

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Helen Jowett
Vice-Chair	Chris White
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Guy Gardhouse
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Kirk McElwain
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	Chris White
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Elizabeth Clarke, Sue Foxton, Helen Jowett, Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell, Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth, Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	George Wicke
Halton Region	Cindy Lunau
City of Hamilton	George Stojanovic
Oxford County	Bruce Banbury
County of Brant	Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons
City of Brantford	Dave Neumann, Vic Prendergast
Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

Above average rainfall

Aside from a snowstorm on March 1 and several light snowfalls, the precipitation in March fell mostly as rain and was above average for the month.

The snowpack on the land disappeared early this year and was mostly gone by the end of February. Under these conditions, the landscape started to dry up and farmers were beginning to prepare their land for spring a little early.

By the end of the month, the reservoirs were within or slightly above their normal operating range. Temperatures in March were close to the long-term average, but were quite variable, alternating between cold and warm. The level of Lake Erie was well above the long-term average at the end of the month.

The first part of April has been wet and warm.

Forest thinning at Shade's Mills Park

Some of the trees in a 30-hectare (75-acres) forest at Shade's Mills Park in Cambridge are being marked this spring so they can be removed later in the year.

The trees are part of a group of pine and spruce plantation forests between Avenue Road and Clyde Road that were planted during the 1980s.

Tree thinning improves the health of the forests. It provides more room for the remaining trees to grow. It also makes space for trees and shrubs of other species. In time, these tree plantations will be converted into more natural and diverse forests.

Earth Day launch for Canada 150 campaign

The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) will kick off its Canada 150 celebration on Earth Day — Saturday, April 22 — at the Guelph Rotary Forest, where a maple grove shaped like a maple leaf will be planted in honour of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The celebration will continue for 150 days, and will include various activities, promotion of GRCA programs and initiatives throughout the watershed, as well as a number of events at Grand River Parks and nature centres. The GRCA will share information through its Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as its website and publications.

The Grand River watershed is rich in Canadian history. In 1994, the Grand River was designated a Canadian Heritage River for its cultural history and outstanding cultural values. Aspects of the Canadian Heritage River will be highlighted, as well as ways to learn about and enjoy nature in the watershed.

Morton prescribed burn

A prescribed burn took place at the Morton property near Pinehurst Lake Park on April 14.

A 20-hectare parcel was burned by Lands and Forests Consulting, a company that strictly follows the intensive Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry guidelines for prescribed burning to ensure safety and effectiveness.

The goal of the prescribed burn was to remove invasive non-native Manitoba maple, grasses and other plants. Fire is a normal part of the life cycle of prairie habitats. Native species can tolerate fire, so burning the land clears out non-native species. Fire also releases important nutrients into the soil, which promotes growth and increases seed yields. The burn will help to prepare the land for a native grassland enhancement project that will be seeded after the burn.

At one time, about 25 per cent of the Grand River watershed was tallgrass prairie. Today, only one per cent remains.

Elora Park renovation of Marston Pavilion underway

The Marston Pavilion at Elora Gorge Park will be renovated this summer and is expected to reopen on Canada Day.



The kitchen and washrooms will be renovated and a new accessible washroom will be added. In addition, the wooden pillars that hold up the structure have been deteriorating over the years, so the bottom 1.2 metres (four feet) of each will be replaced with concrete and clad in stone.

The GRCA has hired Demikon Construction of Guelph to carry out this \$227,000 project. It will be funded through a Canada 150 Community Infrastructure grant of \$83,250 and funds from the conservation areas capital reserve.

The pavilion opened in 1954, the year that this park opened. It is named after Kay Marston, a member of the GRCA board who was instrumental in establishing as the first conservation area in Ontario.

Floodplain mapping workshop held

Several GRCA staff members attended a floodplain mapping technology transfer workshop in Guelph in early March.

The workshop was organized by the GRCA and the Canadian Water Resources Association, with funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Federal National Damage Mitigation Program. About 190 people attended, and most were from conservation authorities and the provincial government. The first day covered the project that the GRCA is coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to adapt their hydrology model to better represent hydrology in Ontario and Canada.

Elora two-zone policy

A new two-zone floodplain policy area for portions of Elora and Fergus has been approved by the GRCA.

Updated floodplain mapping will now be used as the guiding document when dealing with planning matters and permit applications in the two-zone area. Amendments to the GRCA's regulation mapping incorporate the revisions to the floodplain and associated regulated allowance.

This change was requested by the municipality and is being made after a consultation process and necessary approvals.



Photo by Eric Bancroft

The GRCA's osprey WebCam is back for the third year. It allows people to watch a breeding pair of osprey at Belwood Lake. It can be viewed at www.grandriver.ca/osprey.

Two-zone areas are used for existing urban areas that have developed close to rivers and would not be put in place in new areas. They allow redevelopment with restrictions to manage the risk to people and property from floods.

Two-zone areas are in place in many other communities within the watershed.

Water quality report

A new high-level report summarizing water quality conditions across the watershed is complete and on the surface water quality page on www.grandriver.ca.

It shows water quality conditions at long-term sampling sites between 2013 and 2015. The report describes the relative status of nutrient concentrations (nitrogen and phosphorus) and uses the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's Water Quality Index.

River water quality is influenced by point sources, such as wastewater treatment plants, which can have a big negative impact that is more pronounced when river flows are low. Recent improvements to wastewater facilities and operations have been beneficial.

On the other hand, when river flows are high during the spring and heavy rainfall events, runoff from urban and agricultural areas have a significant impact.

Spring planting events across the watershed

The GRCA and its partners are hosting six planting events this spring and encouraging watershed residents to celebrate Canada 150 by planting trees in this watershed.

A complete listing of planting events is available in the online calendar at www.grandriver.ca/events.

This issue of *GRCA Current* was published in April, 2017.

It is a summary of the March, 2017 business conducted by the GRCA board and other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest.

The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes distribution, photocopying and forwarding of *GRCA Current*.

Next board meeting:

April 28 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre

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