

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 2009
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

Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North - Pat Salter

Township of Centre Wellington - Shawn Watters

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Expensive infrastructure repairs require provincial help

The GRCA is asking the province to find a mechanism to help fund big ticket repairs to infrastructure projects, such as the emergency spillway at the Conestogo Dam.

Since 2003, the GRCA has received nearly \$2.7 million from the province to study and repair dams, dykes and erosion control structures. This funding has come through the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Program of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The program allocates \$5 million annually to all 36 conservation authorities in the province. The GRCA uses its portion to fund numerous projects at up to two dozen locations each year.

Since 2007, there hasn't been enough money to fund all of these projects. Funding is granted after a committee reviews and ranks projects based on urgency and safety-related criteria. The province and conservation authority (through the municipal levies), each pay half of the study and project costs.

The Conestogo Dam emergency spillway project would potentially eat up the province's entire allotment of funds for one full year and most of the next, leaving no money for other projects. This project is now in the design phase. The GRCA will make a funding request to the province as soon as the design and costs are finalized.

December flood warnings

Storms resulted in flood warnings being issued during the last half of December.

About 15 mm of rain and warm temperatures Dec. 14 caused snow to melt. Levels in the Grand, Conestogo and Speed rivers rose in response. Flows in the Nith River through New Hamburg peaked Dec. 16 slightly below warning levels. These levels remained high for the next couple of days.

Three winter storms followed by warm weather and rain that began Dec. 24 resulted in swollen rivers.

Several areas within the watershed flooded, resulting in closure of businesses, roads and bridges in New Hamburg, Ayr, Cambridge and St. Jacobs.

The first flood advisory for this event was issued Christmas Eve and the termination message was sent out Jan 2.

The December report on watershed conditions went to the board on Dec. 10 and at that time, with only a third of the month underway, precipitation was 52 to 79 per cent of the long term average and December had been 0.5 degrees colder than average.

Information on river flows and reservoir levels can be found at the GRCA's website at www.grandriver.ca in the "River data" section.

Grand River Management Plan underway to update study

In 2009 the GRCA plans to hire a temporary GIS technical person to do work related to the Grand River Management Plan, a major multi-disciplinary study to update the 1982 Grand River Basin Study.

The 1982 study served the watershed residents, municipalities,



researchers and the GRCA well over the course of 26 years. But more recent research and planning needs to be undertaken.

This new document will be a roadmap guiding future decisions and will take several years to complete.

Nature centre programs and locations expanded

In 2008 the GRCA's nature centres hosted more than 40,000 students from six area school boards and 10,000 participants in family, youth group and environmental day camps.

The nature centres have several new initiatives underway or planned for 2009. These include curriculum upgrades to the elementary science program to keep programs completely relevant to the needs of schools. Outreach has been expanded to Rockwood and Belwood Lake conservation areas to keep the travel costs of students down.

Other changes include developing specialized high school environmental courses, GPS programs, English as a Second Language programs and teacher training and PA day sessions.

Grants available to landowners near municipal wells

Landowners in parts of Dundalk and Wellington County are eligible for grants to decommission old private wells, upgrade septic systems and undertake other projects to help protect municipal drinking water supplies.

The grants are available to those who own land near the two municipal wells in Dundalk and to those in Wellington, near municipal wells in Arthur, Drayton, Moorefield, Fergus, Elora, Rockwood and the Hamilton Drive neighborhood north of Guelph.

In some communities, where the wells are located outside the built-up area, only a handful of properties may be eligible. However, in places where the wells are in the urban area, dozens of properties may be eligible. The eligible properties are within what is known as the "two-year time-of-trav-

el" zone around the municipal wells.

Maps showing the eligible areas can be found on the website of the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Region at www.sourcewater.ca in the "Stewardship Program" section.

To get more information, or to apply for a grant, contact Tracey Ryan, Supervisor of Conservation Services at tryan@grandriver.ca or 519-621-2763, Ext. 2269

2008 Report of the Environmental Commissioner

A report went to the GRCA board highlighting points of interest to the Grand River Conservation Authority contained in Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller's 2008 annual report to the legislative assembly.

Miller's report offers 11 recommendations to the province on environmental issues. These include changing the environmental assessment process to look first at need and alternatives to projects; mandatory water use reduction rules during drought conditions; reducing the financial burden on conservation organizations that buy conservation land; water taking fees that reimburse municipalities for all water costs; and stronger environmental compliance for contractors regarding fish habitat protocol.

The key findings as well as the 228-page report and 390-page supplement are available on www.eco.on.ca. The report to the GRCA about issues affecting conservation authorities is in the meetings section of www.grandriver.ca.

Terms of Reference complete and sent to MOE for approval

The Grand River Source Protection Authority has reviewed the Source Protection Committee's proposed Terms of Reference (TOR) and this document will be sent to the Minister of Environment for his approval.

It sets out the work plan that will guide the committee and staff as they complete the Assessment Report and later the Source Protection Plan. It

includes a list of drinking water systems within the Lake Erie Source Protection Region and outlines tasks to complete technical and policy work.

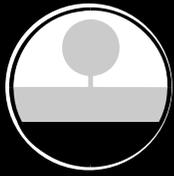
The document was adopted by the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee in November. Members of the public had until early December to comment and a summary of the comments was presented to the authority at the December meeting.

The Minister of Environment is expected to approve the TOR in the spring. The GRCA will apply for more funding to complete the technical studies.

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**February 2009
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Alan Dale re-elected to chair GRCA for a third term

Alan Dale has been re-elected chair of the GRCA for a third one-year term.

Caring for the environment must remain an important issue, even in tough economic times, he said after being acclaimed to the position on Jan. 16.

Dale is a farmer from the Township of Norwich and he represents the County of Oxford on the 26-member board. He has been a member of the GRCA board since 2000 and served as vice-chair in 2006.

Two vice-chairs, Jane Mitchell and Vic Prendergast, were also acclaimed at the board meeting. Mitchell represents the City of Waterloo and has been on the GRCA board since 2000. Prendergast has represented Brantford and has been a board member for 10 years.

Lynne Woolstencroft representing the Region of Waterloo has joined the board, replacing Sean Strickland.

2009 conservation area fees approved by board

Daily admission fees for GRCA conservation areas will remain frozen at the current level in 2009, but nightly camping fees are increasing moderately.

The cost of a vehicle season pass remains the same as last year at \$95 for the first pass and \$65 for the second. Park admission is still \$4.25 for adults (\$5 at Brant Conservation Area), \$2.50 for children 6 to 14 and free for children under five years of age. A pool admission fee of \$1 has been brought back to Byng Island for

those age six and up.

Nightly camping fees range from \$28 to \$31 for unserviced sites and \$35 to 38 for serviced sites. For the complete list of fees, see the parks section of www.grandriver.ca.

Eight of the GRCA's 12 conservation areas offer camping at more than 2,500 camp sites. This makes the GRCA the second largest campground operator in the province - second only to Ontario Parks. The GRCA conservation areas operate on a break-even basis and do not receive government funding. They record more than one million visits annually.

Hydro money to pay back loan for repair work by 2020

The GRCA expects that \$1.8 million in loans for repair work to the Conestogo and Shand hydro plants will be paid off by 2020.

Each of these hydro stations is expected to generate \$225,000 annually in hydro revenue. The Conestogo plant was repaired in 2005-06 at a total cost of nearly \$875,000. The Shand plant was repaired in 2006-2008 at an estimated total cost of \$1.4 million.

In order to carry out the repair work, most of the money was borrowed from the GRCA's land reserves and hydro reserves. Revenue generated by the Shand and Conestogo hydro plants will be used to pay back this amount at a rate of about \$160,000 a year. It will also cover the cost of an additional dam maintenance staff person and put revenue of \$120,000 a year into the GRCA's operating budget to be used for GRCA programs.

Once the loans from the GRCA reserves are paid back in 2020, more hydro revenue will be available to go



into the operating budget. Engineers anticipate the hydro plants will have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years.

A grand winter wonderland

A cold January with regular snow-fall followed a very wet December, leaving lots of snow on the landscape.

Precipitation in January was near average but snow pack is holding over 100 mm of water on the land. The temperature has been about four degrees colder than average. Because this follows a very wet year in 2008, the ground is saturated. Precipitation in Kitchener, for example, was the highest recorded between 1915 and 2008. The potential for flooding is increased, but whether that happens or not will depend on how the spring unfolds.

The Shand, Conestogo and Guelph reservoirs are back in their normal operating range for this time of year. Luther is above normal and was being drawn down at the end of January.

The heavy rain and snowmelt in late December helped improve water quality, since flooding is part of the natural ecology of the river. Floods help flush nutrients from the system, restore habitat and reset the assimilative capacity of the river.

Parks open for winter activities

It is a good year for conservation areas for winter activities – all four of the parks that normally open during the winter were open by the middle of January with all activities available. The parks are Shades' Mills in Cambridge (cross country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing), Pinehurst Lake (snowshoeing and ice fishing), Belwood Lake (ice fishing) and Laurel Creek (cross country skiing).

School bookings are high this year, with snowshoeing at Pinehurst Lake now in its second year, while Laurel Creek Conservation Area has bookings for ski groups nearly every day.

Kids are free on Family Day

Conservation area admission is free

for children 14 and under on Family Day, Monday Feb. 16 at three GRCA conservation areas: Laurel Creek, Shade's Mills and Pinehurst Lake. This offer doesn't apply to Belwood where the winter fee structure is different.

For more information, visit the winter activities page on www.grandriver.ca.

March 24 foundation event raises funds with Cullis-Suzuki

Internationally-known environmentalist Severn Cullis-Suzuki is coming to Guelph in March to lend her support to efforts to improve the environment in the Grand River watershed.

She will speak at the 2009 President's Gala of the Grand River Conservation Foundation at the River Run Centre in Guelph, 6:30 p.m. on March 24. Proceeds will be used to support the environmental work of the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Tickets for the event, entitled "A Celebration of Youth and Conservation," are available by calling the foundation at 877-294-7263 or emailing dhartley@grandriver.ca. Tickets are \$150 each and an income tax receipt will be issued for part of the price. More information is available on the foundation website at www.grcf.ca.

The evening, which is presented by the Nicholas Lambden Children's Foundation and Terra View Homes of Guelph, will offer a gala evening of refreshments and Severn's perspective on the future of water conservation within the Grand River valley and on the national scene.

New Hamburg meeting Feb. 19

A public open house will be held in New Hamburg to provide residents with information about the flood warning system and to reduce the risks posed by flooding in the community.

The meeting will be held Thursday, Feb. 19 at the New Hamburg Community Centre, 251 Jacob St., from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Representatives

of several organizations, including the GRCA, Township of Wilmot, Wateloo Regional Police, Union Gas and Kitchener Wilmot Hydro will be on hand to answer questions.

A new brochure is being distributed to properties within the floodplain of the Nith River in New Hamburg. It has information on the flood warning system, including a map showing the Flood Warning Levels established in the town. It can be downloaded from the Newsroom section of www.grandriver.ca.

Flood coordinators meeting

Several GRCA staff members will make presentations at the annual flood coordinators meeting on Feb. 17.

The meeting is for the flood coordinators who are from communities across the watershed. The primary responsibility for managing a flood emergency rests with the municipality which is responsible for emergency planning.

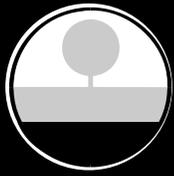
At the meeting, GRCA staff will provide a summary of flood events experienced in 2008, describe the new web page dedicated to flooding and the new real-time weather radar mapping application.

The GRCA's role is to monitor watershed and weather conditions to predict flooding; operate dams and reservoirs to reduce the effects of flooding; and issue flood warning messages.

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March 2009 Volume 14 - No. 3

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Mid-February flood after thaw

Snow melt and rain on Feb. 12-13 led to serious flood conditions in the southern Grand River.

River flows at Dunnville were 1,100 cubic metres per second, compared to a summer low flow of 30 cubic metres. The flows were almost the same as during the severe weather conditions in December, but water levels were much higher due to an ice jam between Dunnville and Port Maitland. The jam downstream of Dunnville resulted in flooding downstream of Dunnville close to the regulatory flood level.

Another ice jam was also located several kilometres downstream of Cayuga. Water backed up into Cayuga, resulting in levels that were also close to the regulatory flood levels.

The reservoir system cut a third off of the peak flows during the flood. Twice within nine days a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker was called in to break up ice and allow water to flow out into Lake Erie more freely.

This is the second incident that has been broadcast in the national media this winter.

Wet watershed in February

February was wetter than normal, continuing a wet trend that has gone on for more than a year.

Only a portion of the snowpack melted during the Feb. 12-13 event, so the amount of snowpack was still above average in the northern part of the watershed at the end of February. The wet frozen ground and snowpack increase the potential for runoff this spring.

The temperatures have been about one degree warmer than average. Stream flows are still higher than normal, but the three largest reservoirs - Shand, Conestogo and Guelph - are back in their normal operating range for this time of year so they have the capacity to hold back water if there is another weather event.

2009 budget approved

The Grand River Conservation Authority board unanimously approved the 2009 budget.

The \$31.4 million budget will pay the cost of GRCA programs that protect water quality, reduce flood damages, protect natural areas, support responsible development, provide outdoor recreation and environmental education.

The 26 member GRCA board is made up of representatives appointed by municipal councils throughout the watershed.

The budget is about \$2.3 million higher than 2008, with much of the increase due to one-time capital projects or special programs, such as Source Water Protection, that are covered entirely by the province, municipalities or other sources.

The three main sources of revenue are: \$9.5 million (33 per cent) from watershed municipalities, mostly through water bills or property taxes which amount to \$9.06 per person; \$7.5 million (25 per cent) from grants, mostly from the provincial government; \$13 million (43 per cent) from self-generated revenue such as money from campground fees, planning fees, tree sales, hydroelectricity generation, rental property income and other sources. More information is posted on www.grandriver.ca.



Land swap near Pioneer Tower

The GRCA has taken possession of floodplain lands totalling 14.4 hectares in the pioneer tower area of South Kitchener, next to the Deer Ridge subdivision.

This was part of a negotiated agreement between the City of Kitchener, the GRCA and JHS Developments.

Under this tri-party agreement, the GRCA sold three partial subdivision lots to the City of Kitchener, which then exchanged them with the developer for Schoerg Farm. This exchange included a historic barn foundation that the city will keep to protect because of its heritage value. The exchange included floodplain land and this is being transferred to the GRCA, along with a cash payment to represent the higher value of the property to be developed. The cash will be used to buy environmentally-sensitive lands.

Upper Blair Creek Functional Drainage Study approved

An updated Upper Blair Creek (Kitchener) Functional Drainage Study was approved by the GRCA board.

The study is used as a guide for planning matters and permit applications in this part of south Kitchener. The board approved an earlier version of the study in October 2007, but development proposed for the area has been appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

As a result of OMB mediation, Kitchener, Waterloo Region, the GRCA and the landowners have been doing more analysis in order to assist in finding a resolution. It is for this reason that an updated version of the report went back to the GRCA board.

Environmental scholarship now available to students

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 the third year or sixth semester of an honours program at a watershed university (Waterloo, Guelph, Laurier) or college (Conestoga). Students must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, in one of the following programs: environmental sciences, engineering, chemistry or manufacturing.

Applications may be downloaded from the scholarship link on the foundation's website at www.grcf.ca.

Shand control room addition

The control room at the Shand Dam will double in size at a cost of about \$85,000 this year.

The work will be carried out by Trade Mark Industrial, one of seven firms that submitted tenders for this project.

A bigger control room is necessary because the control panels and four electric motors that are used to open and close each of the four gates need to be replaced later this year. The current size of the control room won't allow for safe installation of the new equipment while meeting the updated building and electrical code requirements.

The room will increase to 400 square feet. The project cost will be shared evenly by the GRCA and the Ministry of Natural Resources through the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program.

Tickets available for fundraiser

Tickets are available for a special evening featuring internationally-known environmentalist Severn Cullis-Suzuki to support environmental improvement in the Grand River watershed.

She will speak at the 2009 President's Gala of the Grand River Conservation Foundation at the River Run Centre in Guelph, 6:30 p.m. on March 24. Proceeds will be used to support the environmental work of the Grand River Conservation

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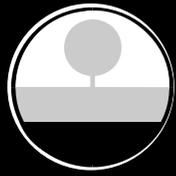
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The event will offer a gala evening of refreshments and Severn's perspective on the protection of our global water resources and sustainable lifestyles. The event is presented by the Nicholas Lambden Children's Foundation and Terra View Homes of Guelph.

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April 2009
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Safety work on Drimmie Dam

The GRCA board agreed to stabilize the Drimmie Dam in Elora with rock fill as an interim measure to reduce the risk of a dam failure to downstream recreational users.

The dam is one of 29 owned by the GRCA. Analysis completed late last fall confirmed safety issues with the dam. The picturesque but aging dam is in poor shape, and if it were to fail it would send a wave of water cascading through the Elora Gorge. This sudden release would pose a risk to anyone fishing, kayaking or walking through the gorge.

The GRCA board supported the interim measure of placing rock fill against the dam to prevent a sudden release of water. The project has an estimated cost of \$100,000. It is expected the work will be done in May, after the end of the spring flood season.

A Class Environmental Assessment (EA) will be undertaken to find a long term solution to the deficiencies of this dam. This will include a public process and will get underway after the interim measures are completed.

Warm March weather

Spring arrived early this year, with temperatures at the Shand Dam that were about four degrees above the long-term average in March.

March started off wet and two flood advisories were issued early in the month. The snowmelt and two rainfall events were spaced far enough apart that there was no flooding, except at the low level bridge above St. Jacobs.

Warm wet weather during the first week of March meant that snow melted ahead of schedule. This resulted in the need to operate the Shand, Guelph and Luther reservoirs above their normal range for a period of time.

The wet start to March was followed by two weeks of dry weather. Total precipitation for the past three months was 27 to 51 per cent above the long term average, but the monthly rainfall during March was only 68 to 93 per cent of the long term average.

Little or no rainfall over the last two weeks of March coupled with dry air masses reduced soil moisture to the point where some farmers were starting to plough their fields. While the dry sunny conditions were welcome from a flood perspective, this could create challenges with respect to filling the reservoirs.

Stream flows had receded by the end of March and were below normal for that time of year.

Successful twinning project between GRCA and Argentina

A conservation organization from Argentina, Los Algarrobos, is grateful to the GRCA, president Andrew Hamilton Joseph told the GRCA board.

Los Algarrobos is a non-profit organization that works to improve the quality of life of people in the Andean region of Argentina. For the past 16 years, visitors from this region of Argentina have come to learn from the GRCA, while GRCA staff has also visited Argentina, sometimes at their own expense.

During this time, Los Algarrobos has become recognized nationally and internationally. It has undertaken many projects related to watershed education, tree and vegetable nurseries, sewage treatment, solid waste handling, water quality improvements, tree planting and installing a communication network for isolated communities. It is now the foremost environmental and education-oriented



non-governmental organization in Latin America. This success is due to the support and mentorship of the GRCA, Joseph told the GRCA board.

The GRCA received the International Riverprize for excellence in watershed management from the International Riverfestival in Australia in 2000. This organization also provided funds for the five year twinning between Los Algarrobos and the GRCA. The funding is nearing the end of its term.

Joseph urged the board to continue in this relationship, because it produces a valuable "multiplier effect" throughout the entire region. Los Algarrobos continues to seek funding for improved watershed management and twinning. A major proposal is being considered by the World Bank's Global Environmental Fund.

Green Energy Act proposal

The GRCA is urging the provincial government to make changes to the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act.

One intention of the proposed act is to streamline the approvals process for green energy projects such as wind and solar energy. The GRCA is recommending not to amend the Conservation Authorities Act by removing "conservation of land" as a reason to refuse a permit or impose conditions to a permit for green energy projects, as is proposed.

GRCA recommends GRCA Regulation 150/06 be changed to allow senior GRCA staff to be delegated to approve permits that meet GRCA policies. This is already permitted under the Conservation Authorities Act and would streamline the process, because staff could approve permits which would comply with policy.

This recommendation will be forwarded to the province, watershed municipalities and a number of agencies.

Orica report to be prepared

GRCA staff has been directed by the board to prepare a report outlining concerns and questions related to the proposed zoning amendment for a

bulk explosive storage and distribution facility in East Luther Grand Valley.

The operation is close to Luther Marsh which has a complex ecosystem. The facility has been operating for several years under temporary use bylaws. Now the township is being asked to permanently rezone a portion of the property from the Agricultural and Environmental Protection designation. The rest of the property will continue to have Agricultural and Environmental Protection designation.

April 30 nomination deadline for 2009 Watershed Awards

The Grand River Conservation Authority is looking for nominees for its 2009 environmental awards.

Each year since 1976, the authority has presented awards to individuals, families, organizations and businesses that have taken action to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Grand River watershed.

The GRCA presents two types of 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.

If you know a person, organization or business that you think deserves an award, please make a nomination. The deadline for nominations is April 30. A nomination form is available in the "Watershed Awards" section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

The 2009 winners will be selected by the Special Recognition Committee of the GRCA board and they will be honoured at an event in the fall.

Dumfries Conservation Area trail remains closed

A section of walking trail through Dumfries Conservation Area will remain closed until late spring to allow a new flood control berm to be constructed.

The City of Cambridge is building the berm across Groff Mill Creek, upstream of the CN/CP rail lines. A small footbridge that crosses the creek

was removed last fall as part of the project.

The berm is part of a project by the city and the Region of Waterloo to control flooding. Coronation Boulevard was damaged when water flowed over the road following heavy rainfalls in 2005 and 2006.

The berm should be completed some time in May. After that, work will begin to reconstruct the trail and complete the landscaping.

President's Gala Nets \$7,000 for Conservation

The President's Gala - A Celebration of Youth and Conservation held at the River Run Centre in Guelph raised \$7,000 for conservation work for high priority conservation projects in the Grand River watershed.

The event featured a presentation by Severn Cullis-Suzuki, a prominent young environmentalist gaining acclaim worldwide for her approach to "intergenerational justice" - the idea that adults have a responsibility to young people to leave our natural world intact and even improved for future generations.

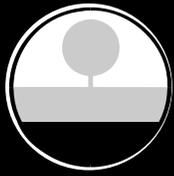
Phil Andrews of the Guelph Mercury was the emcee and Guelph Lake Nature Centre graduates Todd Frizley and Eva Szecsenyi shared stories about how they were inspired to take up environmentally-related careers.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation thanks the many gala sponsors and ticket buyers.

This issue of "GRCA Minutes" was published in April 2009.

It is a summary of the March 2009 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 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: <http://www.grandriver.ca>

**May 2009
Volume 12 - No.5**

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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National fisheries award for Grand committee

A group that has been working for more than 10 years to improve the Grand River fishery has received national recognition.

The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Implementation Committee was selected by the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to receive the award. Representatives of the committee attended the ceremony in Ottawa on May 4.

Federal Fisheries Minister Gail Shea told the implementation committee that it was selected for the award because of its "volunteer efforts to improve the fishery and fish habitat in the Grand River watershed."

The management plan was prepared over three years and completed in 1998. The committee is led by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the GRCA with input and assistance of more than a dozen different partners.

This work has resulted in increased awareness and a thriving river with a healthy fishery and more than \$4 million worth of programs, projects and activities.

Fisheries implementation update

Five public open houses were held throughout the watershed between January and March, 2009.

This included presentations about the Grand River fisheries management plan's successes and current conditions. Participants at the open houses were asked for input about their concerns regarding the fish plan.

This was the first river fisheries management plan developed in Ontario and it was completed in 1998,

so the open houses were related to its 10th anniversary.

There were several concerns raised about the need for continued support for improving the knowledge about fish and fish habitat in the river system, particularly in the southern Grand River and Lake Erie. Sediment generated from subdivisions reaching small streams and the growing urban areas were other concerns, as well as the need to involve volunteers in rehabilitation.

April weather

Some parts of the watershed were wet and others were dry during April, so watershed conditions varied during the month.

But the past three months have been wetter than average interspersed with dry spells during March and April. April was also about 1.5 degrees cooler than average.

From a flood advisory and flood warning perspective, April was a quiet month with no warnings issued. An internal review of the lessons learned from recent floods is being compiled and will be presented at the next GRCA board meeting.

The reservoirs are in their normal operating range for the time of year.

Parks opened May 1

Most Grand River Conservation Authority parks opened for the season on May 1.

The GRCA operates 12 conservation areas, eight of which offer camping, with about 2,500 camping sites. Some parks opened in April and one, Elora Quarry, will open in mid-June.



A season-long alcohol ban is in effect at Elora Gorge. Early season bans, from May 14 (Victoria Day weekend) to June 21, will be in place at Byng Island, Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek. Alcohol is banned in all parks during the Victoria Day and Labour Day weekends.

For information on the parks, to purchase season passes visit www.grandriver.ca, or call 1-519-621-2763.

Heritage bridge inventory

The GRCA is working with the Ministry of Culture and the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo to identify opportunities for completing a comprehensive bridge inventory for the Grand River watershed.

In 2004, the GRCA initiated a Heritage Bridge Inventory to identify bridges in the Grand River watershed that support the Canadian Heritage River designation of the Grand River and its tributaries. This inventory is based on secondary sources of information available from watershed municipalities. It is not complete, because information wasn't available for all bridges.

As they age, the bridges in the watershed are deteriorating and there is significant pressure on municipalities to replace them. In many cases, decisions to demolish a heritage bridge are made without knowledge that it is important to the heritage river designation.

The comprehensive bridge inventory will identify heritage bridges so that this information is considered before a decision about replacing, repairing or restoring the bridge is made.

Season passes for councillors

Season passes will be issued to 265 members of municipal and First Nations councils within the Grand River watershed to recognize the GRCA's 75th anniversary.

The GRCA has two founding organizations: the Grand River Conservation Commission (founded

in 1934) and the Grand Valley Conservation Authority (founded in 1948) which joined together in 1966 and became the GRCA. The commission was the first partnership of watershed municipalities to form a watershed management organization in Canada and it was also the third partnership of this type in the world.

Municipal partners continue to play a central role in operating the GRCA. They contribute one-third of the GRCA's annual budget and appoint members to the GRCA board.

Brant source protection studies

Golder Associates has been awarded a \$109,000 contract to complete the Source Protection Technical Studies in the County of Brant.

The consulting services contracts have been on hold since 2007. The regulations and rules have now been finalized and Brant has requested that the GRCA take over the financial and technical administration of these technical studies.

Road contracts awarded

The GRCA awarded two contracts for road surfacing.

A contract for nearly \$250,000 for the Cottage Lot Road Surface maintenance has been awarded to Cornell Construction Ltd. It will be funded through the fees paid to the GRCA by cottage lot owners at Conestogo and Belwood lakes.

Central Asphalt Ltd. of London was awarded a contract for \$130,000 for roads within the conservation areas. Both of these contracts were awarded to the lowest of four bids on the projects.

Earth day events

Tree planting on GRCA land was among the many Earth Day activities throughout the watershed this year.

More than 1,000 trees were planted at the 11th annual Sunoco Earth Day at the Laurel Creek Conservation Area in Waterloo. It was the second time this event was held at Laurel Creek. In

addition to tree planting, there were about 20 fun and educational activities geared to visitors of all ages.

The Guelph Rotary Forest is also in its second year of planting. By 2020, 65,000 trees will have been planted on the property, transforming 40 hectares of farmland north of the Guelph lake Nature Centre into forest.

Hikes for 75th anniversary

If you enjoy hiking or think you'd like to give it a try, get your boots ready for lots of opportunities to enjoy the trails in the Grand River watershed this year.

In honour of the 75th anniversary of the GRCA, the Grand Valley Trails Association has planned three different series of hikes that will keep people on the trails until December.

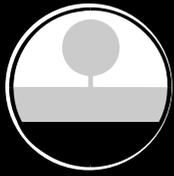
The "Best of the Grand" hikes will be two or three hours long and explore different spots along the Grand Valley Trail. Family hikes will be loops that start and end at the same point and are no more than two hours. These are for children accompanied by adults and will be at a leisurely pace. Serious hikers can do the 275-km Grand Valley Trail from start to finish. The GVTA has been around since 1972 and has about 400 members throughout the watershed. Full details of all the hikes are available at www.gvta.on.ca.

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GRCA Minutes

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June 2009
Volume 14 - No. 6

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Chilligo pond construction

Work to create two ponds beside Chilligo Creek in Cambridge is expected to get under way this summer.

Gateman-Milloy Inc. of Kitchener has been awarded the \$146,000 project which has been in the works since 2000, when the Chilligo Dam failed. The ponds will encourage wildlife diversity and offer people in the community a conservation hub to enjoy. With the support of donors and community members in the area, funding is coming from the Grand River Conservation Foundation with an additional \$30,000 from the GRCA.

Two of the three proposed ponds are being constructed, because this most closely matches the funds that are available. The ponds will be completed this fall, and a second phase of the project will be tree planting and naturalization, set to take place next spring.

75th anniversary celebration

The GRCA has a history of firsts, said Donna Cansfield, Ontario's Natural Resources Minister at the GRCA's 75th anniversary celebration in Brantford.

She noted that the Grand River Conservation Commission, one of two founding organizations, was the first watershed management organization in Canada. It built the first multi-purpose dam, the Shand Dam, in 1942. The Grand River was the first urbanized river to receive a heritage designation in 1994 and the first river in Canada to receive the International Riverprize for river management in 2000.

Political leaders from across the watershed spoke about the GRCA at

the meeting, where GRCA chair Alan Dale made a presentation about the history of the organization.

The first formal meeting of the conservation commission took place on May 30, 1934 in Brantford when representatives of Brantford, Kitchener, Galt, Fergus and Caledonia agreed to form the commission.

High water bulletin May 29

The GRCA issued a high water safety bulletin advising that water levels in the rivers were high on May 29 due to heavy rains.

Overall during May, precipitation was close to the long-term average, but it has been above the long-term average for the past three months, including March and April.

Frequent regular rainfall has kept the soil near saturated. This time of year is a balancing act for reservoir operations because the reservoirs need to have storage available to manage floods, but they also need to be full to augment the rivers during the summer months.

All reservoirs are in their normal operating range for this time of year.

Six recreation applications for provincial and federal funding

The GRCA has applied to the Recreational Infrastructure Canada program for funding for six projects in conservation areas.

The project applications were approved by the board. The GRCA, federal and provincial governments would each provide one-third of the construction costs for projects that are successful under this program. The GRCA is requesting financial assistance to replace a workshop at



Conestogo Lake, the gatehouse at Brant and washrooms at Byng Island, Elora Gorge and Guelph Lake conservation areas. It would also like to construct a new pavilion at Pinehurst Lake.

Conservation authorities are eligible to apply for this program through which the federal government expects to invest \$500 million in recreational facilities across Canada over two years. The GRCA's 12 conservation areas are self-supporting and don't normally receive financial assistance from the provincial or federal governments.

2009 Watershed Award recipients have been selected

The GRCA has selected the recipients of the 2009 watershed awards and a ceremony to recognize their environmental contributions will take place in the fall.

Peter Krause, a former chair of the GRCA board, will receive the Honour Roll award, which is not given out each year. Krause served on the GRCA board for over two decades including nine years as chair.

Watershed awards will go to Blount Canada for 20 years of leadership in corporate greening in an urban landscape and the Speed River Chapter of Trout Unlimited for their work restoring Marden Creek. Three individuals recipients are: Thomas Sitak, an environmental teacher in Brantford; Murray Schlueter, a volunteer naturalist in the Waterloo and Oxford areas, and Norm Lundvall a member of the Grand River Conservation Foundation for 36 years.

Comments sought on aggregate report by July 31

Public comment is being sought on a report about the cumulative impacts of aggregate extraction below the water table in the Grand River watershed.

The report provides guidelines to assess the impacts of gravel extraction below the water table. It outlines steps that should be taken to identify the potential effects on surface and groundwater quantity and quality

when there are many gravel pits operating close to each other or where there is a potential for many gravel pits in a subwatershed.

In a pit operating below the water table, water will usually seep into the pit, creating a pit pond. Below-water pits usually use large excavators or draglines to dredge sand and gravel from the pit ponds that form below the water table level.

The report was written in response to concerns expressed by several municipalities that the presence of several pits, operating below the water table, could have an impact on surface and groundwater quality and quantity downstream of the pits. It is available on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca. Comments can be sent by e-mail to policy@grandriver.ca by July 31.

20 top birding trails highlighted in brochure and website

To help novice hikers and birders discover the trails this summer, the Grand River Country tourism alliance has just completed its "Trails Take Flight" brochure and accompanying website.

These outline 20 of the best birding trails in the Grand River watershed. Information on the trails and bird species were scouted by the Guelph Field Naturalists, and the website was developed with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion.

The website features interactive trail maps, and includes descriptive text and photos about each trail and the birds you may find there. For more information, visit www.grandriver-country.com/trails.

Snyder's Flats Rotary Forest launched May 29

Snyder's Flats Rotary Forest was launched May 29 to turn a former gravel pit area into a diverse natural landscape that will become a vibrant, publicly-accessible natural space.

Snyder's Flats is a 96-hectare (240-acre) property owned by the GRCA, nestled in a bend in the Grand River in Bloomingdale.

The Kitchener-Conestoga Rotary Club is supporting the project through a donation to the Grand River Conservation Foundation of part of the proceeds of the club's 2008 Dream Home lottery. The money will be used to plant 56,000 native trees and shrubs to restore forests and grasslands, build a Rotary Walk trail and install interpretive signage. Additional support for the Rotary Forest was provided by the Good Foundation Inc. in memory of Milton R. Good and the Trees Ontario Foundation.

Public comment sought on changes to regulated areas

The GRCA is seeking public comments on proposed changes in the areas that are regulated by the GRCA.

The GRCA helps to protect natural areas such as rivers, streams, flood plains, wetlands, steep slopes and the Lake Erie shoreline by regulating construction, grading, alteration and development activities in and near those areas.

The GRCA maintains maps showing areas regulated by the GRCA. As a result of recent studies, the GRCA has updated those maps and made changes that affect land in various parts of the watershed. In some locations the regulated area was reduced, and in other locations it was enlarged.

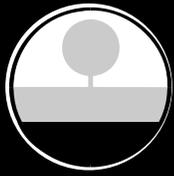
More information, including maps showing the changes, is available at www.grandriver.ca in the Planning and Regulations section.

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July 2009
Volume 14 - No. 7

GRCA **General Membership**

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San Roque twinning continues another five years

The twinning agreement between the GRCA and the San Roque Lake watershed in Cordoba, Argentina has been renewed for another five years.

The GRCA board agreed to continue with this agreement, which has resulted in 10 exchanges since 2005. Los Algarrobos is a leading organization in South America. It does work in many provinces, so there is a "multiplier benefit" for twinning with this one watershed that extends well beyond the watershed and even the country.

Los Algarrobos has undertaken pilot projects, demonstration sites and these help lead to changes that have a lasting environmental impact.

GRCA to begin \$2.7 million upgrade to Conestogo Dam

The GRCA is about to begin a \$2.7 million upgrade of the Conestogo Dam near Glen Allan in Mapleton Township.

The project, which began in early July, will be completed by the fall of 2010. The cost of the project is divided evenly between the GRCA and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources through its Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program.

The contractor is Facca Inc. of Essex County. The project was designed by Hatch Energy of Niagara Falls. Hatch is the successor to H.G. Acres & Company Ltd. which also designed the dam and supervised its construction in 1958.

The work involves upgrades to the stilling basin, which is the area immediately downstream of the dam gates. Concrete walls and other elements

"still," or calm, the water as it surges out of the gates. If the water is not calmed, it could rush back against the base of the dam and erode it, possibly causing the dam to collapse.

Public open house discussed safety plans for Conestogo Dam

The GRCA held a public open house for residents of Mapleton, Wellesley and Woolwich townships about GRCA projects designed to ensure Conestogo Dam continues to meet or exceed provincial safety standards.

The June 25 open house provided information about two major projects worth a total of about \$23 million to upgrade several important parts of the Conestogo Dam. The meeting also covered a new Emergency Preparedness and Response plan, which has been developed by the GRCA, municipal governments and emergency response agencies, to protect residents of Glen Allan, St. Jacobs and other Conestogo River communities in the unlikely event of a dam emergency.

The Conestogo Dam was built in 1958 to protect residents and their property from floods and to ensure an adequate water supply in the summer and fall. It is regularly examined by GRCA staff and independent experts under the GRCA's Dam Management Program. As a result of those examinations, the upgrades and the Emergency Plan were developed to meet new, more rigorous provincial standards.

Trees as green infrastructure

The GRCA board heard a presentation about the GRCA as a provider of "green infrastructure."

Green infrastructure includes wet-



lands, forests and natural areas. These moderate rain, snowfall and temperatures, clean water and air and carbon sequestration to lessen the impact of climate change. Green infrastructure is essential to livable communities, just like roads, bridges, schools and municipal buildings.

A network of natural ecosystems, especially those that are connected with each other, support long-term sustainability of water and land resources.

The GRCA will explore ways to strengthen the natural areas that make up the watershed's green infrastructure, working in partnership with landowners, municipalities and others.

Dry June weather follows wet spring

June was dry, with precipitation ranging from only 38 to 78 per cent of the long-term average throughout the watershed.

However, total precipitation for the three previous months was above the long term average, reflecting wetter-than normal conditions March through May. June was also a cool month, at 2.3 degrees below the long-term average at Shand Dam, with cool weather expected to continue.

The regular rainfall and cool weather mean all reservoirs are at or close to their normal operating range for this time of year. Reservoir discharges have been above the long term average during June and there has been less evaporation loss from the reservoirs due to the cool weather.

GRCA sets aside plan to shore up Drimmie Dam

The Grand River Conservation Authority has set aside a plan to shore up the Drimmie Dam in Elora.

Instead, the GRCA is monitoring the condition of the dam on a daily basis to watch for signs of deterioration. If signs of possible failure do develop, the GRCA would shut down its tubing operation in Elora Gorge Conservation Area and issue a safety warning to other river users. This

decision by the GRCA board was made after receiving a letter from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry letter said the likelihood of a sudden collapse of the dam in summer is low.

"Gravity dams like the Drimmie Dam typically fail over a prolonged period, a small piece at a time," said the letter from Les Pataky, regional engineer with the ministry. "We do not believe that persons or property are at imminent risk."

In March, the GRCA adopted a plan to place rock fill on either side of the dam to shore it up to protect the dam from a "sunny day failure." That would be a sudden, unexpected collapse of the dam - in as short a time as 15 minutes - that would send a two-metre wave of water cascading downstream. A wave of that size would threaten the safety of kayakers, anglers and tubers for about 300 metres downstream of the dam. The GRCA did not receive the ministry's approval to use rock fill for this purpose. An Environmental Assessment is the next step and it will examine alternatives, ranging from complete removal of the dam to replacement.

Water Forum to focus on Grand River and Lake Erie connection

The link between the Great Lakes and the rivers that flow into them will be the subject of presentations at the Ninth Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum on Sept. 18 in Cambridge.

"Great Lakes ~ Great Links: A Grand Connection" will allow for an exchange of ideas about the relationship between the Great Lakes and their tributaries. The morning program will focus on the issues facing the Great Lakes and their impact on the watershed. The afternoon session will focus on the watershed response to the Great Lakes concerns and innovative solutions.

The annual event, which attracts about 400 participants, takes place at the head office of the GRCA in Cambridge. Registration is open to the public. Details about the program, speakers and registration (including

an online registration process) are in the Water Forum section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

Four new foundation directors

The Grand River Conservation Foundation appointed four new members to its board at the annual general meeting in June and these appointments were approved by the GRCA board.

The foundation has established staggered terms for directors and reduced the board from 20 to 16 members, including the GRCA chair.

The four new members are: lawyer C. Thomas LeBrun, a retired partner in the law firm Gowlings who has many years of community service for several organizations; financial planner Joy O'Donnell of Brantford who is also past president of the Rotary Club of Cambridge North; accountant Terry Reidel who served at Ernst & Young and then was president and CEO of Kuntz Electroplating; and Randy Walden, owner of Nedlaw Roofing Limited, Nedlaw Living Roofs Inc. and Nedlaw Living Walls Inc. Walden's appointment won't take effect until Jan. 1.

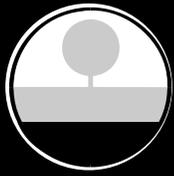
In addition, Vyrt Sisson has been reappointed for three more years. Up to one-third of the directors rotate off the board each year.

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August 2009
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GRCA **General Membership**

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Cool weather continued through July

Temperatures were an average of 2.4 degrees cooler than usual through July, leading to less evaporation from the reservoirs.

Rain was 79 to 115 per cent of the long-term average, with less rain falling in the north of Drayton and Fergus. But the general trend over 20 months has been to wet weather. River flows have been higher than average except in the northern third of the watershed.

All reservoirs are in or close to their normal operating range for this time of year. Up to 79 per cent of the river flow through Kitchener and Waterloo during the middle of July was from the reservoirs, but this tapered off later in the month. Lake Erie is slightly higher than average for this time of year.

Regulation mapping updated

As a result of recent studies, the GRCA has approved updated maps that show GRCA-regulated areas.

The updated maps are posted on the GRCA website www.grandriver.ca under the Map Your Property link. They were developed within guidelines from Conservation Ontario and the GRCA after public consultation. A number of minor adjustments have been made to the regulation limit to reflect new information based on site specific technical studies and other information.

In some locations, the regulated area was reduced, and in other locations it was enlarged. Nearly one-third of the land within the watershed falls within the regulation limit.

To notify the public about the map

update, newspaper notices were placed throughout the Grand River watershed, a public open house was held and notice of the map updates was circulated to the Home Builders/GRCA Liaison Committee.

Approval of update to regulation became effective Aug. 1

The GRCA board approved revised Policies for the Administration of the Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation effective Aug. 1.

The policies first came into effect Jan. 1, 2008 and this is the second revision since then. The modifications focus on agricultural structures in the floodplain, peat extraction, accessory structures to existing rural residential uses, shoreline development, municipally-approved legacy subdivision and condominium plans in or near wetlands for which GRCA permits are required.

The changes are minor and they help clarify some points and address policy gaps.

New procedures for compliance with regulation

The GRCA board also approved a new document that describes policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Policies for the Administration of the Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation.

These policies and procedures provide direction to GRCA staff which ensures that permit holders and landowners who may be in violation of the Regulation are treated in a



timely and fair manner and that a consistent and well-documented procedure for investigating and pursuing violations is carried out.

GRCA receives provincial grants for three projects at parks

The GRCA will invest \$1.3 million in new facilities at three conservation areas, thanks to grants from the provincial and federal governments.

The GRCA will receive a total of \$867,000 in grants, split between the Recreation Infrastructure Canada Program (RIInC) and the Ontario Recreation Program (Ontario REC). The GRCA will contribute \$433,000. The money will be used for three projects:

- A new \$300,000 gatehouse at Brant Conservation Area, Brantford to replace the existing structure built in 1971.

- New washroom facilities worth \$700,000 at Elora Gorge Conservation Area, Elora.

- New washroom facilities worth \$300,000 at Guelph Lake Conservation Area, Guelph.

At both Elora Gorge and Guelph Lake parks, the existing washrooms do not meet current standards and do not have enough capacity to meet the growing demand from campers and day-use visitors. New washrooms will include toilets and showers and will be barrier-free.

Work on the projects is expected to start later this year and be complete by the summer of 2010.

Fishermills ponds under way to be completed in August

The excavation of ponds beside Ellis Creek in Cambridge got under way in July and the project is expected to be completed in August.

The two new ponds will be on the east side of the creek and they will provide habitat for native aquatic species. Native trees and shrubs will be planted around the ponds, and interpretive signs about the history of the area and the restoration will be added after the project is complete.

The project is the result of many years of planning following the failure of a dam in the former community of Fishermills near Beaverville and Chilligo roads. In 2000, the dam was removed, resulting in better water quality as Ellis Creek flowed freely. Since that time, the GRCA and nearby community members have developed an environmentally-friendly alternative to restore this scenic and recreational community hub.

Funding for this project was spearheaded by the Grand River Conservation Foundation. More than \$158,000 has been raised with an additional \$30,000 from the GRCA.

Friends of Mill Creek celebrate 10th anniversary Aug. 13

Friends of Mill Creek are celebrating 10 successful years that have seen divergent groups work together for the benefit of Mill Creek.

The group will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Thursday, Aug. 13 at Shades' Mills Conservation Area in Cambridge. The event will include demonstrations of benthic sampling, to check the health of the watercourse based on the bugs that live there, and electro-fishing at 3:30 p.m. This will be followed by a barbeque and presentations.

Landowners, politicians, young people, local industrialists and environmentalists have all volunteered their time and effort for the benefit of this spring-fed cold water stream that runs through Puslinch Township and the City of Cambridge where it joins the Grand River.

Sept. 4 deadline for comment on aggregate extraction

The deadline for public comment on a report on aggregate extraction in the Grand River watershed has been extended to Sept. 4. The original deadline was July 31.

The report is about the cumulative impacts of aggregate extraction below the water table. It provides guidelines for the assessment of the impacts of gravel extraction below the water table. It outlines steps that should be

taken to identify the potential effects on surface and groundwater quantity and quality when there are many gravel pits operating close to each other or where there is a potential for many gravel pits in a subwatershed.

A copy of the report is available on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca. Comments can be sent by e-mail to policy@grandriver.ca.

Proposed tourism changes to Grand River Country

Provincial changes to tourism regions could see the Grand River watershed divided up into two sections, a proposal that members of Grand River Country oppose.

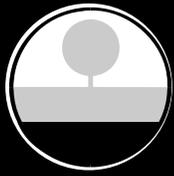
Grand River Country is a marketing alliance with several partners: Wellington-North, Elora/Fergus Tourism, St. Jacobs Country/Woolwich, Guelph Tourism, Brantford Tourism, County of Brant, Six Nations Tourism, County of Haldimand, and the GRCA. They work together to cover most areas in the watershed and do not wish to see the Grand River watershed split up for tourism marketing purposes.

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GRCA Minutes

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September 2009
Volume 14 - No. 9

GRCA **General Membership**

Chairman - Alan Dale

1st Vice-Chairman - Jane Mitchell

2nd Vice-Chairman - Vic Prendergast

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Federal grant to restore Harris Mill Ruin in Rockwood

The federal government is providing most of the money needed to restore the Harris Mill ruins in the Rockwood Conservation Area in Rockwood, east of Guelph.

Michael Chong, MP for Wellington-Halton Hills, announced \$755,000 toward the \$855,000 project. The GRCA and the Grand River Conservation Foundation will each contribute \$50,000.

The ruins have deteriorated significantly so public use has been restricted. The GRCA will hire a construction crew to shore up the foundation, repoint the walls, cap the tops of the walls and do other work to preserve the ruins. The restoration work is scheduled to be finished by next spring.

The ruins are all that remain of the woolen mill that operated from 1867 until 1925. They are a focal point of the conservation area and a significant tourism attraction in the Township of Guelph/Eramosa. They serve as a setting for activities as diverse as weddings and major film productions.

New hydro-electric plant up and running at Shand Dam

A new hydroelectric generating plant has been installed at the GRCA's Shand Dam, near Fergus, and is generating enough electricity to meet the needs of about 600 homes.

The new plant, which cost about \$1.3 million, went into operation in mid-July and is producing about 690 kilowatts of electricity. It replaced a 19-year-old unit that failed in 2006.

The new plant is more efficient than the old one and over the course of a

year will generate about 30 per cent more electricity. The plant will pay for itself in about six years and has a 25-year life expectancy.

The water powering the turbines is water that is released from the reservoirs to maintain flows in the Grand, Conestogo and Speed rivers. The improved efficiency of the Shand and Conestogo plants means they can generate greater amounts of electricity in low flow periods.

The Shand plant could be upgraded to increase its maximum output by about 30 per cent, but before that can be done the Hydro One grid in the area would have to be upgraded.

New stairs for Elora Gorge

Descending into the Elora Gorge to go tubing will soon be a little easier, thanks to a stairway that will be constructed to replace the current pathway.

Axiom Millwrighting and Fabrication of Waterloo will undertake the \$88,000 project, which is being funded from park revenue. This was the lowest of nine bids on the project. The work will be completed this fall.

Varied rainfall in August

The range in rainfall across the watershed in August varied due to cellular thunderstorms in some areas.

Rainfall was as low as 38 per cent of the long term average at Woolwich, which experienced localized dry conditions. It was as high as 148 per cent of the long term average at Shades' Mills in Cambridge.

The average monthly air temperature at Shand Dam was 1.2 degrees warmer than the long term average,



breaking the cooler than normal weather trend.

Rainfall in August coupled with the wet cool trend in 2009 resulted in river flows and reservoir discharges that remain above the long term average. Luther and Shand reservoirs are slightly above their normal range, while Conestogo and Guelph are at the upper curve and the smaller dams are all at their summer operating levels.

Alternatives for Drimmie Dam discussed at meetings

A public open house took place in Elora on Sept. 2 to provide information on alternative measures to improve the safety of Drimmie Dam on the Grand River in Elora.

This was the first of three open houses to be held this fall. Representatives of the GRCA and Sanchez Engineering Inc. discussed the alternatives.

The GRCA launched an environmental assessment to look at the future of the dam, which is in poor condition and at risk of failure. Sanchez Engineering is managing the environmental assessment process. The firm conducted a dam safety assessment for the GRCA in 2008 and has developed several alternatives for the future of the dam. These range from complete removal to construction of a new dam.

As part of the environmental assessment, a Public Liaison Committee was created with representatives of groups with an interest in the future of the dam including business, tourism, heritage, kayakers, anglers and the Township of Centre Wellington.

The committee will help in the process of selecting a preferred outcome from the list of alternatives. In selecting the preferred option, consideration will be given to the engineering, social, environmental and cultural aspects of the project.

Minister to speak at Grand River Watershed Water Forum Sept. 18

Donna Cansfield, the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources, will be

a keynote speaker at the Ninth Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum on Sept. 18 in Cambridge.

She'll be speaking on the theme of the conference: Great Lakes ~ Great Links: A Grand Connection."

The day-long forum will allow for an exchange of ideas about the relationship between the Great Lakes and their tributaries. The morning program will focus on the issues facing the Great Lakes and their impact on the watershed. The afternoon session will focus on the watershed response to the Great Lakes concerns and innovative solutions.

The annual event, which attracts about 400 participants, takes place at the head office of the Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Rd. Cambridge from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration is open to the public. Details can be found in the Water Forum section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca

GRCA open house Oct. 3

The GRCA will hold an open house on Saturday, Oct. 3, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

The administration centre at 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge will be open to the public. Staff from a variety of departments and partner groups will be on hand to offer information and conduct tours. Displays about different aspects of the work of the GRCA will be set up.

Waterloo Region Record photographers David Bebee and Mathew McCarthy will be on hand to talk about their photo blog, "A Year on the Grand."

Towards the end of the afternoon, the 2009 Watershed Awards will be given out in the auditorium.

GRCA Wins the 2009 Commuter Challenge for Waterloo Region

GRCA staff placed first in the 101-500 employee class with a 25 per cent participation rate for the 2009 Commuter Challenge.

As a result, the Commuter Challenge trophy was at the Administration

Centre in August. The GRCA staff avoided 7,200 km in single vehicle trips and saved 1.15 tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions during Commuter Challenge week in June.

This is the GRCA's fifth consecutive year participating in the Commuter Challenge and the third time first place finish. Most notable is the continued effort of staff to carpool, bike, use transit and other sustainable means of transportation to get to work and meetings on a year-round basis.

Other regional winners are the City of Waterloo (501 or more employees), the Working Centre (26 to 100 employees) and Sustainable Waterloo (one to 25 employees).

Visit Laurel Creek Nature Centre for Doors Open Waterloo

Laurel Creek Nature Centre will offer guided hikes and programs for kids in conjunction with the annual Doors Open Waterloo event, Sept 19, 10 a.m. 5 p.m.

This was the GRCA's first purpose-built nature centre and it received a green roof in 2008. It achieved silver ranking in the provincial Eco-Schools program.

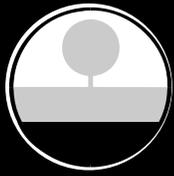
Over 15,000 students and members of the public participate annually in the centre's environmental education programs.

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October 2009
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Report on reducing spills into the waterways

The board approved recommendations by the Water Managers Working Group about spills prevention and reporting.

A report was undertaken by the 12 watershed municipalities that own and operate sewage works. It reviewed Ministry of Environment data on spills between 2002 and 2006, finding there were 136 events and that 36 per cent of these were weather-related. Other causes were power failure (14 per cent), equipment failures (16 per cent), maintenance and repairs (10 per cent), damaged or blocked sewers (10 per cent) and unknown causes (18 per cent).

Most important, the report identifies best practices and makes 13 recommendations. These are intended to improve information management and communication and to reduce the frequency and severity of spills and bypasses in the watershed.

Very dry September weather

Rainfall was abnormally low and September 2009 could end up being the driest on record.

Monthly total precipitation ranged from 13 to 23 per cent of the long-term average. This came about after a 20-day stretch without any appreciable precipitation. September 1960 precipitation was the next driest on record.

While flows in the regulated reaches of the river are at or above the long-term average for September, flows in unregulated reaches are below the long-term average. These include the Upper Speed River, Eramosa River and Mill Creek.

Until recently, there has been a reduced need to augment the river flows this year. But dry September weather means the demand for flow augmentation reached 80 per cent through Kitchener and Waterloo during the middle of September and 60 per cent in the Speed River through Guelph.

Reservation system for conservation areas

Mediamix Interactive of Toronto will provide reservation services to the GRCA over the next five years, starting in January.

The GRCA books about 20,000 reservations per year for eight conservation areas between May 1 and Thanksgiving weekend.

Mediamix offered the best price among the three systems that were investigated to provide this service. The other two systems were based in Manitoba and the U.S.

GRCA presents Watershed Awards

The 2009 Grand River Watershed Awards were presented to groups and individuals who have undertaken projects to enhance the natural environment in the Grand River watershed.

This year an Honour Roll award went to Peter Krause for 21 years of work promoting the Grand River and conservation not only locally, but also provincially, nationally and internationally. Five Watershed Awards were awarded to: Tom Sitak, a teacher in Brantford; Murray Schlueter of Wellesley for his work with bluebirds; Blount Canada of Guelph for corporate greening; Norm Lundvall of



Guelph for conservation fundraising; and Trout Unlimited's Speed River Chapter for stream restoration.

YouTube links to short videos about the award recipients are posted on www.grandriver.ca in the Watershed Awards section.

GRCA marked 75th anniversary with head office open house

The GRCA marked its 75th anniversary year with a successful public open house at its head office in Cambridge Oct. 3.

Visitors were able to learn about the activities and programs of the GRCA as well as several community organizations that work with the GRCA.

A highlight of the day was a presentation by photographers from the Waterloo Region Record who showed photos from their project "A Year on The Grand."

There were also many activities for children, tours of the facilities, displays and a very large 75th birthday cake. About 200 people attended this event.

Spills prevention workshop set for Brantford on Oct. 27-28

A training workshop to help industries and businesses learn how to prevent and respond to chemical spills will be held in Brantford on Oct. 27-28.

The workshop will provide participants with a broad range of information on how to prevent spills, how to clean up properly, the legal liabilities around spills and other topics.

The workshop is being offered by the City of Brantford and the GRCA. More information is available on www.grandriver.ca in the Newsroom section of the website.

Warning buoys and booms to be removed from GRCA dams

Warning buoys and booms upstream of GRCA dams will be removed the week of Oct. 19 to prepare for winter. They will be put back

in place in May 2010 after the spring runoff.

The buoys and booms are installed each May to provide warning to boaters about the danger of approaching these dams. Boaters should exercise extra caution around the dams after the buoys and booms are removed.

Upgrades to Cambridge-Paris Rail-Trail

The Cambridge-Paris Rail-Trail is being spruced up with money provided under a federal government economic stimulus program.

The GRCA is spending a total of \$43,750 on the improvements. Half of the money is coming from the National Trails Council which is administering a nationwide trail improvement program on behalf of the federal government. The other half is coming from the Grand River Conservation Foundation which raises funds on behalf of the GRCA.

The project will include new signs, improvements to gates, upgrades of three culverts and tree pruning. The work is expected to be completed this fall.

This trail was opened in 1994 and is one of four rail-trails owned by the GRCA.

Canada wins International Riverprize for second time

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority received the esteemed International Thiess Riverprize, the most highly regarded and valuable river management award in the world.

LSRCA is the second Canadian organization to receive the international prize - the first was the GRCA in 2000 when the prize was given out for only the second time.

The newest recipient has been working for many years to develop a sustainable approach to managing the watershed and has made significant progress.

The annual prize is awarded to

organizations that are engaged in the very best practices in watershed management. It is presented to the project that represents the world's best effort to conserve natural watershed resources for future generations.

The prize was presented during the 12th International Riversymposium and Rivers from Source to Sea Conference in Brisbane, Australia in September.

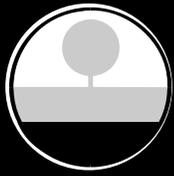
The prize now carries a monetary award of AUD\$350,000 (CDN \$326,000).

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November 2009 Volume 14 - No. 11

GRCA

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No rock climbing in parks

The GRCA will continue to prohibit rock climbing at all GRCA conservation areas.

A volunteer group called the Ontario Access Coalition proposed that the GRCA enter a memorandum of understanding to allow rock climbing at Rockwood Conservation Area. The group was also interested in rock climbing at Elora Gorge Conservation Area.

After looking into the issue, the GRCA staff recommended continuing to prohibit rock climbing for several reasons. These include the possible environmental impact, potential conflicts with other GRCA programs, the group's lack of insurance coverage and concerns about emergency rescue access.

First draft of 2010 budget

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

The preliminary GRCA budget showed spending of \$31.1 million, compared to a 2009 budget of \$31.4 million. Changes to the budget will be proposed by staff and reviewed by the board over the next few months. The budget is scheduled to be ratified by the board in February.

GRCA making changes to committee structures in 2010

The GRCA is streamlining its meeting procedures for meetings of the Committee of the Whole.

Until 2007, the GRCA had the Planning and Operation Committee and the Administration, Finance and Personnel Committee, each chaired by

a different vice-chair of the GRCA. The two committees met separately.

In 2007, the board decided to go to a Committee of the Whole system where all members meet together. However, the meeting was still divided into separate sections reflecting the old committee system, as called for in the GRCA operating bylaw.

Now that process will end. In 2010, the revamped committee meetings will be alternately chaired by the two vice-chairs of the board.

Comment summary presented on aggregate extraction

A report summarizing the comments on the best practices paper for Below the Water Table Aggregate Operations Within the Grand River Watershed was reviewed by the board.

A first draft of a best practices guide in pilot sub-watersheds of the Grand River was produced by a joint committee and released in May 2009. The GRCA accepted comments on behalf of the joint committee about the draft guide from watershed municipalities and the public. The deadline for comments was extended until early September.

The report is posted in the meetings section of the GRCA website. It outlines 13 key concerns from municipalities and seven concerns from the public. The comments from all parties show universal support for the need for a policy. The consensus was that voluntary compliance with best practices on the part of aggregate producers is not enough to address concerns, and the Ministry of Natural Resources needs to ensure mandatory compliance. Concern was also expressed that municipalities and the public were not



represented on the joint committee.

Representatives from these two groups will be invited to join the committee before it looks into implementation.

Normal rainfall in October brings rivers back up

Rainfall during October was pretty much normal at 92 to 127 per cent of the long-term average across the watershed.

This followed an abnormally dry September. But by mid-October, the ground was near saturated. River flows at the end of October were back up above the long-term average. Conditions in the Eramosa River returned to normal after they were declared at a Level One low water response in September.

Reservoirs were close to or in the normal operating range for this time of year. Levels at Luther Dam are slightly above the upper rule curve and are being drawn down. Safety booms and buoys have been removed

Six Nations Intake Protection Zones Study and dye test

Stantec Consulting Ltd. has been retained to carry out the Six Nations Intake Protection Zones Study which is expected to cost \$110,000.

As part of the agreement with the province, the GRCA will conduct technical assessments and develop policies related to including the Ohsweken Grand River drinking water system in the source protection planning process. The study areas include Fairchild Creek downstream of Highway 2/53. The study will need to be completed by February 2010 in order to be included in the Grand River watershed Assessment Report which is due to be complete in March.

During the last two weeks of November, officials from the GRCA, in partnership with the Six Nations of the Grand River Public Works Department (Water / Sewage Division), will place a safe, environmentally-friendly fluorescing dye into the Grand River near Brantford and

Newport, and Fairchild Creek near Cainsville, temporarily giving these watercourse systems a red tint.

The undertaking is known as a "dye tracer test" - a common way to determine travel time in watercourses for the protection of the water supply intake.

The test may appear to turn the watercourses red temporarily where the dye is placed. It will dilute quickly as it moves downstream, eventually becoming invisible.

The dye tracer test is one component of a series of water supply source protection studies the GRCA is conducting with Six Nations in support of the province's Clean Water Act.

RBC grant to help land owners protect water quality

The GRCA is expanding its programs for rural property owners, thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the RBC Blue Water Project to the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

The RBC Leadership Grant will help the GRCA provide advice to rural landowners - both farm and non-farm - on how to protect water quality on their land. This will increase capacity in the GRCA's Rural Water Quality and rural non-farm programs. It will be used to broaden outreach activities such as landowner contact. A series of five workshops will be held for rural non-farm residents.

The grant will allow the GRCA to extend the reach of the existing Rural Water Quality Program to parts of the watershed where it's not currently in place, such as Dufferin and Haldimand counties.

Rural non-farm participants will be introduced to the Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide which will help them evaluate the effect their property and actions have on the environment. They'll receive advice on the value of upgrading wells, improving septic systems and planting trees for wind-breaks. Some landowners may be eligible to apply for grants to undertake these projects.

'Tis the time for giving green

This holiday season, consider giving the gift of a strong and resilient natural world by making a donation to the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Whether it is for family, friends or someone you appreciate in your community, a gift in support of tree planting, trails and special natural places is unique and will be appreciated for generations to come.

A \$30 contribution will cover the costs to plant a tree in your area, or spend \$20 to help keep our trail systems in top shape for the community. The recipient of your gift will receive a beautiful personalized card from the GRCA, and you will receive a charitable tax receipt.

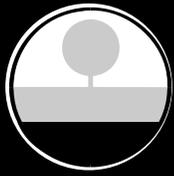
Give by visiting www.grcf.ca, calling Doina Hartley toll-free at (877) 29-GRAND (877-294-7263) or e-mailing dhartley@grandriver.ca.

Please order by Dec. 18 to ensure that your gift card will arrive before the holidays.

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December 2009 Volume 14 - No. 12

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Subwatershed planning update presented to board

Five subwatershed studies are currently underway, according to an update presented to the board.

This type of planning started in the 1990s. To date, 29 subwatershed plans and 16 master drainage plans have been completed, largely in municipalities where growth is anticipated. These plans are technical reports that give background information about surface water, groundwater, water-courses, forests, wetlands and fish within the subwatershed. They make recommendations on how urbanization and other changes can be undertaken in a sustainable way.

The subwatershed plans now underway are in different phases and different locations. These plans are undertaken by a team of experts in consultation with local residents. When they are on a big scale, they are led by the GRCA while local scale studies are led by the municipality with active participation from the GRCA. They are paid for by municipalities, the GRCA or developers, depending on the phase and scale of the plan.

The GRCA's draft 2010 budget includes \$100,000 for the East Side Subwatersheds Study (includes parts of the cities of Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph and townships of Woolwich and Guelph/Eramosa), which is funded 50 per cent by the GRCA and 50 per cent by the Region of Waterloo. There is interest in other areas to begin new studies or update existing studies.

ECO annual report endorsed

The GRCA board endorsed the recommendations contained in the

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's annual report.

Several of the recommendations are relevant to the work that is carried out by conservation authorities, including land use planning, biodiversity and natural resources management.

The full report to the board by GRCA staff lists these concerns and it is posted in the meetings section of our website.

Capital spending for parks

GRCA staff have identified the capital projects in conservation areas will cost an estimated \$10 million over the next 20 years.

The GRCA operates 11 active conservation areas that generate revenue through fees paid by visitors. These parks are operated on a break-even basis and the budget for capital projects is not enough to cover all the anticipated costs.

Of the \$10 million in project costs, funding is already in place for projects expected to cost \$5.6 million. These will be completed by 2011, with some funding for some of them from the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program.

Other projects expected to cost \$4.4 million have no confirmed source of funding. Some support could come from the conservation area capital budget, but additional sources of funding will be needed if all these projects are to be undertaken. The GRCA is looking at ways to pay for these projects.

November was dry and warm

November has been a warm dry month, with precipitation well below



the long term average across the watershed.

Shade's Mills received the most rain at 37 per cent (28.8 mm) of the long term average, while Laurel Creek received only 18 per cent (15.8 mm). Temperatures were 4.7 degrees warmer than average at Shand Dam.

River flows, however, are at or above the long term average for November, because October was wetter and cooler than normal. All the major reservoirs are close to or in the normal operating range.

The flood operations centre is monitoring conditions closely. Staff will meet with police services to review and refine flood warning message protocols before the spring flood season.

Long term projects for outdoor education

Spending of about \$2.6 million in capital projects for outdoor education has been identified over the next 20 years.

The most costly of the proposed projects is \$2 million for a new outdoor education centre at Guelph Lake. About \$250,000 in capital upgrades will be required at other nature centres and staff will investigate funding sources for these. These projects should be undertaken within 10 years.

The remaining \$350,000 for longer-term projects include solar/wind demonstration sites at Shades and Luther (\$25,000 each) and a new building at Rockwood, but the feasibility of this project has yet to be studied.

The GRCA now has nature centre capital reserves totaling \$100,000 and the nature centre budget sets aside \$20,000 each year for capital projects.

More funding for enforcement and permit issues

The GRCA board agreed to include \$150,000 in the draft 2010 budget for inspections and enforcement related to permit issues.

This will pay for a second staff posi-

tion, a vehicle and legal expenses for increased inspections and enforcement related to the Development Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation, also called Ontario Regulation 150/06.

The GRCA now regulates 31 per cent of the land in the watershed. The number of permit applications has almost tripled since the revised regulation came into effect: from a low of 230 permits in 2002 to a high of 690 in 2007.

In 2007, a regulations officer was hired to do inspections where permits had been approved and to investigate potential and confirmed violations of the regulation. This second staff member will help meet the enforcement requirements.

Chilligo Creek ponds dug planting in spring 2010

The final stage of construction of two new ponds on Chilligo Creek in Cambridge took place in November.

Crews installed bundles of brushwood, called fascines, to stabilize parts of the banks of the ponds dug during the summer. The final touches will be added next year when a variety of native trees and shrubs will be planted around the ponds and interpretive signage installed. A dedication ceremony is expected to take place in the spring.

The project is the result of many years of planning following the failure of the Chilligo Dam in the Fishermills neighbourhood near Beaverville and Chilligo roads. In 2000 the dam was removed, resulting in better water quality as Chilligo Creek flowed freely. The Grand River Conservation Authority worked with community members to develop an environmentally-friendly alternative to restore the scenic and recreational community hub.

Fundraising was co-ordinated by the Grand River Conservation Foundation which worked with the community and the Rotary Club of Cambridge North to come up with more than \$150,000 for the project.

Second public open house for Drimmie Dam Dec. 9

A public open house will be held in Elora on Wednesday, December 9 to provide information on alternative measures to improve the safety of Drimmie Dam on the Grand River in Elora.

The open house will be held in the Veteran's Room at the Centre Wellington Township Office, 1 MacDonald Square, from 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Representatives of the GRCA and Sanchez Engineering Inc. will be on hand throughout the evening to discuss the alternatives.

The GRCA has launched an environmental assessment to look at the future of the dam, which is in poor condition and at risk of failure. Sanchez Engineering is managing the environmental assessment process.

As part of the environmental assessment, a Public Liaison Committee has been created with representatives of groups with an interest in the future of the dam including business, tourism, heritage, kayakers, anglers and the Township of Centre Wellington.

This issue of "GRCA Minutes" was published in December 2009.

It is a summary of the November 2009 business conducted by the Planning & Operations; Administration, Finance & Personnel; and General Membership 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. Reports mentioned in the GRCA Minutes are also available online in the Meetings section.

