

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Jane Mitchell
Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
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	Kelly Linton
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

New municipal agreements

The GRCA's planning department is renewing and updating agreements with municipalities that date back to the 1990s.

During that time, the province delegated responsibility for commenting on Planning Act applications to municipalities. Many smaller municipalities didn't have the resources to comment and conservation authorities helped them fulfill this role. However, a lot has changed over the past 20 years and the new agreements will reflect revised responsibilities and other changes that have taken place.

The agreements are going to be different for each municipality and will clarify the roles. For example, within Wellington County there are six conservation authorities and all are working together with the county to co-ordinate Planning Act issues and set out how planning is undertaken.

The GRCA provides comments to municipalities throughout the watershed for Planning Act applications they are considering. The agreements provide an opportunity to coordinate between Planning Act and Conservation Authority Act requirements when they overlap.

2015 was a Grand year for extreme temperatures

The past year had the highest high and the lowest low in average temperatures, as the graph below shows.

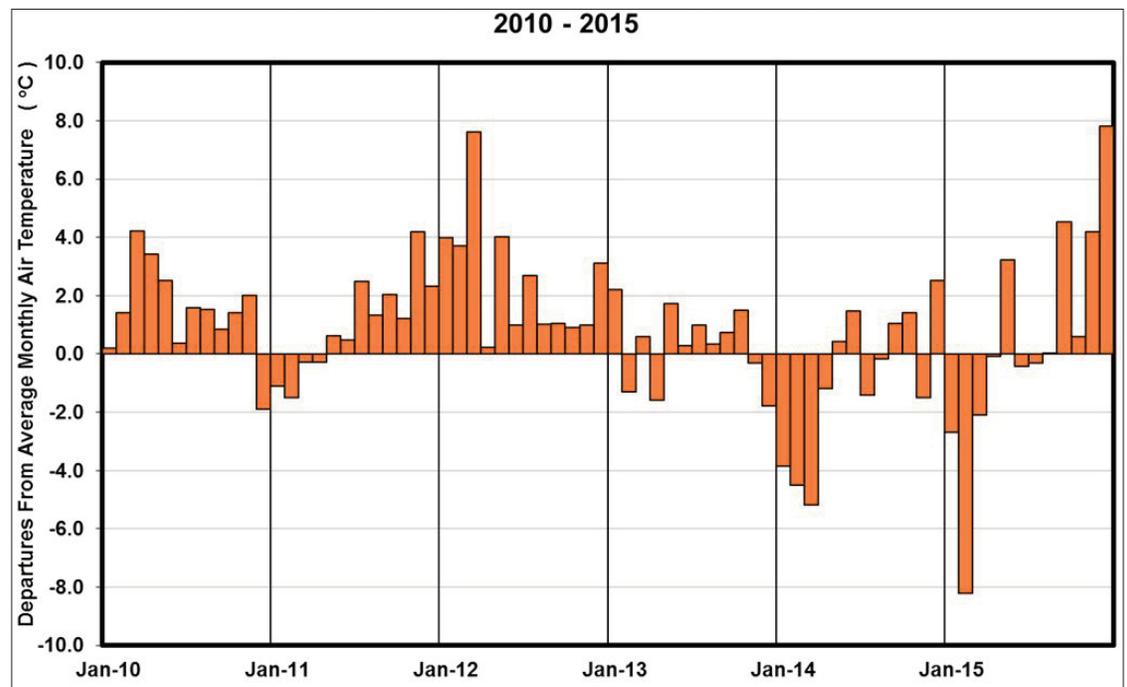
The first three months brought some of the coldest temperatures on record across the watershed, with an average temperature of -14.8 C at the Shand Dam weather station in February.

May was warm, while the summer was cool. However, the fall brought an upward swing with very warm weather that also broke some records.

Across the watershed the precipitation was below average during the year, but there was a big difference between north and south. The northern part tended to be close to the long-term average, but the summer was very dry south of Brantford.

Reservoir levels were at or above the upper level at the end of December.

The level of Lake Erie was well above the long-term average in December and is expected to remain high, which increases the potential for flooding along the Lake Erie shoreline.



Shade's Mills is now open year-round

Starting Jan. 4 2016, Shade's Mills Park in Cambridge has a new automatic access gate that allows the park to open year-round.

People will be able to drive up to the gate, open it and drive in. Visitors can open the gate by swiping their Grand River Parks membership pass or paying at the gate.

There will still be some restrictions on the hours of entry, but the park will generally be open dawn to dusk. The big advantage of the new gate is that people will be able to arrive at dawn for a run or to go fishing, rather than waiting until 8 a.m. as previously. In addition, the gate means people can experience the park during all seasons — when there are spring flowers, fall colours or the first snowfall.

This type of gate is planned for other parks within the next few years.



The new access gate means that Shade's Mills Park in Cambridge is open year-round. Visitors can use a Park Membership pass to enter without paying, or can pay using cash (bills and coins). Soon, credit cards will also be accepted for payment.

Warm winter expected

The warm December set a trend that is expected to continue through the winter.

The strong El Nino continues to impact temperatures and December was 6.9 C above average at Shand Dam.

Conditions are similar to those during the warm winter of 1997-98 when there was also a strong El Nino effect. However each El Nino episode is different.

The three-month forecast in the Grand River watershed calls for normal precipitation in the north and above normal in the south near Lake Erie where it is needed most.

Precipitation this winter is anticipated to be a mix of rain and snow, and there is a risk of ice storms. The first took place Dec. 28-29, however this didn't result in flooding. By Jan.1 there was snow throughout most of the watershed.

An early, warm spring starting in March is predicted, followed by a normal summer with the possibility of dry conditions.

Tree trimming on 20 hectares at Belwood

Sections of the recreational trails at Belwood Lake Park were closed for most of December so that forestry crews could thin

trees.

Approximately 20 hectares of forest plantations and sections of the walking trails were impacted. A plantation contractor harvested trees in order to improve forest health and biodiversity within the forest.

Scheduled thinning is done periodically to give growing space to the healthiest trees, allow for hardwoods to seed naturally and to improve the general health and condition of the plantation. Thinning during the winter avoids disrupting the spring and summer nesting seasons.

All work was done in accordance with sustainable forest management guidelines in the GRCA's Watershed Forest Plan.

Park membership passes

Grand River Parks membership passes have been very popular since they were introduced in 2014 and sales increased by 40 per cent between 2014 and 2015.

The pass replaced the vehicle season windshield stickers that had been used for many years.

The pass allows people to visit all Grand River Parks for one year from the date of purchase for \$125. This fee did not increase in 2016.

The pass comes with a coupon booklet for

experiences such as tubing at Elora Gorge, canoe rental and day passes to give to friends.

Families also enjoy an increasing number of visitor service programs provided by nature guides. These are also included in the park membership.

This issue of *GRCA Current* was published in January 2016.

It is a summary of the December 2015 business conducted by the Grand River Conservation Authority board and committees as well as other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest.

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

Next board meeting:

Jan. 22 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre.

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