RV Show and the BR&GC Show. Presentations were made to both municipal councils and to a number of local organizations who requested speakers.

The Brantford Expositor has found the river and water quality a productive source for stories and articles. Their writers have produced a number of major articles in 2005. These activities are the basis of a growing recognition of this resource to the community.

Visitors and Users

Each year seems to attract more distant visitors as the reputation of the Grand's quality expands. In addition to paddlers from distance points the angling community continue to find rewards in fishing the Grand. In 2005 the Grand Spey Clave took place at Brant Conservation Area with participants from the U.S. and the U.K. We hosted a researcher from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in Australia who had read about the work of the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan and the Exceptional Waters program and came for a first hand look. The outfitters had numerous long distant visitors' book trips. The local community continues to rediscover this wonderful local resource, either paddling the river or hiking and cycling the adjacent trails.

Fish and Birds

A cleaner river has led to returning population of fish and birds. These are major contributors to the increased interest in the Grand River and in particular the Exceptional Waters reach. Steelhead trout are a major sport fish. They have returned to this section of the river in increased numbers and with them have come the serious fly anglers. The bass fishery is also strong and attracts local and distant anglers. Perhaps the most special anglers are the bald eagle and osprey. Their return provides evidence of an improved quality resource when they can feed and raise healthy offspring. The Exceptional Waters program has supported programs and activities that enhance the habitat for these populations. Committee members are participating in an eagle watch program in the winter of 2005-06 to help better understand their movement.



Visitors to the Exceptional Waters area enjoy a paddle down the river.



Volunteers from the LCBO Staff Association remove large debris from the river between Paris and Brantford..

Looking Ahead

During the balance of the current project period a major focus will be developing a community based Resource Management Plan. Input will be sought from community and will be used by the advisory committee and municipal partners to recommend a management plan. The plan will focus on ways to enhance the four cornerstones of the program, as a resource, from a recreational outlook, through increased knowledge of the science and from a community stewardship perspective. The river continues to improve. The many trails and on water experiences plus the improving habitat and resulting increase and diversity of the wildlife that make the Grand River watershed home attest to that. The Grand River is a jewel that is still being polished. The Exceptional Waters reach is one area where this is greatly visible.

Partners

The Exceptional Waters Community Advisory Committee acknowledges the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing funding to support the community coordinator position.

Community Advisory Committee

- * Brantford Community Foundation
- * Brant Waterways Foundation
- * Grand River Conservation Authority
- * Grand River Conservation Foundation
- * Trout Unlimited Canada
- * Bell City Anglers
- * Brant Resource Stewardship Network
- * Brant Rod & Gun Club
- * Brantford Steelheaders
- * City of Brantford
- * County of Brant
- * Fish and Wildlife Guardians, Brant Section
- * Grand Experiences Outfitters
- * Grand River Fisheries Management Plan
- * Implementation Committee
- * Grand Valley Trails Association
- * Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- * Ontario Steelheaders
- * Six Nations of the Grand, Eco-Centre
- * Trout Unlimited, Middle Grand Chapter

For More Information Contact

Bob Scott, Exceptional Waters Community Coordinator
 (519) 621-2761 x296, bscott@grandriver.ca or visit
www.grandriver.ca/exceptionalwaters



Volunteers collect aquatic organisms from the river bottom. These organisms can give an idea of the river's overall health.