

GRCA Minutes

Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge, Ontario N1R 5W6
Tel: (519) 621-2761 Fax: (519) 621-4844 Internet: www.grandriver.ca

**January 2008
Volume 14 - No. 1**

GRCA General Membership

Chairman - Alan Dale

1st Vice-Chairman - Jane Mitchell

2nd Vice-Chairman - Vic Prendergast

Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, East Luther Grand Valley, Melancthon and Southgate - Tom Nevills

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Acquiring new natural areas

One way that the GRCA helps promote watershed health is by acquiring land that is environmentally significant.

The GRCA owns over 19,000 hectares of land, which includes three per cent of the land, eight per cent of the forests and 18 per cent of the habitat for species at risk in the watershed.

Of all the GRCA's land, only 420 hectares has been acquired since 2000 and all of this is natural heritage wetlands, such as wetlands or hazard lands beside rivers and streams.

When the GRCA buys land, it is usually with funding assistance from the Ontario Heritage Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada or Ducks Unlimited. Sometimes land is donated and this generosity contributes significantly to publicly-owned natural heritage.

A challenge is that any land owned by the GRCA needs to be maintained and this comes with a price tag. For example, housing that is next to conservation areas needs to be protected from falling branches and trees, and this is a strain on the GRCA's hazard tree budget.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation and the GRCA have raised more than \$500,000 in recent years for land purchase and stewardship through the generosity of several committed donors.

Environment Canada's marginal water quality rating no surprise

CAO Paul Emerson told the board that he is not surprised by Environment Canada's recent "marginal" water quality rating for the Grand River that received lots of media attention.

The media reported that the Grand at Dunnville is "the third foulest river" in Ontario, and Emerson said that this is consistent with the annual water quality report that goes to the GRCA board.

The Grand River is nutrient-rich, partly because of its geology and partly due to the land uses within the watershed. Intensive agriculture and urban growth are key factors that contribute to the overall negative impact on water quality, especially downstream of wastewater treatment plants and in the southern reach near Lake Erie.

Most of the GRCA's municipal partners are working on wastewater management plans and the GRCA is also planning to update the water management plan for the watershed. This will deal with the combined impacts of sewage treatment, non-point pollution sources and removing unnecessary dams that slow the water down and degrade water quality.

Even if all the municipalities in the watershed met the Ministry of Environment discharge standards, there would still be a water quality problem in the Grand River, Emerson said. The GRCA would like to take a leadership role in setting a higher standard for the river.

Average precipitation expected

Precipitation to mid-December is on track to meet or exceed the long-term average for the month.

Less than half way through December, average precipitation ranged from a low of 36 per cent of the long term average at Guelph to a high of 80 per cent at Conestogo. Cold temperatures were well below the long-term average.

In the northern half of the water-



shed, over 50 mm of water content was recorded in most watercourses during the Dec. 1 snow survey. Having snow on the ground is like having money in the bank – the snow will melt at some point and this will help build the reservoirs back up.

The Level 2 low water condition declared on Sept. 26 throughout the Grand River watershed continued into December, due to ongoing lack of rain, reduced river flows and lower-than-average reservoir levels. In a Level 2, the Low Water Response Team asks water users to reduce their consumption by 20 per cent.

Rivers and ponds dangerous places in early winter

Cold weather and then warmer temperatures and rain make conditions dangerous around rivers and streams.

The impact of warm Christmas weather will be most noticeable in urban areas with an increase in flows in streams and ditches. Parents are advised to keep their children away from these areas because of the increased danger caused by higher flows, slippery banks and cold water temperatures.

Localized street flooding is also possible due to obstructed catch basins.

The Grand, Conestogo and Speed Rivers are expected to see moderate increases in flows but should remain within their banks. In rural areas, particularly the northern part of the watershed, the blanket of snow on the ground will absorb much of the rain, reducing the amount of runoff.

There is a potential for small ice jams to develop along the Grand which could cause localized flooding.

People should keep off the ice on rivers and streams where the thickness of ice can vary greatly and ice can erode from underneath, resulting in big changes in thickness within short distances.

In addition, water entering a river from a groundwater spring, storm sewer drain or other source can be warmer than the rest of the water in the river, creating spots of open water or thin ice.

For more information on river flows

see the "River Data" section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

Download a copy of the GRCA's river safety booklet for children in the "River Safety" section.

Three conservation areas plan to open for winter activities

Shade's Mills Conservation Area in Cambridge opened for ice fishing and cross-country skiing in mid-December, which is earlier than usual due to an early arrival of winter weather.

For skiers, there are four trails from 1.6 km to 2.7 km in length, for skill levels ranging from beginner to expert. The trails are groomed and track set. Ski equipment is available for rent for \$10, but skiers should call the park at 519-621-3697 to reserve equipment and check on current conditions. Groups should also call ahead for bookings.

Anglers will be able to fish for pike and perch. There are no ice huts or equipment rentals at Shade's Mills. The park will be closed on Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Shade's Mills is one of three GRCA conservation areas that will be open for winter activity this year. Pinehurst Lake, near Paris, will offer ice fishing and snowshoeing when it opens later in December. Laurel Creek in Waterloo will offer cross-country skiing when it opens. Information on the opening dates for these parks are posted at www.grandriver.ca.

Ice-fishing has been cancelled this year at two parks – Belwood Lake Conservation Area near Fergus and Guelph Lake Conservation Area – to protect the fish population. The water level in the two reservoirs is low because of the exceptionally dry weather during the summer.

Aggregate extraction concerns in the Grand watershed

Concerns about the possible impacts of aggregate extraction below the water table on water quality and quantity prompted the GRCA to meet with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association.

After several meetings, a set of principles to guide future activities addressing this issue were developed by the three parties. (Aggregate extraction in the province is governed by the Aggregate Resources Act, which the Ministry of Natural Resources implements and enforces.)

The principles acknowledge the importance of water and aggregate resources to the watershed and the need for more comprehensive and consistent data collection methods.

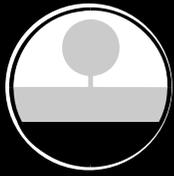
The principles also allow for the three organizations to work together to develop a guide for cumulative impact assessment and best practices in the watershed.

The GRCA board passed the principles and requested the Ministry of Natural Resources to provide opportunities for municipalities and the public to review and comment on the guide before it is finalized. Once completed, the ministry will be responsible for implementing the guide in priority areas of the Grand River watershed.

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**February 2008
Volume 13 – No. 2**

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Dale to serve second year as chair of GRCA board

Alan Dale has been re-elected for a second one-year term as chair of the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Dale, who represents Oxford County on the 26-member board, was acclaimed at a GRCA board meeting on Jan. 11. He has been a member of the GRCA board since 2000 and served as vice-chair in 2006.

“We have a rich and proud history, a grand history, and I believe that we have a great future ahead of us but we cannot rest on our laurels,” said Dale. “We must continue to work hard and lead the way. We must strive for a healthy and sustainable natural environment.”

One of the challenges will be dealing with the impact of climate change which will be felt in many parts of the GRCA’s operations, such as flood control, water supply and protection of natural areas.

Two vice-chairs, Jane Mitchell, a member of Waterloo Regional Council from the City of Waterloo and Vic Prendergast, a representative of the City of Brantford, were acclaimed to another term in these positions.

Upper Strasburg Creek and Alder Creek plans approved

The Alder Creek Watershed Study and Upper Strasburg Creek Subwatershed Plan were endorsed by the board.

Growth is expected in some parts of these subwatersheds and these studies will guide planning matters and permit applications.

Alder Creek is a tributary of the Nith River primarily within Wilmot Township, while the Upper Strasburg

Creek Subwatershed is in southwest Kitchener.

The studies outline management strategies to help preserve and protect existing natural features while allowing development to proceed in a responsible manner on land designated for that purpose.

A companion document, the Upper Strasburg Class Environmental Assessment, recommends replacing a culvert on Fischer-Hallman Road with a new one and adding a high level overflow culvert to resolve a flood concern. This work would be paid for by the Region of Waterloo.

The studies are posted on the website at www.grandriver.ca in the current studies and reviews section.

New Hamburg development permit approved by board

A proposal by Sunvest Development Corporation to put 160 residential units west of Catherine Street in New Hamburg was endorsed.

Most of the land is within the Regulatory Floodplain of the Nith River and the development has been in the works for more than two decades. It had already received approvals from the GRCA, Wilmot Township and Waterloo Region in the 1990s when regulations were not as stringent.

Only five hectares of the 27.4 hectare property will be developed and the rest will remain open space and a stormwater management facility. The number of units has been cut back from 202 in 1987 to 160.

This development will be flood-proofed and fill will be added to bring it above the regulatory floodline. In



addition, the stormwater management facility will provide enhanced water quality treatment not only for this development, but also for nearby existing development.

January flooding after thaw

It took years of planning, millions of dollars and the work of many organizations so that on Jan. 9 most of us could carry out our daily activities unaffected by flooding.

An extended warm weather front after freezing temperatures was very unusual because the river system had to cope with abundant water from sky and land within a very short time. It stayed warm even at night, melting the snow continuously. At the same time, 50 millimetres of rain fell across the watershed.

"The flood infrastructure that cost millions of dollars over many decades pays for itself when one major flood is averted," says Dwight Boyd, senior water resources engineer with the Grand River Conservation Authority. This warm weather front would have resulted in millions of dollars in damages along the Grand River in an earlier time.

The GRCA issued nine flood advisories to keep people informed of what to expect and where potential problems could occur. The reservoirs were used to reduce river flows through Cambridge and Brantford by up to 50 per cent. Major dykes that have been constructed in Bridgeport, Cambridge and Brantford protected these areas, keeping the water mostly in the river in urban areas. Municipalities were very effective at taking measures to ensure public safety such as closing roads and bridges. The media did a great job of keeping people informed.

"People shouldn't go away and say the river can't flood, it can flood," Boyd says. But the systems in place to protect people and property are effective and a worthwhile investment.

Warm wet January

After a long, dry spell there is lots of water back in the Grand River system.

Precipitation in January was gener-

ally above average with a low of 82 per cent at Shades Mills and a high of 190 per cent at Laurel Dam up until Jan. 24.

The temperature was well above average at three degrees warmer than the long-term average at Shand Dam to Jan. 23. Warmer weather means more evaporation of water from the reservoirs and more melting snow and ice.

The Shand and Conestogo dams are back to normal levels for this time of year. Guelph Reservoir was above normal, but was drawn down to the normal level so that it can absorb the spring runoff. Luther reservoir will remain above normal.

At the end of January strong winds and warm weather caused the water in Port Maitland to peak 0.35 metres above the critical level, causing an evacuation there.

Conservation area fees change

Fees for conservation areas in the Grand River watershed have been set for 2008.

Vehicle passes decrease from \$110 to \$95 when compared to last year. Camping fees are remaining the same at \$27 for an unserviced site and increasing by \$2 per night to \$34 for a serviced site. There will now be a new lower Sunday-to-Thursday rate for people who are staying for a week.

Eight of the GRCA's parks offer camping, making the Grand River parks the second largest campground operation in the province - second only to Ontario Parks - with more than 2,500 campsites. The 2008 fees for all types of services and camping in the GRCA's 11 conservation areas are posted on the website at www.grandriver.ca.

Heritage Day Workshop

People throughout the Grand River watershed can learn more about the traditions, events and influence of Six Nations at the 11th Heritage Day Workshop on Monday Feb. 18 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Six Nations Community Centre, Ohsweken.

The people of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory have been an important part of the Grand River watershed's history and heritage.

Over 200 participants are expected in the workshop which is free, although donations are welcome. Space is limited so it is necessary to register in advance. Contact Brandee Sandy, Chiefswood National Historic Site, 519-752-5005 or by e-mail at chiefs@execulink.com.

Source Water Protection committee now meeting

The Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee meets the first Thursday of each month to develop a source protection plan for the Grand River watershed.

The committee of 24 is under the leadership of Craig Ashbaugh and their second meeting took place Thursday Feb. 7.

After approving committee rules and other matters, their first big task is to create the terms of reference that will guide them in their work.

They will base their decisions on characterization reports for each of the four watersheds that make up the Lake Erie region - the Grand River and Long Point Region, Kettle Creek and Catfish Creek.

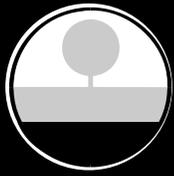
The meeting schedule, agendas and reports are posted on the website www.sourcewater.ca.

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March 2008
Volume 13 – No. 3

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GRCA approves 2008 budget
\$29.1 million, \$8.54 per person

The general membership of the GRCA has approved a \$29.1 million budget for 2008 that includes money for new projects to protect water quality, learn more about water supplies, enhance natural areas and upgrade its hydro generating capacity.

Although the budget is up about \$5.7 million from last year, most of the increase is due to special one-time projects that are being covered with grants from the province, municipalities or other sources.

The cost to the 950,000 watershed residents for their share of the GRCA budget this year will be about \$8.54 a person.

Budget expenditures are for operating expenses (\$18.1 million), conservation area operations (\$5.6 million) and special projects (\$5.4 million).

The three principal sources of revenue are self-generated funds such as park fees (\$12.2 million), municipal levy (\$9 million) and government grants (\$6.4 million). Almost all of the grants are from the province.

New green sustainability development policy

The general membership passed a resolution that will permit only sustainable development and construction on surplus land with development potential that the GRCA sells.

The GRCA owns over 19,000 hectares of land. Occasionally small parcels which don't provide an environmental, educational or recreational purpose are sold.

The new policy means conditions will be placed on the sale of this land

and only the appropriate kinds of development will be considered early in the planning process. This will be somewhat similar to the standards suggested by the United States Green Building Council's draft document "LEED for Neighbourhood Development" rating system.

The GRCA will set conditions through "expressions of interest" and "requests for proposals" that would allow land to be purchased only by organizations willing and able to design and build to specific environmental standards. For example, a purchaser will be required to design buildings that use less water and energy and meet other environmental criteria.

This land sale protocol fits well within the GRCA's vision statement calling for a healthy and sustainable natural environment.

The Feb. 12 report is posted with the agendas in the "Meetings" section of the website at www.grandriver.ca.

Flood outlook for spring

The combination of frozen ground and a significant snowpack means there is a high risk of flooding in the Grand River watershed this spring, according to a GRCA report.

Whether flooding actually takes place will depend on what happens during the spring melt. The winter started with dry conditions through November, but rain and snow fall have been at or above the long term average since then.

Water stored in the snowpack can melt and contribute to spring floods. The January snow melt has left the ground frozen and saturated with water, and recent snow has returned



the snowpack back up to normal levels.

The major GRCA reservoirs have between 52 per cent and 84 per cent of their storage capacity available for flood control. The Shand and Conestogo dams have enough storage to accommodate the water in the snowpack, but not enough to also accommodate heavy rains.

Two flood warnings have been issued for the Village of West Montrose because river levels were up to the road due to ice jams.

In the coming weeks, the reservoir levels will be monitored along with snowpack conditions, and adjusted to prepare for the spring snow melt.

Money for conservation projects available from Foundation

Applications are now being accepted from community groups and schools for Community Conservation Grants given out by the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Each year the Foundation awards grants of up to \$2,000 to qualified groups (must be a registered charity) or up to \$500 for elementary schools undertaking conservation projects in communities throughout the Grand River watershed.

Eligible projects must be tangible and available for the use or benefit of the entire community.

Deadline for receipt of grant applications is May 2. The award recipients will be selected this summer with the cheque presentations this fall.

A final report may be requested of grant recipients within one year, or upon the successful completion of the project.

Applications can be downloaded from the Foundation section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca/foundation or by contacting the Foundation at 519-621-2763 ext. 2271 in Cambridge.

Rotary forest at Guelph Lake

The Rotary Club of Guelph, the GRCA and the Grand River

Conservation Foundation are working together to turn a farm field into a 40-hectare forest at the Guelph Lake Conservation Area.

The club will purchase and organize the planting of 5,000 trees a year over the next 13 years - a total of 65,000 trees - to establish the "Rotary Forest."

The GRCA, which owns the land, will prepare the site and then manage the new forest, which is opposite the Guelph Lake Nature Centre on Conservation Road.

The three project partners will look for community support from organizations, companies and individuals in the form of donations, tree purchase plans and help with tree planting.

The project kick-off is Saturday, April 26 at an Earth Day and Environmental Showcase event. The project will end in 2020, which will also be the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Rotary Club in Guelph.

The creation of the forest, using native tree species, will improve wildlife habitat and bio-diversity in the conservation area.

Nominees for environmental awards sought for 2008

The Grand River Conservation Authority is looking for nominees for its 2008 environmental awards.

Each year the GRCA presents awards to individuals, families, organizations and businesses that have taken action to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Grand River watershed.

It presents two awards: the Honour Roll Award for a sustained record of achievement over an extended period of time and Watershed Awards for outstanding examples of conservation and environmental work.

Nominations can come from anyone in the watershed. The deadline for nominations is May 2. A nomination form is available from the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca. Look for the "Watershed Awards" link on the home page in the "Taking Action"

section.

The winners are selected by the Special Recognition Committee of the GRCA board. The winners will be honoured at a special event this fall.

Source water newsletter sign up now available

Anyone can subscribe to the newsletter to implement the Ontario Clean Water Act in the Lake Erie Source Protection Region, which includes four watersheds: Grand River, Long Point Region, Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek.

Future editions of the newsletter will be produced after the monthly meeting of the Source Protection Committee. These meetings take place the first Thursday of the month.

To receive this newsletter, send a blank e-mail (no subject line) to SourceWaterNews-subscribe@sourcewater.ca.

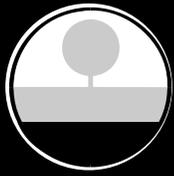
The newsletter and the instructions can also be viewed on the Internet at www.sourcewater.ca.

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April 2008
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Big snow melt led to flooding

The Flood Operations Centre has been very busy this spring.

Abundant snow was still on the ground at the end of March when the snow pack was four times higher than normal in the area south of Cambridge, and 1.5 times higher than normal in the area north of Cambridge.

March had been colder and wetter than normal. Warm, sunny days towards the end of the month were slowly releasing water from the snow. But when the warm weather combined with 25 cm of rain overnight on March 31-April 1, it led to flooding of the Nith River in New Hamburg, Ayr and Paris, as well as along the Grand River in low lying areas of Kitchener, Brantford, Six Nations and Haldimand County.

This flood event and events in January and February have resulted in a very busy spring for flood operations.

GRCA supports recommendations from Environmental Commissioner

The GRCA board has thrown its support behind Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller's 10 recommendations in his annual report.

The board is asking that provincial agencies address the "irreconcilable priorities" of growth and a healthy environment that Miller discussed. In addition, the GRCA is asking member municipalities to support Miller's recommendations and incorporate sustainable water and environmental concepts into their official plans as soon as they can.

The GRCA also wants provincial support to update the Grand River Basin Water Management Study which was completed in 1982. This plan focuses on sustainable water management in the watershed and addresses the cumulative impacts of climate change and population growth on water quality and quantity.

The board is asking other conservation authorities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe to endorse a similar motion.

Caledonia bridge replacement

A new bridge to replace the historic nine span bowstring bridge in Caledonia is on the province's five-year work plan.

Tanya Cross, senior project engineer with the Ministry of Transportation, made a presentation to the board about the bridge.

The Grand River was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1994 based on recreational and heritage features including bridges, but the GRCA can't regulate or restrict any heritage features, such as bridges. The board could only listen and comment on the presentation, but their view has no weight in the decision-making process, which is already complete.

The environmental assessment on the bridge began in 2002 and after many steps along the way it led to a November 2007 decision by Haldimand County Council to replace the two-lane bridge with a new three-lane bridge.

About \$3 million will be spent on repairs to the bridge beginning this spring. The new bridge will be a five span steel arch bridge – a design that harkens back to the 1874 bridge that



was in this location before the bow-string bridge replaced it. The total cost for repair, design and replacement is \$20 million.

Road maintenance contract

Cornell Construction Ltd. of Brantford will be contracted to construct roads and provide road maintenance for the GRCA this year.

Cornell met all requirements in their \$114,500 bid. They have done this work in previous years.

The GRCA has had this capital work and surface treatment of roads done by an outside contractor since 2004.

Board Chair Alan Dale appointed to Nestle Waters committee

GRCA board chair Alan Dale has been appointed to a new committee that has been set up as part of an agreement between Nestle Waters Canada and Puslinch Township.

The agreement was signed last fall and sets out a process to ensure any water supply complaints made by neighbours of Nestle are dealt with quickly.

Under the agreement, Nestle will pay a licensed well contractor to respond to complaints and fix or replace residential, agricultural or commercial wells that are within a specified area. If the contractor's study finds Nestle is not at fault and the well owner disagrees, the Nestle Waters Canada Well Interference Committee will have five business days to review the situation and make a decision.

Dale was appointed to this committee because Puslinch Township requested a representative from the GRCA.

Reviews available to businesses for pollution prevention

Companies in the Grand River watershed that want to help protect municipal drinking water supplies from contamination may be eligible to participate in a cost-free pollution prevention review program.

Money is available to businesses with 500 employees or less whose properties are located within 100 metres of a municipal well or 200 metres of a municipal surface water intake.

There are more than 190 municipal wells and five surface water intakes in the Grand River watershed and many of them are located in the built-up areas of cities and towns. Many of the wells are located in cities and towns. Maps showing the location of the municipal wells and intakes are available at www.sourcewater.ca.

Interested businesses can contact Crystal Allan at the Grand River Conservation Authority at 519-621-2763, ext. 2268 for further information. Eligible businesses must submit an application by Sept. 30.

Gypsy moth spraying program in Brantford

The Grand River Conservation Authority and the City of Brantford held a joint public information meeting March 18 to discuss plans to deal with a gypsy moth outbreak in two parks in the city.

A gypsy moth outbreak in southwestern Ontario has hit Brantford in the past year and has threatened trees in the city's Mohawk Park and the GRCA's Brant Conservation Area. Most at risk are stands of native trees, including some 200-year-old oaks.

The city and the GRCA propose to spray naturally-occurring bacteria which kills the gypsy moth caterpillar but which is harmless to humans, wildlife, aquatic life, plants and soils. The spraying would be done by a helicopter at dawn in May. The precise date would depend on weather conditions. Two sprayings are expected at each location.

About 30 hectares of trees would be sprayed at Brant Park, and about 15 hectares at Mohawk Park. The board also recommended that the province conduct spray programs or provide funding to help property owners spray.

Gypsy moth populations have been growing across Southern Ontario for

the past four years. The caterpillars feed on tree leaves and large populations can eat all of a tree's leaves, eventually causing the tree to die.

Post-secondary scholarship deadline is May 31

Applications are being accepted until May 31 for the S.C. Johnson Environmental Scholarship.

This scholarship, worth \$1,500, is made available by the Grand River Conservation Foundation to help university students continue their studies in conservation and environment related fields.

Applications are open to full-time students who have completed their third year or sixth semester of an honours program in a watershed university (Waterloo, Guelph, Laurier) or college (Conestoga). Students must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, in the following programs of study: environmental sciences, engineering, chemistry or manufacturing.

The deadline for applications is May 31. A selection will be made by the foundation's awards committee prior to Aug. 31.

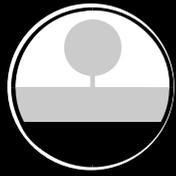
For further information and an application form, contact the Grand River Conservation Foundation by e-mail at foundation@grandriver.ca or by phone at 519-621-2763 ext. 2271.

This issue of "GRCA Minutes" was published in April 2008.

It is a summary of the March 2008 business conducted by the GRCA board and committees.

Space permitting, other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest have been included. The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes the photocopying and distribution of "GRCA Minutes" or visit our website at www.grandriver.ca.





GRCA Minutes

Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge, Ontario N1R 5W6
Tel: (519) 621-2761 Fax: (519) 621-4844 Internet: www.grandriver.ca

May 2008
Volume 13 – No. 5

GRCA **General Membership**

Chairman - Alan Dale

1st Vice-Chairman - Jane Mitchell

2nd Vice-Chairman - Vic Prendergast

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April was dry and warm

Rainfall in April was below average, reversing the trend of heavy precipitation through the winter.

April was also very warm and this combination of warm dry weather has seen the landscape dry up very quickly. The period from May to November 2007 was one of the driest in 60 years and this has left the landscape much drier than expected after a very wet winter.

Spring flows were higher than normal this year, leading to flood conditions in the first part of April. By the end of the month, about the same amount of water was going into the reservoirs as was leaving them. This break-even situation has come a little early this year, which means the GRCA is about to start augmenting the rivers with water from the reservoirs.

GRCA hears from SMART about Highway 24 route

Representatives from a coalition of citizens concerned about the environmental assessment to identify a new route for Highway 24 around the east side of Cambridge spoke to the GRCA board.

Eric Taylor, a Puslinch resident and member of Save Money and Reduce Traffic (SMART) asked the GRCA board to insure that the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario regenerates highway routes with environmental factors having equal or stronger weighting.

He said his group has analyzed the MTO report, publications and responses and attended sessions with the project team and senior MTO staff. He said they would share their

research with the GRCA.

Taylor and his group will meet with GRCA staff to discuss the issue further.

GRCA wants Grand moraines in draft greenbelt criteria

The GRCA wants the greenbelt expansion criteria to include policies to protect the Grand River moraine systems, similar to policies protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The greenbelt is the cornerstone of the Greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan. It was set up in 2005 and surrounds the Greater Toronto Area. A small portion of the Grand River watershed is within the greenbelt and the draft criteria sets out what would be required for new areas to become part of the greenbelt. It is expected that growth could "leapfrog" into the Grand River watershed, putting stress on the watershed's water resources.

The criteria for the proposed expansion were released by the province at the end of March and workshops were held in some communities in April. A GRCA report on the criteria contained several recommendations and was sent in time for the April 30 deadline for responses.

Senior staff changes at GRCA

Changes in the management team of the GRCA were approved by the board April 15.

The GRCA will now have two assistant CAO positions. Joe Farwell has been appointed as assistant CAO for resource management, a position that has been vacant since Tony Smith retired five years ago. Farwell's previous position of manager of engineer-



ing, planning and watershed restoration will no longer exist, but a new position of manager of resource planning has been created.

Ralph Beaumont is moving from manager of communications to the new position of manager of environmental education and marketing. Dave Schultz has assumed the position of communications manager.

Jim Woods will retire and is being replaced by Jack Griffin as manager of conservation areas.

Michael Bradley has been appointed manager of property, replacing Tom Smith who is moving out of the province.

GRCA will draw down water level in Chicopee ponds

The GRCA drained some of the water from two ponds at the Chicopee Ski Club, Morrison Road, Kitchener to allow the club to dredge one of the ponds later this summer.

Chicopee plans to remove silt from the upper pond in order to increase the amount of water the pond can hold for winter snow-making. The silt is largely composed of decayed vegetation. The excavation work will take place in July to allow the ponds to be refilled before winter.

The draw-down is taking place slowly over five weeks in April and May to minimize the amount of silt released to the downstream water course. The gradual lowering will also allow fish to migrate from the upper pond to the lower pond, which will still have about four metres of water in it at the end of the draw-down.

There are no natural fish populations in the ponds. The fish there are mostly goldfish and other pet fish released into the ponds by others.

Funding sought for Fishermills Pond project in Cambridge

Community leaders and GRCA staff held a media event to launch an innovative plan to revitalize the Fishermills Pond area of Chilligo Conservation Area in Cambridge.

A partnership involving the GRCA, the Grand River Conservation Foundation, area residents and the community at large will turn the area into a showcase for conservation in Cambridge.

The revitalization plan means creating three ponds as natural habitat where a dam was until 2000. The stream won't be connected to the ponds, keeping the water cooler which is better for fish. Excavation will begin this fall and planting will take place next spring.

The Trillium Foundation has provided \$75,000 for this \$435,000 project, which is also supported by the Cambridge North Rotary Club. About half of the funds have been raised.

For more information or to make a contribution, contact Sara Wilbur 519-621-2763, ext. 2272.

GRCA parks opened April 25

GRCA conservation areas opened April 25 in time for the launch of the trout fishing season.

Rainbow trout have been stocked in ponds at Belwood Lake Conservation Area and Rockwood Conservation Area. The Hampton Pond at Belwood Lake is reserved for children under the age of 13. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has also continued its program of stocking thousands of brown trout in the Grand and Conestogo rivers to give seasoned anglers a chance to enjoy some of the best fly-fishing locations in the province.

The GRCA operates one of the Ontario's largest networks of parks, offering visitors a wide range of outdoor activities in some of the most striking natural areas in the province. With more than 2,500 campsites at eight conservation areas, the GRCA is the second largest operator of campgrounds in the province - second only to Ontario Parks.

More information is available on www.grandriver.ca or call 1-866-ONT-CAMP (1-866-668-2267) to book a campsite.

Canoeists, kayakers and anglers can

get information on river conditions by calling the GRCA's River Flow Information Line at (519) 621-2763, Ext. 519 or visiting the River Data section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca

Prescribed burns for Brantford, Paris and Luther islands

The GRCA carried out prescribed burns on two of its properties to help maintain the remnant prairie and savannah habitats in the area.

Controlled burns were held on five hectares at Brant Conservation Area and 0.5 hectares of land west of Paris. The same areas were burned in 2006.

The burns restore rare habitats to maintain and enhance the tallgrass prairie and other native plants and reduce the presence of woody plants and invasive species.

Prairie and savannah habitats are scarce in Southern Ontario as they have been degraded for a number of reasons including farming, urbanization and suppression of fire. Without restoration, there is a risk that this important part of our natural heritage will disappear. These burns are carefully planned and carried out with the assistance of experts.

It is estimated that 25 per cent of the Grand River Plains was once tallgrass prairie and oak savannah. Today only one-tenth of one per cent of the Grand River Plains original tallgrass prairie and savannah remains.

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June 2008
Volume 13 – No. 6

GRCA **General Membership**

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GRIN nets gold award

The Grand River Conservation Authority received a 2008 Gold Award for putting powerful map-making tools and a wealth of data in the hands of website visitors.

The Best Web GIS Gold Award was given to GRCA geomatics staff members Graham Smith and Zoë Green by the Ontario Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information System Association (URISA) in Toronto in May.

Smith and Green are pleased that their work has been recognized by peers from this 500-member organization.

While Web-GIS has become common, what is unique about the GRCA's approach is that anyone can access the information and download it, promoting better decision-making and a healthier watershed.

Visit www.grandriver.ca/GRIN/grin.cfm to learn more about these tools.

Watershed is in good shape after wet winter weather

A wet and snowy winter has helped to restore surface and groundwater levels to normal conditions, says a report presented recently to the Grand River Low Water Response Team.

Precipitation has been above normal during the last six months, making up for the particularly dry weather across the Grand River watershed in the summer and early fall of 2007.

As a result, the low water response team, which met by conference call, has declared the watershed to be out of the Level 1 restrictions that have been in place since June 2007. Under

Level 1 water users were asked to voluntarily cut their consumption by 10 per cent.

In several parts of the watershed that were particularly hard hit by dry weather and high water demand, Level 2 was put in place, under which water users were asked to cut consumption by 20 per cent. The team removed the Level 2 declaration in February after a mid-winter rainfall and snow melt brought the GRCA's reservoirs back to their normal level for that time of the year.

The low water response team is made up of representatives of major water users including municipalities, farmers, golf course operators, gravel pit businesses, Six Nations and others. It meets as necessary in order to implement the Ontario Low Water Response Plan in the Grand River watershed.

Although precipitation is up, a good start to the summer season is no guarantee that conditions will last. Environment Canada predicts above-average temperatures and below-normal precipitation for the next four months. It is still important for watershed residents to conserve water around the home, farm and business, including following municipal outdoor water use bylaws.

2008 Watershed Awards

Six 2008 Watershed Awards will be given out by the GRCA at a special recognition event in the fall.

The award recipients are: the Port Maitland Historical Society for cleaning up the feeder canal and the Port Maitland Lock; Woolwich Clean Waterways for creek rehabilitation and bank stabilization projects; David Belleville, chair of the Beautiful



Brantford Committee since 1997; Phil and Katie Wilman who have made numerous improvements to River's Edge Goat Dairy in Arthur; Richard Cook of Wellesley, volunteer operator of the Wellesley Dam for 18 years; and Doug Ratz of Elora, who has been part of many local environmental groups.

The award recipients were selected by the special recognition committee and approved by the GRCA board in May.

Update to new planning policies

New planning policies that came into effect Jan.1 were updated in May and are now posted along with a summary of the revisions in the planning section of www.grandriver.ca.

The name of the document is the GRCA's Policies for the Administration of the Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation (Ontario Regulation 150/60).

The regulation strives to protect people and property from damage that may result from flooding. It also prevents or restricts development that may increase flooding or erosion or impact water and conservation.

The changes to the GRCA's policies that were approved in May are minor – they help clarify some points and address a couple of policy gaps.

Elmira now has new floodlines and a two-zone policy area

The GRCA has adopted the Weigel Drain floodlines and a two-zone policy in parts of Elmira.

The Weigel Drain is a watercourse that drains 2.6 square kilometers of land and includes the core of Elmira.

A two-zone area identifies low risk areas within the floodplain where development is not normally permitted and allows redevelopment with restrictions to manage the risk to people and property from floods.

The mapping and analysis were presented to the public at an open house in December. The Township of

Woolwich is planning to incorporate the changes into their official plan and zoning bylaws. For more information on one-zone, two-zone and SPAs, visit the planning section of www.grandriver.ca.

New Fergus floodplain mapping and policy area change

GRCA staff has started to update floodplain mapping for the Grand River between the Irvine River and the Shand Dam.

This could mean some development policy changes for parts of Fergus.

An update found river flows could be higher than previously thought. As a result, more land could end up within the GRCA's regulated areas. The revised maps will be released for public review and after the input is gathered, the new maps with regulated areas will be finalized.

The GRCA is working with Wellington County and the Township of Centre Wellington on a possible two-zone policy area that would regulate development in the fringe of the floodplain with restrictions to manage the risk to people and property for flooding. The new mapping and policy is expected to be in place by the end of the year.

Four new buffer fact sheets

Four new fact sheets outline the many benefits of creating buffers between farmland and watercourses.

Trees, vegetation and fencing along streams provide a buffer to protect watercourses. The fact sheets have been created thanks to funding from Greencover Canada.

They help people recognize some environmental practices used by farmers to protect our water supply. They also help farmers and landowners recognize that buffers have environmental and economic benefits to their own operation.

Each fact sheet highlights a buffer in a different part of the Grand River watershed. Each buffer has also provided different benefits to the

landowners and the watercourse. The fact sheets are posted in the Rural Water Quality section of www.grandriver.ca.

Warning markers at eight dams

The Grand River Conservation Authority has installed warning markers upstream of eight of its dams on the Grand, Nith and Speed rivers to provide additional notice to canoeists and kayakers to stay away from the dams.

Installation was completed in May at these locations: Wellington Street Dam, Guelph; Dunnville Dam; Caledonia Dam; Wilkes Dam, Brantford; Parkhill Dam; New Hamburg Dam; Bissell Dam, Elora; and a boom at Drimmie Dam, Elora.

The buoys are marked with a bright red diamond, which is an international warning symbol for boaters. They are in addition to existing warning and portage signs.

The eight GRCA dams are all "run of the river" or "low head" dams. The water upstream of the dams can be still and placid, but the area downstream can be dangerous. Strong currents at the base of the dam can capsize a canoe or kayak and trap the occupant underwater.

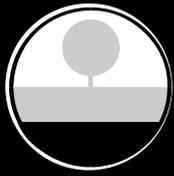
The County of Brant has also installed buoys at the Penman's Dam in Paris. This dam is owned by Brant County. The markers will be removed in the fall.

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GRCA Minutes

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July 2008
Volume 13 – No. 7

GRCA **General Membership**

Chairman - Alan Dale

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Stilling basin upgrade for Conestogo Dam moved to 2009

An expensive project to upgrade the stilling basin at Conestogo Dam has been deferred until 2009 to give the GRCA time to take a more detailed look at another project at the dam.

Water leaving the dam gates has a high amount of energy, especially when the gates are fully opened. The stilling basin is the area where the energy is dissipated before the water moves downstream. There is a risk that if the water is not "stilled" that it could flow back against the dam itself, eroding it and possibly causing it to fail.

At present, the stilling basin can handle flows of about 700 cubic metres per second (cms). The plan is to increase the capacity of the dam to handle flows of about 1,400 cms, which is much higher than flows from a Hurricane Hazel-type storm. The project is estimated to cost about \$2.7 million.

However, the GRCA is also looking at a second, potentially more expensive project to construct an emergency spillway. If the water in the reservoir were to ever reach the top of the dam, the spillway would provide a route for water to safely spill over or around the dam in order to protect the dam from breaching.

The Ministry of Natural Resources has asked the GRCA to develop plans for the spillway project, which could cost as much as \$18 million, before it will give permission for the stilling basin project to proceed.

Wet June keeps rivers flowing

Rainfall was above average in most of the watershed in June, which has

kept rivers and streams flowing strongly.

Rainfall for June ranged from 80 mm at Laurel Creek Conservation Area to 104 mm at Shand Dam. Normal rainfall is about 80 mm.

Rainfall has generally been above average throughout the spring. As a result, river flows have been above average, with little need for the GRCA to augment flows from the water stored in its seven reservoirs.

GRCA to study Upper Rockwood Dam

The Grand River Conservation Authority is starting a review of the future of the Upper Rockwood Dam on the Eramosa River in the Rockwood Conservation Area.

The review, which is called a Class Environmental Assessment, will include opportunities for members of the public to comment on plans for the dam.

The dam is beside the old Harris Mill. The dam is one metre and sits on top of a two metre waterfall. It was likely built in the 1860s and has two concrete abutments and three piers. Sets of logs (called stoplogs) are placed between the abutments and piers to block the flow of water in the Eramosa River. When the logs are in place, they create a pond that is about one metre deep and two hectares in area.

The stoplogs have reached the end of their 25-year life span and replacements would cost about \$10,000. The GRCA removed some of the logs in 2006. Since then, vegetation has grown up in the previously flooded area.

The environmental assessment will



consider a range of alternatives that include doing nothing, replacing the stoplogs and repairing the piers or removing the entire dam.

Part of the process will be to investigate the impact of the dam on water quality in the Eramosa River. The Eramosa is a coldwater river, however the presence of the dam creates a pond where the water warms up before moving downstream to the larger pond at the centre of the conservation area.

New Rotary Forest for Snyder Flats

A new Rotary Forest is planned for Snyder Flats in Waterloo thanks to the Kitchener-Conestoga Rotary Club's 2008 Dream Home Lottery.

Snyder Flats is on the east side of the Grand River in Waterloo, near Bloomington. More than 56,000 native trees and shrubs will be planted on the property, which is owned by the GRCA.

Community groups will be invited to help plant the trees. Restored grasslands and a 2.5 km Rotary Walk are also part of this project.

The Dream Home Lottery has raised \$5.5 million for community groups over the past 22 years including more than \$500,000 last year. The home is under construction is south Kitchener and tickets go on sale in September.

Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region will share the lottery proceeds and use the funds to help build a new shelter.

The Rotary Club of Guelph is undertaking a similar project near Guelph Lake. The Guelph Rotary Forest is expected to be a 13 year project that will turn 40 hectares of fields into forest by planting 5,000 trees each year.

Outdoor writers tour watershed

About 30 members of the Outdoor Writers of Canada recently held their annual convention in the Elora Area. As part of their visit, they were guests of the GRCA at a luncheon held at the Elora Gorge Conservation Area.

The association members spent three days in the Grand River watershed, learning more about its natural features and recreational opportunities.

The Outdoor Writers of Canada is a national organization of professional communicators specializing in the outdoor field. The membership includes writers, artists, photographers, cinematographers, lecturers, broadcasters, public relations consultants, and government information officers.

New members join foundation board

Four new members have joined the board of the Grand River Conservation Foundation. In addition, seven long-serving members have retired.

The new and retiring members were all honoured at the annual meeting of the foundation held June 25 at the Laurel Creek Nature Centre.

New members are: David Pady, Guelph; Ian MacNaughton, Breslau; Martin Ehlert, Sheffield; and Alex Wilson, Hillsburgh

Retiring members are: Alex Lang, John Knill, Tom Land, Rick Chaplin, Allan Holmes, Gil Henderson and Norm Lundvall.

Project shows value of shelterbelts

The GRCA, working with Ontario Pork, has concluded a three-year demonstration project to show the advantages of shelterbelts on hog farms.

Shelterbelts – rows of trees and bushes around barns – can reduce odour, improve aesthetics, lower heating costs for bars, and cut down on soil loss through wind erosion.

Three demonstration sites were set up in the Grand River watershed, among 12 sites across Ontario. New techniques for developing faster-growing shelterbelts were tested. Information was presented to farmers through newsletters and workshops. The techniques developed in this pro-

gram can also be applied to other sectors of the livestock industry and the poultry industry.

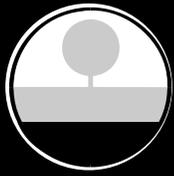
The project was paid for through a grant from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Greencover Technical Assistance Program. More information is available at www.wbvecan.ca

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August 2008
Volume 13 – No. 8

GRCA **General Membership**

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Lots of rain in July

Two severe rainfall events – one on the morning of July 11 and the second of July 22 – helped make July wetter than the long-term average.

Guelph received more than double the average amount of rain over the course of the past month, four times more than it received during July 2007 which was unusually dry.

In the national media, Waterloo was dubbed Canada's second wettest city outdone by Toronto. A flood advisory was issued on July 11 in response to the heavy rainfall, which is very unusual during the summer.

All the major reservoirs are slightly above their normal operating range, while flows in the main Grand River are well above average.

A full version of the watershed conditions report for this and past months is available in the watershed conditions section of the website.

Heavy rain means more GRCA-produced hydro electricity

Higher-than-average rainfall means lots of water to turn the turbines and create hydro power.

The GRCA operates hydro generators at three sites – Shand Dam at Belwood Lake (rated at 600 kW), Conestogo Dam at Wallenstein (500 kW) and Guelph Lake Dam (110 kW) north of the city.

The Shand generator has not been working since July 2006 due to mechanical failure. But GRCA staff hope it will restart in September, depending on approvals from various

agencies.

The Conestogo hydro facility was also recently overhauled and returned to service in September 2006. The new turbine at Conestogo Dam is a double regulated turbine, which means that adjustments can be made to both the wicket gates that regulate the flow of water through the turbine and the angle of the propeller blades.

Double regulation makes the turbine more efficient at converting water energy into electrical power. The end result is that the new turbine will be more efficient than the original turbine. It will generate about 30 per cent more electrical energy from the same amount of water.

New berm for Groff Mill Creek

The GRCA has granted an easement to the City of Cambridge for a new berm to help control flooding of Groff Mill Creek in Dumfries Conservation Area.

Severe rainstorms in recent years flooded Coronation Boulevard, a golf course, some private homes and GRCA land. As a result, the city initiated an environmental assessment process for Groff Mill Creek to find a solution to the flooding.

The preferred alternative included installing a berm upstream of the rail crossing of Groff Mill Creek within the conservation area, as well as making channel improvements to the creek and realigning the trail over the berm.

GRCA staff will work with city staff to coordinate this project. The city will cover the costs of construction and maintenance.



Terrestrial resources report

Terrestrial resources presented its 2007 annual report to the board outlining details of the projects that were undertaken during the year.

The day-to-day workload of the Terrestrial Resource program at the GRCA is focused on protecting and enhancing watershed natural heritage.

Report highlights include milestones such as pine shoot beetle control at Laurel Creek Conservation Area, restoring eight hectares of land at Dunnville Marsh, the Luther Marsh Management Plan that extends to 2016 and an updated Forest Management Plan that will help the GRCA capitalize on tax incentives.

In addition, the GRCA facilitated three exchanges within the San Roque Lake watershed in Argentina through an international twinning program.

Eighth annual Water Forum Sept. 19 'reflecting on change'

The major issues confronting the Grand River watershed, from population growth to climate change, will be the subject of presentations at the Eighth Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum on Sept. 19 in Cambridge.

The annual event, which attracts about 400 participants, takes place at the head office of the Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Rd. from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration is open to the public and details about the program, speakers and registration (including an online registration process), can be found in the Water Forum section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca

The registration fee of \$90, or \$55 for students and seniors, includes lunch.

The theme for the forum is "Reflecting Change - Mirrored in the Water" and addresses the impact that human activities have on water quality and water supplies.

"This year we have more keynote

speakers than usual who bring incredible expertise on a wide array of topics," says forum chair Ralph Beaumont.

The nationally and internationally known speakers include Isobel Heathcote, professor of environmental science and environmental engineering at the University of Guelph; John Gerretsen, Ontario Minister of the Environment; James P. Bruce, Canadian Policy Representative, Soil and Water Conservation Society; Rob de Loë, Canada Research Chair in Water Management, University of Guelph; Paul Emerson, CAO of the Grand River Conservation Authority; Mark Servos, Canada Research Chair in Water Quality Protection, University of Waterloo; Eva G. Abal, Scientific Co-ordinator, South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Partnership in Brisbane, Australia; and Gord Miller, environmental commissioner of Ontario.

The Run for the Toad Pavilion planned for Pinehurst

Oct. 4 marks the seventh annual Run for the Toad, a 25 or 50 km run at the GRCA's Pinehurst Conservation Area.

To celebrate this event and a very fruitful partnership with the GRCA, race directors George and Peggy Sarson are inviting runners, walkers and corporate support to build a new Run for the Toad Pavilion at Pinehurst.

The pavilion will serve as a great place for run participants each year, but it will do much more than that. Throughout the year it will also be used for the many groups that come to Pinehurst to enjoy its forests, beaches and camping facilities. At 3,200 square feet, the pavilion will enable larger groups than ever before to enjoy the park. It will be located in the beach area, near the starting area for Run for the Toad.

The Run for the Toad goal of \$80,000 was announced at the Training Run in July. All contributors

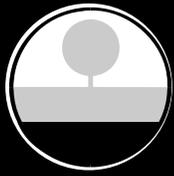
will be acknowledged at the pavilion and invited to its launch once funds are raised. All donations are eligible for a charitable receipt.

For more information about Run for the Toad, please visit www.runfor-thetoad.com.

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GRCA Minutes

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Tel: (519) 621-2761 Fax: (519) 621-4844 Internet: www.grandriver.ca

September 2008
Volume 13 - No. 9

GRCA **General Membership**

Chairman - Alan Dale

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2nd Vice-Chairman - Vic Prendergast

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City of Hamilton - Anna Kramer

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County of Brant - Robert Chambers, Brian Coleman

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Haldimand and Norfolk Counties - Lorne Boyko, Craig Grice

Firm retained for Shand Dam electrical upgrade

Hatch Energy has been retained at a cost of \$105,000 to finalize the design and prepare tender documents for the Shand Dam electrical upgrade.

Testing of Shand Dam's 66-year-old electrical system has confirmed that the gate operation motors are consistently overloaded during normal gate operations. The dam is on the Grand River north of Fergus.

The gates are used to control the water that passes through the dam. The electrical upgrade includes constructing an addition on the control building on the east end of the dam's spillway and installing a new gate electrical system.

New water quality gauges for Kitchener and York

The GRCA is moving ahead with plans for two water quality gauge stations on the Grand River in Kitchener and in York.

Both projects have been on hold since 2006 pending Six Nations land claim issues. Representatives of the GRCA met with Six Nations hereditary chiefs and notified the Band Council to inform them of these projects.

The Region of Waterloo first approached the GRCA about the Kitchener station in 2003. The project is expected to go ahead this fall.

The gauge will be part of an early warning system for the drinking water supply, will help to model the assimilative capacity of the river, and help monitor flooding conditions around Bingeman's Park.

The 35-year-old York gauge will be

replaced and relocated downstream of the Haldimand Road 9 bridge where it will be less of a safety risk to GRCA staff, who must stop on the bridge when they visit the station.

Construction of the new York gauge is expected to take place during the summer of 2009 when river water levels may be lower.

Wet weather continues

Rain was above or close to the long term average across the watershed in August, but some areas were affected by localized thunderstorms that brought heavy rain.

One storm on Aug. 5 dropped 68 mm over five hours in Cambridge, and this represented a 10 to 25 year storm. It resulted in some local street flooding and excess water in urban waterways, including Schneider Creek, Laurel Creek, Groff Mill Creek and Mill Creek.

Lower-than-normal air temperature in August followed a warmer June and July. The rain means all the major reservoirs are above their normal operating range, while the flows in the river system are well above the long term average.

Abundant water has resulted in high dissolved oxygen levels, cooler water temperatures and less solar radiation. All of this is good for the fish in the waterways. This means there are less aquatic plants that contribute to water quality problems.

High flows have also forced the suspension of tubing at the Elora Gorge Conservation Area on several occasions this summer.

Emergency spillway design under way for Conestogo Dam



A plan to upgrade the stilling basin at the Conestogo Dam has been put on hold until after a plan and detailed cost estimates for an emergency spillway at this dam have been completed.

The stilling basin is the area below the dam where the water is stilled or calmed before it goes downstream. Hatch Energy has been retained for just over \$250,000 to design and prepare plans for the spillway.

This spillway design must be submitted to the Ministry of Natural Resources by the GRCA before the ministry will approve the stilling basin upgrade. For this reason, the stilling basin upgrade has been put on hold.

There are two different alternatives for dealing with the deficiency in the overflow capacity of the dam. Both would mean constructing an emergency spillway and the cost estimates range from approximately \$7.6 million for controlled overtopping to \$17.6 million for controlled bypass.

Drilling for water in the search for an ancient river valley

A \$300,000 contract for the next phase of a three-year study to find an ancient buried river valley has been awarded to All Terrain Drilling Ltd.

About seven boreholes will be drilled in three areas – north of Paris extending southeast of Lynden (three holes), Southwest of Kitchener between Ayr and Roseville (two holes), and on the north side of Wellesley (one or two holes). Drilling will take place between mid-September and November. Residents in the vicinity of the drilling will be notified before it gets under way.

The Dundas Valley Study is searching for a river valley that is millions of years old. The study has four phases of investigation over three years.

Already data has been compiled and a geophysical survey has been completed. This has led to the drilling phase, since holes will provide scientists with more information about the location and characteristics of the ancient river valley. All of the information that has been gathered will

then be brought together for the final phase of the study.

GRCA searching for old wells

The GRCA is searching for old wells on GRCA property so that these wells can be properly decommissioned.

Old wells are a safety concern for people who chance upon them and may fall in. They are also a pathway for contaminants to enter the drinking water supply. Over the past three years GRCA staff has visited 200 possible well sites and located 80 old wells. Forty-one of these have been decommissioned and others will be decommissioned by a licensed well driller as funds become available.

It is expected that there may be another 20 wells that have not yet been found. The GRCA owns 20,000 hectares of land that was once used as farms and homesteads, so some wells remain on these properties.

If you suspect you know where a well may be on GRCA property, please call 519-621-2763, ext. 2288. If you suspect that you may have an abandoned well on your property and would like to learn more about funding assistance to properly decommission it, contact Tracey Ryan 519-621-2763, ext. 2269.

Rockwood Biothon Sept. 20-21

A 24-hour search for creatures of all varieties is taking place in the Rockwood Conservation Area on Sept. 20-21. This is the fifth annual Grand River Watershed Biothon, a fundraising project organized by staff at the Grand River Conservation Authority to support outdoor education programs.

Teams made up of GRCA staff and volunteers search for as many species as they can find in 24 hours on the conservation area grounds. Team members collect donations for each species they identify in three categories: vertebrates, invertebrates and plants.

Members of the public are invited to the conservation area on Sunday, Sept. 21 from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. to participate in a long list of free, fun-

filled activities including catching bugs, Mother Nature Bingo, wildlife demonstrations, cave exploration, guided nature walks, a lunchtime cookout and silent auction.

For more information, call the Rockwood Conservation Area at 519-856-9543 or 519-240-1402 or e-mail vfieldwebster@grandriver.ca.

Terms of reference meetings for Source Protection in October

Three public meetings will be held in the Grand River watershed on the Terms of Reference that have been prepared by the Lake Erie Source Protection Committee for the Clean Water Act.

The meetings will be held Wednesday, Oct. 1, Best Western, 19 Holiday Drive, Brantford; Thursday, Oct. 2, GRCA head office, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge; and Monday, Oct. 6, Wellington County Museum Archives, Aboyne Hall, RR1 Fergus .

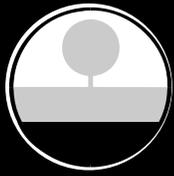
All these meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and will include displays, presentations (beginning at 7:30 p.m.) and a public comment period (beginning at 8:30 p.m.).

For more information including the Terms of Reference document, please visit www.sourcewater.ca.

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October 2008
Volume 13 - No. 9

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Wet weather leaves watershed in good shape for fall

Wet weather has continued through September thanks to a trail from Hurricane Ike that dropped 100 mm of rain in the upper watershed.

A Flood Advisory was issued on Sept. 12 due to the hurricane, but the storm shifted north and major flooding was averted.

The Shand and Conestogo reservoirs have higher water levels than normal. The GRCA has not had to augment the river flows very much this year due to the regular rainfall since May.

River flows have also been above average. The temperature has been 1.5 degrees above the long term average for September.

Special 2009 budget meeting

The GRCA board got a first glimpse into the budget for the coming year at a special budget meeting in September.

The GRCA budget is divided into four areas including the base budget (61 per cent of total budget), special programs with matching special funding (5 per cent), the Source Protection Program with matching provincial funding (14 per cent) and Conservation Areas with self-generated revenue (20 per cent).

This draft of the 2009 budget showed spending of \$28 million, compared to spending of \$29.1 million in 2008. The lower spending in the draft budget is normal for this time of year. This is because special project funding will be added into the 2009 budget in the coming months as grants are approved by external organizations,

so the budget is expected to be higher than the current draft indicates.

The board will review several more drafts of the budget in the coming months before it is finalized in February.

GRCA plans maintenance work at Woolwich Dam

The Grand River Conservation Authority is going to dig up a small section of the surface of the Woolwich Dam near Elmira to learn why it is settling more than the usual amount and then do any necessary repairs.

The work will start Oct. 7 and last about a week. To allow the work to take place, the reservoir will be drawn down early to its winter holding level. Normally it reaches the winter level in mid-November.

In addition, the trails around the Woolwich Dam will be closed on Oct. 6, about one week earlier than normal.

It is normal for earthen embankment dams, such as Woolwich, to settle over time, but the amount of settling has been greater than usual. The reservoir will remain at its winter holding level after the work is done.

Transportation official speaks to GRCA board

Fred Leech of the Ministry of Transportation made a presentation to the GRCA board about the draft Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference released in September.

This is a step in the EA process that was announced in June to improve transportation in the growing communities of Cambridge and Brantford, he said. This study replaces the former Highway 24 Transportation Corridor



Class EA study and is more broadly based. It will address transportation system problems and opportunities to 2031 and prepare plans and conceptual designs for changes. The alternatives that are being considered are to optimize the existing transportation system, expand non-road infrastructure, widen roads and highways or build new roads or highways.

The ministry is holding four Public Information Centres and will accept comments until Nov. 14. A proposed environmental assessment terms of reference will be submitted to the Minister of Transportation early next year.

Any construction that may be proposed for Highway 24 won't take place until 2015 at the earliest, he said. The website about the study is www.brantford-cambridge-ea.ca.

Lessons from Australia for Grand River watershed

There are many lessons that water experts and researchers in the Grand River watershed can learn from Queensland, Australia.

Dr. Eva Abal, the Scientific Coordinator, South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Partnership, spoke to scientists in the Grand River Watershed and also at Water Forum in September.

She described a far-reaching plan that began in 1992 to solve the water challenges on the eastern coast of Australia. The plan sets targets for 2026 that improve the environmental and water quality conditions of today and outlines 500 committed actions that will help bring about these changes.

The Grand's soft path of water

Oliver Brandes has been encouraging Canadians to take the soft path to water and now he is bringing this approach to the Grand River.

The associate director of the Polis Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria spoke with the GRCA board and staff as well as attendees of Water Forum.

The soft path is a different way of thinking about water and it can mean big savings in both water and money. Now water is thought of in a linear way – it is cleaned in a centralized system, sent out for distribution, and used after which it becomes wastewater. The soft path means decentralized decision making and water distribution as well as many water systems that better match the quality of water to its use – for example, using rain-water or grey water to flush toilets instead of tap water.

Brandes and the GRCA are determining how much water can potentially be saved by taking this new approach within this watershed.

Environmental scholarship awarded at Water Forum

The S. C. Johnson Environmental Scholarship was awarded to Julie Anderson, a fourth year environmental science student at the University of Guelph who plans to continue her studies next year by entering a Masters program in environmental toxicology.

This scholarship is made available by the Grand River Conservation Foundation, with annual awards of \$1,500 to help university students continue their studies in conservation and environment related fields. The presentation of this scholarship was made at Water Forum on Sept. 19.

Kitchener-Conestogo Rotary Forest DreamHome tickets

The Kitchener-Conestoga Rotary Forest will take shape beginning in spring 2009.

The forest will be a vibrant, 250 acre space along the east side of the Grand River at Snyder Flats in Waterloo, offering more than 56,000 trees, a 2.5 km Rotary Trail and restored native grassland habitat that is rare in Ontario.

The forest is being funded by the Rotary Club through sale of tickets for the DreamHome lottery. Tickets are \$100 each, or three for \$250.

To learn more and purchase a ticket,

go to the Dream Home website at www.rotarydreamhome.com, or call 866-294-6466.

If you or your group is interested in helping to plant the Rotary Forest beginning in spring of 2009, please call the GRCA at 519-621-2761.

Community conservation grants

Three community projects and four schools are to receive 2008 community conservation grants in October.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation awards grants to qualified community groups and elementary schools that are undertaking conservation projects.

Grants for \$1,000 have been awarded to the Parks Foundation in Paris for an erosion project, the Port Maitland Historical Association for lock restoration and Ruthven and Habitat Haldimand for habitat restoration. Schools set to receive awards are St. Augustine in Cambridge, St. Leo in Brantford, St. Teresa in Kitchener and St. Nicholas in Waterloo.

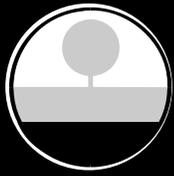
Applications for the 2009 grants will be posted on the GRCA website in the spring.

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November 2008 Volume 13 - No. 11

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Less rainfall in October

The rain fell regularly in October, but there was less of it.

Only about 70 per cent of the long term average precipitation fell, breaking a trend of wet weather for 2008.

The air temperature was slightly warmer than average - 0.5 degrees - in October.

River flows on the main Grand River were heavier than average due to frequent rainfall throughout the summer.

At the end of October, the reservoirs were within their normal operating range, aside from Belwood Lake, which was high due to work on the gate at the Shand Dam slated for Nov. 19. On the other hand, the Woolwich reservoir was below the normal operating range due to work on the earth embankment at the dam.

Low water level due to work at Wellesley Pond in November

The water level in Wellesley Pond was drawn down Nov. 3 to permit minor repairs to the concrete on the dam at the south end of the pond.

The construction work is expected to be finished at the end of November and then the pond will be refilled for the winter. The dam is owned and operated by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

It took several days to drain the water from the pond, which feeds Firella Creek. The drawdown was done gradually to minimize the

amount of silt that is washed downstream and to give fish in the ponds time to swim to other parts of the creek. GRCA staff monitored the drawdown.

The water level dropped about 2.5 to three metres, leaving large mud flats exposed. Water continued to flow through the old creek channel on the floor of the pond.

It's believed there's been a dam on the site since the 1860s. The current dam may have been built early in the 20th century and was improved in the 1950s. The GRCA has owned it since 1957.

Flood Operations Centre working with municipalities

The Flood Operations Centre is working with municipalities on emergency plans.

Staff participated in a Haldimand County desktop flood emergency exercise on Oct. 8. GRCA staff provided technical background information to the emergency coordinator for Haldimand County for this exercise.

Staff met with the flood coordinator for Wilmot Township and the Waterloo Regional Police Service. This is to finalize the flood warning zones for New Hamburg and review flood-plain communications materials.

Weather extremes in watershed during 2007 and 2008

These past two years have both been extremes in precipitation in the Grand River watershed.



Last year – 2007 – was the driest year on record in the watershed. It was so unusual that it was outside of the range of variability, according to a newly compiled graph showing precipitation between May and November at the Shand Dam 1939 to 2008.

In contrast, 2008 has been exceptionally wet and is within the upper range of variability for precipitation. However the graph shows that 1986 was the wettest fall on record.

Dumfries Conservation Area trail closed during berm construction

Construction of a new flood control berm in Dumfries Conservation Area in Cambridge began the week of Nov. 10, which means closing part of the trail in the park.

The City of Cambridge, which is paying for the project, has hired Network Site Services Ltd. to build a flood control berm across the creek upstream of the CN/CP rail lines.

A small footbridge that crosses the creek will be removed as part of the project. The berm is the second part of a three-phase project by the City of Cambridge and the Region of Waterloo to control flooding along Groff Mill Creek. Coronation Boulevard was damaged when water flowed over the road following heavy rainfalls in both 2005 and 2006.

During construction in the conservation area, trucks will enter from Dunbar Road, opposite St. George Street. The entrance gate is closed to the public and notices will be posted advising that the area is a construction zone. Another warning sign was also posted at the park entrance near the YMCA on Hespeler Road.

Public comment sought by December 3 for source protection Terms of Reference

The public is invited to comment on the steps that are being taken to pro-

tect the sources of municipal drinking water in the Grand River watershed.

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Grand River watershed has been released for a second round of public comment. The document is available on the website of the Lake Erie Source Protection Region at www.sourcewater.ca or can be examined at the GRCA office, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge.

The deadline for comments is Dec. 6. Members of the public have three ways to provide comment on the document:

By mail to: Lorrie Minshall, Source Protection Program Director, Lake Erie Source Protection Region, c/o Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge, ON N1R 5W6

By fax to: (519) 621-4844

By e-mail to: comments@sourcewater.ca.

Heritage bridge inventory

The GRCA deferred a decision not to pursue a comprehensive heritage bridge inventory and evaluation.

Heritage bridges support the 1994 designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.

A comprehensive bridge inventory has already been carried out by the Region of Waterloo, but not other municipalities.

The inventory is a planning tool to help decision-makers when they consider work associated with a bridge.

Give green for the holidays

The Grand River Conservation Foundation's give green campaign is now underway for the holiday season.

This provides the opportunity to make an investment in our natural world for generations to come.

A holiday gift of \$30 will cover the cost to plant a tree in your Grand River valley community. A \$20 gift will help care for the GRCA's natural areas and trail systems.

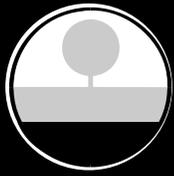
Each donor will receive a thank you letter, tax receipt and a beautiful holiday card. Or, we can send the holiday card directly to the recipient so that it arrives in time for the holidays.

Orders must be placed by Dec. 15, 2008. Call 1-877-29-GRAND to donate or visit www.grcf.ca to learn more.

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December 2008 Volume 13 - No. 12

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Shand Dam turbine now repaired to produce hydro in January

After being shut down for two and a half years, the Shand Dam turbine is expected to once again generate hydro electricity.

This generator has not been in service since July 2006 due to mechanical failure. Since that time, a new turbine has been installed along with many improvements at a cost of \$1.3 million.

The peak generating capacity at Shand Dam remains at 600 kW. With the upgrades, it is expected that the average output from the new turbine will be higher than the unit it replaced. At peak capacity the hydro plant produces enough electricity to power 600 homes.

Funding for this upgrade has come from the reserves. Revenue from the sale of electricity will be used to pay back the reserves over a number of years. The revenue from the Shand generator is expected to be \$195,000 a year. The payback will be 6.8 years.

The generator is expected to be tested in January and will then go back into production.

2008 water quality report

Wet weather this year has led to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the waterways of the Grand River watershed, yet dissolved oxygen was at a relatively good level.

High levels of these two nutrients means prolific growth of aquatic plants. This is the water quality issue of primary concern in the Grand River watershed.

Wet weather takes the water quality issues from the river and transfers these into Lake Erie.

Recently, the Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network was expanded to 36 long-term monitoring sites - up from 28 sites in 2002. At the same time, laboratory costs were reduced by 20 per cent, to make this program more efficient.

The 2008 water quality report was presented to the board at the November meeting and is posted in the Water section of www.grandriver.ca.

2008 Grand Actions Registry

The 13th edition of the Grand Actions Registry is complete and has been posted on the GRCA website.

This edition describes a wide array of actions undertaken in 2007 to improve the Grand River watershed, increase heritage appreciation and support the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River. The registry has grown from 168 entries in 1994-95 to 235 entries currently. It is assembled to find out who is actively involved in improving the health and heritage of the watershed, to commend these efforts and encourage new partnerships.

The Registry is available on www.grandriver.ca and is searchable based on year and categories of work. One organization working on tree stewardship in one community, for example, can use it to link up with similar organizations in other communities.

Wet weather continued in November with snow and rain

November brought more rain and snow than usual, leaving the ground saturated as winter weather approaches.

The resulting saturated ground



means there is more runoff to watercourses when it rains. If the snow pack forms before it gets extremely cold, the frost penetration will be reduced. This would result in less runoff during winter thaws, as water more readily soaks into the ground. The first half of November was a little warmer than average, with an early onset of winter snows later in the month.

River flows are high and most reservoirs are above the normal operating range, as a result of recent precipitation. The reservoirs will be drawn down to their normal winter level over the following weeks.

10th anniversary events for fisheries management plan

The 10th anniversary of the Grand River Fisheries Management plan is being celebrated with a Grand Fish Grand Waters Banquet and Symposium at the German Canadian Club in Brantford, Saturday, Jan. 31, starting at 1 p.m.

The afternoon symposium will feature several speakers and be followed by dinner and silent and live auctions to raise funds for fisheries projects in the Grand River. This is a special event since it is linked with the 10th anniversary of the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan, the first river plan of its kind in the province.

In addition, there will also be several open house meetings in communities along the Grand River to provide information on the progress of the plan and seek feedback on the next steps to be undertaken to improve the fisheries.

Two meetings are scheduled in January: Jan. 7 at the Wellington County Museum, County Rd. 18 between Fergus and Elora at 7 p.m. and Jan. 21 at the GRCA auditorium, 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge. Later meetings will take place: Feb. 3, Brant Artillery Club; Feb. 16, Dunnville District Hunters and Anglers Clubhouse; and March 18, Six Nations Tourism Building, Ohsweken. All meetings begin at 7 p.m.

For more information, see the Fisheries section of www.grandriver.ca.

Classroom to be renamed in memory of Bruce Duncan

The downstairs classroom at the Taquanyah Nature Centre will be named in honour of former GRCA employee Bruce Duncan.

Bruce died Nov. 11 2006 from injuries he sustained in a car accident. He was 60 years old and the general manager of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority at the time of his death. He worked at the GRCA for 15 years as a nature interpreter based at the Taquanyah Nature Centre. Bruce left the GRCA in 1988 to work at the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority.

While he was with the GRCA, Bruce initiated environmental day camps at the GRCA and under his direction four bald eagle chicks were raised and released at Taquanyah. This year eagles were breeding again in the southern Grand after an absence of many years.

Heritage Workshop in 2009 to focus on rural roots

The 12th Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration takes place Heritage Day, Feb. 16 and the theme is Rural Routes ~ Rural Roots: A Heritage View of the Countryside.

The workshop will be held at the Wilmot Recreation Complex in Baden, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The program includes many speakers, a launch of the heritage river inventory and a tour of Castle Kilbride National Historic Site. It is free, but donations are welcome.

This event is organized by the Heritage Working Group. Registration and program information is posted in the Conferences section on www.grandriver.ca.

New air conditioning system for GRCA Administration Centre

The administration centre of the GRCA will get a new air conditioning system.

This item was approved by the GRCA board and put into the 2009 budget. The current air conditioning and ventilation system is 35 years old

and was installed in 1973 when the building was constructed. It is not expected to be able to function another summer.

The \$204,000 contract was awarded to Conestogo Mechanical Inc. of Kitchener, the lowest of four bidders on this proposal.

Trees available for purchase

Landowners with 2.5 acres or more of land (exclusive of buildings) can order trees from the GRCA by March 31.

The list of available trees, a price list and an order form are on www.grandriver.ca in the Forestry section. The list is updated periodically. Orders for these trees must be for a minimum of 200 seedlings or 20 saplings.

Tree planting in the watershed is expected to grow from 180,000 in 2008 to more than 230,000 in 2009, but this is nowhere near the rate of one million in the 1980's, before government funding cutbacks.

For more information see the Forestry section of www.grandriver.ca.

This issue of "GRCA Minutes" was published in December 2008.

It is a summary of the November 2008 business conducted by the Grand River Conservation Authority board and committees. Space permitting, other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest have been included. The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes the photocopying and distribution of "GRCA Minutes" or visit our website at www.grandriver.ca, where back issues are also available.

