

GRCA Minutes



January 2013 • Volume 18, Number 1

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Jane Mitchell
1st Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
2nd Vice-Chair	Jan d'Ailly
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Tom Nevills
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Joanne Ross-Zuj
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	John Brennan
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Maggie Laidlaw
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Todd Cowan, Jan d'Ailly, Rob Deutschmann, Jean Haalboom, Ross Kelterborn, Geoff Lorentz, Claudette Miller, Jane Mitchell, Warren Stauch
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	George Wicke
Halton Region	J. Barry Lee
City of Hamilton	Jeanette Jamieson
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Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Lorne Boyko, Fred Morison

Draft 2013 GRCA budget

The GRCA board is working through the 2013 budget and it will be voted on in February.

The board was presented with a draft in November. It shows a budget of \$28.3 million, compared to an overall budget of \$32.8 million in 2012 and \$33.6 million in 2011.

The base programs budget is expected to increase by 2.5 percent while the capital budget is expected to decrease by 42 per cent.

Overall, the general municipal levy is budgeted to increase three per cent. Special project spending is expected to decrease \$3 million.

Changes to the budget will be reviewed by the board in January. A third draft is scheduled to be presented at the annual general meeting in February. The draft budget is available online by looking at the General Agenda for Nov. 23 on www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

New park fees set

Conservation area fees for 2013 have been set and some are going up, while others are going down.

Adult day use fees will range from \$5.50 to \$6 while the rate for children will be \$2.75 to \$3. There will also be a senior discount on day use fees. A vehicle season pass will now be \$122, instead of \$118.

The projected revenue resulting from the proposed fee changes supports the projected \$6.8 million revenue amount that is in the draft 2013 budget. This represents a 2.9 per cent increase from the 2012 target.

The 2013 pricing recommendations are a result of the business planning process. The fees provide a direct correlation between demand and price. The cost of camping during the week is reduced but camping fees will increase during peak times and on long weekends. Camping fees will be different at different conservation areas. It will also be necessary to reserve for two nights on weekends.

Later this month the new fees will be on www.grandriver.ca/parks. The camping reservation website www.grcacamping.ca opens March 4 to take reservations for the 2013 season.

The conservation areas open for the summer season on Wednesday, May 1.

A warm dry year

The year 2012 will be remembered as warm and dry.

Dry conditions prevailed through the winter, spring and early summer. By May, most of the watershed only received 50 to 65 per cent of the long-term average precipitation. The summer was also dry, except in the headwaters near Luther Marsh, which received more rain than usual. While September and October were wet, dry conditions returned for November and December.

Temperatures have been above the long-term average since May of 2011, which is the longest period above average in the last decade.

The warm and dry winter resulted in light snowpack and very little ice cover on the major rivers. The summer and fall were about one degree above the long-term average.

Reservoir levels had been low for many months, but by December they were within the normal operating range.

Source Protection Plan for public comment to Jan. 16

A plan to protect the sources of water for municipal drinking water systems in the Grand River watershed is available for public comment until Jan. 16.

The proposed Source Protection Plan outlines the policies and programs needed to protect municipal water systems from contamination. It is available online at www.sourcewater.ca and at the head office of the Grand River Conservation Authority, 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge.

The deadline for comments is Wednesday, Jan. 16. Information on how to submit comments is



available on the website or at the GRCA office. This is the second round of public consultation on the plan. The first round took place from August through October. Some changes have been made in the plan to reflect the comments received.

Comments received during the current consultation will be attached to the plan when it is submitted to the Ministry of Environment for approval in January. The publication of the plan is the result of more than five years of work done under the Clean Water Act. The Act was passed in 2006 in response to the Walkerton tainted water tragedy.

The Source Protection Plan outlines policies and programs to protect the sources of municipal drinking water serving more than 650,000 in the Grand River watershed. There are 45 municipal water systems and one First Nation system. Those systems get their water from about 190 wells, four river intakes and one Lake Erie intake.

The committee worked closely with municipal officials to develop the plans and policies that are included in the plan.

Maintenance work on Bridgeport Dike

A multi-year maintenance project for the Bridgeport Dike in Kitchener will begin in late January.

The goal is to ensure that the dike will remain strong enough to protect the community from Grand River floods. The project is a joint effort of the GRCA and the City of Kitchener, which own and maintain the dike.

Trees, shrubs and invasive plant species will be removed from the face of the dike and, where needed, replaced with grass. The trail on top of the dike will be closed during the work and signs will be posted to notify users.

Trees pose a threat to the integrity of the dike. The root balls of both healthy and unhealthy trees can weaken the structure of the dike. Removing the trees and shrubs will also make it easier to do annual inspections.

The first phase of the work in late January should take about three weeks to complete. It will involve the section of the dike from the Bridge Street bridge upstream to the end of the dike near Prince Street. The work to be done in 2013 will cost up to about \$50,000 which will be split between the GRCA and



Photo by Chris Wilkinson

Will 2013 bring enough snow for outdoor activities such as dog sledding along the Elora Cataract Rail-Trail? Time will tell. Some conservation areas open for winter activities as conditions allow. Check www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm for updates.

the Ontario government through its Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program (WECI). Other sections will be done in future years.

New name and logo for GRCA tree program



The GRCA's successful tree planting program has a new name and the new logo above.

Now called Trees for the Grand, the program offers all the same services as before. It will continue to partner with local community-based organizations such as Trees for Mapleton, Trees for Woolwich and Wellington Green Legacy. It will also work with funding organizations including Trees Ontario.

Trees for the Grand offers technical and financial assistance to rural landowners throughout the watershed who wish to plant trees. The goal of the program, which started in 1954, is to have 30 per cent forest cover across the watershed.

Three GRCA forestry specialists work

with private landowners to make recommendations on tree planting. They work with many programs to bring information and funding to landowners. The deadline passed Dec. 1 for the GRCA to plant trees on your land, but tree orders may still be placed by March 1 for landowners who would like to do their own planting.

To contact Trees for the Grand call 1-866-900-4722 or e-mail trees@grandriver.ca or visit www.grandriver.ca/trees.

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It is a summary of the December 2012 business conducted by the Grand River Conservation Authority board and committees as well as other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest.

The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes the photocopying, forwarding and distribution of GRCA Minutes.

Next board meeting: Jan. 25, 9:30 a.m.

Reports mentioned in the GRCA Minutes are available online at www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

For information about coming events, please see www.grandriver.ca/Calendar.

GRCA Minutes



February 2013 • Volume 18, Number 2

GRCA General Membership

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1st Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
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Jane Mitchell returned as GRCA chair

Jane Mitchell has been acclaimed to a third one-year term as chair of the GRCA.

The election took place at a GRCA board meeting on Friday, Jan. 25.

Mitchell, who represents the Region of Waterloo on the board, was first elected to the position in 2011. Prior to that, she served as first vice-chair from 2007 to 2010.

Also returned by acclamation are First Vice-chair Vic Prendergast of Brantford and Second Vice-chair Jan D'Ailly of the Region of Waterloo.

Mitchell said a number of initiatives in 2013 will help the environment and also put the GRCA on a sound financial footing.

She pointed to municipal sewage treatment plant upgrades and the ongoing work of the Rural Water Quality Program that are helping to improve water quality. She noted, too, that work on a Water Management Plan, which is addressing water quality, flooding and water supply issues, is nearing completion.

Funding, particularly from the provincial government, also continues to be a problem she said. At the same time, the GRCA is taking steps to increase the revenue it generates itself. A project is underway to develop a hydro-electricity plant at the Parkhill Dam in Cambridge. In addition, new business plans have been drafted for the GRCA's conservation areas which could lead to additional revenue.

The GRCA board is made up to 26 members appointed by the municipalities of the Grand River watershed. They elect a chair and two vice-chairs at the first meeting of each year.

2011 conviction upheld

An appeal court has upheld the conviction of the owners of a Roseville Road property who built a laneway through a wetland in August 2009.

Justice G. F. Hearn dismissed the appeal filed by Jason Geil, his company Geil Style Enterprises and

Janet Ann Bratton. The judge issued his decision on Nov. 28, 2012.

The three had been convicted in January 2011 after being found guilty of building the roadway without a permit from the Grand River Conservation Authority. They were fined a total of \$15,625.

In the appeal, they questioned whether a conservation authority has jurisdiction over wetlands on private property.

In his ruling Hearn said that "the land was within the jurisdiction of the authority and the authority was authorized to restrict development on designated property including wetlands."

Hearn also upheld the penalty against Jason Geil – the maximum allowed – which the judge said was "fit and appropriate."

The GRCA and other conservation authorities in Ontario administer regulations that control development near wetlands, along watercourses and their flood plains, steep slopes and the Lake Erie shoreline. Regulated areas make up about one-third of the Grand River watershed.

In recent years, the GRCA has stepped up its enforcement efforts. Most cases are resolved through negotiation between the GRCA and landowners without court action.

Temperature swings in January

Temperatures in January swung from unseasonable high to extremely cold.

On Jan. 12 it reached 10 C while on Jan 23 the overnight low was -25 C.

Precipitation in January was below the long-term average. Only a small amount of snow was on the ground on Jan. 15 in the most northern parts of the watershed, while the rest of the watershed did not have measurable amounts.

The GRCA issued a water safety message Jan. 11 due to warm weather and heavy rainfall, resulting in high flows in the rivers. Another watershed conditions statement was issued on Jan. 28 because high temperatures and rainfall of 40 mm was expected over three days. The GRCA also



issued a Flood Watch for the watershed and a Level 1 Flood Warning for the Nith River for New Hamburg and Ayr on Jan. 30 due to melting snow and rain.

Reservoir levels at the major dams were slightly above normal for the time of year. During the winter, the GRCA operates the dams to maintain capacity in the reservoirs to mitigate spring floods.

Guelph Dam elevator upgrade

The GRCA board approved an upgrade to the Guelph Dam elevator.

The elevator is used for dam operations and maintenance and is needed to service the six levels of the dam.

The original elevator has been in service since the dam was constructed in 1976. The Technical Standards and Safety Authority advised the GRCA that this elevator must be upgraded by May, 2015 because it doesn't meet current standards.

The overall cost of this project is expected to be \$235,000, with half of the work funded through the GRCA's general municipal levy, and the other half to be covered by the provincial government's Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding program.

Work will be carried out by ThyssenKrupp Elevator Limited of Hamilton, which bid \$125,500 for a portion of the project.

The dam stretches 600 metres across the Speed River and holds back 22 million cubic metres of water using five metal flood gates.

This elevator project is expected to be completed this spring.

Drimmie Dam reconstruction update

The GRCA will ask the Minister of Natural Resources to carryover the 2012 Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding for the Drimmie Dam which still requires final approvals prior to work commencing in 2013.

Sanchez Engineering Inc. was hired to provide engineering and construction inspection for the project. GRCA staff are currently securing letters of consent from 21 property owners upstream of the dam as part of the approvals.



Photo by Kevin Tupman

January was characterized by very warm and also very cold weather. This photo captures the forest and sky at Shade's Mill Conservation Area in a melting drop of water during a January thaw. The varied weather kept GRCA Dam operators busy in January.

The overall cost of this project is expected to be \$1.12 million. Half of the work will be funded through WECI funds. The GRCA general levy will cover \$375,000 while Centre Wellington Township will contribute \$200,000.

Once approvals are in place, Xterra Construction Inc. of Kitchener will get started on out of river work to prepare for the reconstruction of the Drimmie Dam in Elora.

The in-river construction window closes on March 31 and work not completed by that time will need to wait until after July 1. This construction window is put in place by the Ministry of Natural Resources in order to limit the potential impact on the fisheries during the construction.

Ice fishing available only briefly in January

Belwood Lake opened for ice fishing on Jan. 25 and Shade's Mills in Cambridge opened Jan. 26, however warm weather suspended ice fishing at both locations on Jan. 28.

A third park, Pinehurst Lake, didn't open for ice fishing in January.

Those parks, plus Laurel Creek in Water-

loo did not open in January for other winter activities such as snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing because there was not enough snow.

Up-to-date information on winter activities is available in the Newsroom section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

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Next board meeting: The AGM on Feb. 28, 9:30 a.m.

Reports mentioned in the GRCA Minutes are available online at www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

For information about coming events, please see www.grandriver.ca/Calendar.

GRCA Minutes



March 2013 • Volume 18, Number 3

GRCA General Membership

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2013 budget approved

Residents of the Grand River watershed are being asked to contribute about 30 cents more to cover the cost of the environmental protection work planned by the GRCA in 2013.

The GRCA board approved a 2013 budget in February calling for total expenditures of \$30.7 million. About \$10.5 million, or one-third of the budget, comes from the municipalities of the watershed which collect the money from residents through property taxes or water bills. The municipal share of the budget is up three per cent from 2012, which amounts to \$10.35 per person this year compared to \$10.05 in 2012.

The GRCA budget covers the cost of programs that protect water quality, reduce flood damages, preserve and improve natural areas, support responsible development and provide outdoor recreation and environmental education.

The overall budget is actually down about \$2 million from last year. Much of the drop is linked to reductions in provincial grants to the GRCA. Government grants total about \$4.7 million, or 15 per cent of the budget, which is down from \$7.2 million from last year. The provincial annual operating grant was cut eight per cent to \$871,000.

Jane Mitchell, chair of the GRCA said that "overall the GRCA is doing well" despite the cuts.

In addition, there was an expected reduction in provincial grants for the drinking water source protection program from \$2.6 million in 2012 to \$650,000 because the majority of the work is complete.

Lots of dam work

The GRCA's 2013 budget includes about \$1.7 million in work related to flood control structures.

At the top of the list is \$1.15 million to reconstruct the Drimmie Dam in Elora. This is subject to financial support and project approval from the province, but work could begin this summer to replace the deteriorating dam.

Repairs on Luther Dam are expected to cost \$425,000 to stabilize the banks of the 60-year-old

dam and bring the structure up to current standards.

A consulting company will be hired to begin preliminary design for a new spillway at Conestogo Dam so that it can safely handle high water flows during a major storm.

A study on the safety at the dikes in downtown Cambridge (Galt) will include engineering inspection to guide future repairs.

Reforestation services

Four contractors have been hired to plant 217,400 trees on behalf of the GRCA this spring.

The trees will be planted on both public and private land. The GRCA anticipates sales of an additional 50,000 trees to landowners this spring while staff and community groups will plant 10,000 to 20,000 trees.

Tender bids were opened Feb. 14 and Black River Tree Planting, Giles Restoration Service, Bartram Woodlands and Brinkman and Associates have been hired to plant the trees. Contracts were divided up according to the type of planting and locations.

The GRCA has planted more than 27 million trees since the 1940s and has been working with landowners since 1954.

Crackdown on deer poaching at Luther

The GRCA will look into improved control and monitoring to reduce illegal deer poaching at Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

The Upper Grand Watershed Committee sent a letter to the GRCA and Ministry of Natural Resources to investigate the ongoing poaching issue and to develop educational and legal regulations. The committee also asked local municipalities, MPs and MPPs to support the issue.

Luther Marsh is open during specific periods from October to December for archery, muzzle-loader and shotgun hunting of deer. An annual user guide lists the dates and type of hunting



allowed, as well as the rules and permit requirements. MNR has a phone number to report poaching and other violations and this is included in the guide.

The GRCA will work with MNR to find strategies to improve control and monitoring related to hunting violations.

Landowners to be surveyed on wetlands

The GRCA is participating in a study to survey 5,000 landowners about wetland restoration.

The Upper Thames River, the Credit River and Toronto Region conservation authorities are also participating in the study that is being led by researchers from the University of New Brunswick and Simon Fraser University. The study will survey farmers and rural non-farm landowners within these watersheds.

The questionnaires ask landowners about wetland management history and their attitudes toward wetlands, as well as their willingness to accept compensation for wetland-related work that they may undertake.

The GRCA already works with rural landowners on many water quality projects and will use this information to assist with future programs.

The GRCA will receive a copy of survey results specific to the watershed.

Plans to celebrate 20th anniversary

The GRCA is planning to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Heritage River designation in 2014.

The Grand River and its tributaries (The Nith, Conestogo, Speed and Eramosa) were designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers in 1994. The fifth anniversary was marked with an event at the River Run Centre in Guelph and the 10th with a free public event at Guelph Lake Conservation Area that included watershed musicians and performers that was part of the National River Heritage Conference.

A group of GRCA staff, members of the Heritage Working Group and board members will look into ideas that are not costly and can be integrated into existing GRCA programs and activities, as well as encourag-



Photo by Dan Schneider

A Grade 2 student feeds a chickadee at Guelph Lake in February. While March break camps are now fully booked, summer camp registration is now open www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

ing community groups to plan celebrations.

Moderate flooding risk this spring

There is a moderate risk of flooding in the Grand River watershed this spring, the GRCA announced Feb. 17 at the annual meeting of municipal flood co-ordinators at the GRCA office in Cambridge.

They were gathered to hear the spring flood prognosis and receive an update on the flood warning system used by the GRCA to alert municipalities and residents of flood conditions.

After an exceptionally dry winter in 2012, conditions are closer to normal this year. Snowfall was above average in January, and average in February. However, most of the January snow melted away during two warm spells that month.

Snow cover in the northern part of the watershed, including parts of Dufferin and Wellington counties, is just below normal, while the central portion, including Waterloo Region and Guelph, is only about half of normal. The southern portion, from Brantford to Lake Erie, is about normal.

The risk of flooding from ice jams is moderate this year. Most rivers and streams are ice covered, but at this time there is only one notable ice jam, just upstream of Dunnville. There is the potential for more ice jams to form if there is a rapid melt that moves upstream ice downstream quickly.

Ice jams can be an unpredictable cause of

flooding because they can form quickly. Water backs up behind them and spills out of the river banks, sometimes inundating communities.

About 60 per cent of the flood storage space is available in the reservoir system. Water levels in the reservoirs are a bit higher this year than most years but can be lowered as weather and watershed conditions change.

The risk of lake surge flooding on the Lake Erie shoreline in Haldimand County is low this year because of low Lake Erie water levels.

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Next board meeting: March 22 at 9:30 a.m.

Reports mentioned in the GRCA Minutes are available online at www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

For information about coming events, please see www.grandriver.ca/Calendar.

GRCA Minutes



April 2013 • Volume 18, Number 4

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Waterline repairs needed at Byng Island

The opening of Byng Island Conservation Area will be delayed because of a broken waterline that crosses under the Grand River from Dunnville.

The 30-year-old line supplies the park with municipal drinking water. The break was discovered in December and a report in March confirmed that it is not possible to repair the existing line, so a new permanent solution is needed.

The GRCA is considering a variety of options for restoring the permanent water supply but none of these will be ready for the park opening. In the interim the GRCA will be investigating temporary water supply options in an effort to minimize service disruptions.

Opening day for conservation areas in the Grand River watershed is May 1, but earlier this spring the GRCA announced a plan to delay opening Byng Island until May 15 so that staff can explore solutions. Campsite reservations at Byng are not being accepted until after May 31 and seasonal campers have been told about the delay.

After the park opens, there may be disruptions in the water supply to the park and some facilities may be closed until the upgrades are completed. Any disruptions will be posted online in the GRCA newsroom.

Cool dry March

March was drier and cooler than the long-term average, resulting in good maple syrup weather.

Precipitation by March 19 was about half the long-term average, following on the heels of a wet February. During that time the temperature was slightly below the long-term average at Shand Dam.

River flows were high in March due to runoff from snow melt. Most of the ice on the rivers had moved out during the second week of March when temperatures rose. A flood warning was issued March 11 for Ayr and a water safety message was issued for the Easter long weekend at the end of the month due to increasing river levels.

At the end of the month, major reservoirs had approximately 40 per cent to 50 per cent of their flood storage space available and were being operated to reduce downstream river flows. Groundwater levels were increasing in aquifers at monitoring wells near Mill Creek and Whitemans Creek. Rivers were expected to remain high during the early part of April.

For more information on flows, weather and reservoir conditions see the River Data section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca/riverdata.

Conestogo wetland project

Improvements will be made to berms and other control features of wetlands within Conestogo Lake Conservation Area.

The area has three impoundment wetlands that were created in the 1980s on 7.5 hectares of land. These will be retrofitted with water control structures so that water levels can be controlled. Work is expected to begin this month, with other work to take place in August.

Most of the \$110,000 cost of the work is being paid for by donations from a variety of environmental groups, including the Grand River Conservation Foundation (\$23,700), Wildlife Habitat Canada (\$45,000), Ducks Unlimited Canada (\$26,000), the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (\$7,000) and Wellington Water Stewardship Program (\$8,000).

GRCA is looking for 'watershed heroes'

They're the individuals, families, groups and businesses that put their time, energy and sometimes money into improving the environment in the Grand River watershed.

Many do it without recognition, satisfied with the legacy they leave for future generations.

Well, the Grand River Conservation Authority thinks they deserve to be acknowledged, so is looking for nominations for its annual Watershed Awards.



The GRCA has presented the awards since 1976.

There are two categories of awards:

- Watershed Awards for outstanding examples of conservation and environmental work
- Honour Roll Awards for a sustained record of achievement over an extended period of time.

Nominations can come from anyone in the watershed. The deadline for nominations is May 31, 2013. More information on the program, including short biographies of past winners and a nomination form, can be found on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca/awards.

The winners will be honoured at a special event in the fall.

Parks open May 1

May 1 is the start of a new season of camping, swimming, canoeing, fishing and hiking at Grand River parks.

The parks are open May 1 to Oct. 14 this year allowing for 167 days of outdoor activities in the finest natural areas within the Grand River watershed.

Park passes are available at the gatehouse of each of the parks or online at www.grcacamping.ca. Make this your year to get outside and enjoy nature at Grand River parks.

Grants available for environmental projects

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

Grants of up to \$1,000 are awarded to qualified groups (i.e. a registered charity), or up to \$750 for elementary schools, undertaking conservation projects in communities throughout the Grand River watershed. Eligible projects must be tangible and available for the use or benefit of the entire community.

The deadline for receipt of grant applications is May 31. The award recipients will be selected this summer with the cheque pres-



Photo by Alex Paroski

Students from Ecole l'Harmonie in Waterloo visit the sugar bush at Laurel Creek Nature Centre. It was shaping up to be a good year for maple sugar.

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

Applications can be downloaded from www.grcf.ca or by contacting the foundation in Cambridge at 519-621-2763 ext. 2372 or by email at foundation@grandriver.ca.

All set for tree planting

Early April is the quiet before the storm for GRCA staff who are preparing for 260,000 trees to be planted.

Later in April they will be squeezing tree planting into an already packed schedule of other spring projects that include creating tallgrass prairie habitat, improving wetlands and trails at locations across the watershed. Many of these projects only happen due to the GRCA's many partners who also like to give nature a helping hand.

Tree planting is more important than ever due to the loss of trees to development, severe weather and invasive pests such as the emerald ash borer and pine shoot beetle.

If you would like to volunteer to plant trees this spring, there are many tree plant-

ing events in the works.

Check www.grandriver.ca/calendar for tree planting events.

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Next board meeting: April 26 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

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For information about coming events, please see www.grandriver.ca/Calendar.

Current issue of Grand Actions available online at:

www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

GRCA Current



May 2013 • Volume 18, Number 5

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Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Lorne Boyko, Fred Morison

New planning and permit fees effective June 1

A new resource planning fee schedule will come into effect June 1.

The new fees were approved by the board April 26 and reflect a three per cent increase for permit applications, plan review and title clearance and inquiries. Minor fees and fees for aggregate extraction below the water table were not changed. GRCA staff discussed the increase with the Home Builders and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, who didn't object.

In 2012, fees resulted in \$713,000 in revenue, and the increase means revenue of \$731,000 is expected in 2013. These fees help cover the cost of staff time for planning, engineering, terrestrial, aquatics and information systems.

Controlled burn held at Apps' Mill

A controlled burn took place at the Apps' Mill Conservation Area April 28.

The goal of the burn was to help re-establish the oak savannah habitat on the property owned by the Grand River Conservation Authority. About 4.2 hectares was burned.

Fire is a normal part of the life cycle of savannah habitats. Native species can tolerate fire, so burning the land clears out non-native species. Non-native Scots pines and shrubs will be burned to improve the black oak ecosystem. Burning also releases important nutrients from the soil, which promotes growth. The GRCA often holds one or more controlled burns each spring.

Bridge inventory

An inventory of nearly 700 bridges throughout the watershed is complete and available on the GRCA website.

About a third of the bridges in the inventory have heritage value and each of these has a two-page listing that includes a colour photo. Bridges

GRCA Current is our new name

This is the same publication — GRCA Minutes but it has a new name — GRCA Current.

Over the years there has been some confusion between this publication and the official minutes from GRCA board meetings. The new name for this monthly publication will eliminate any confusion. This is the first issue with the new name, but nothing else has changed.

contribute to the unique identity of communities and they are one of the reasons the Grand and its tributaries received Canadian Heritage River designation in 1994.

Each time a municipality needs to repair or replace a bridge, its heritage value must be part of the environmental assessment process. The inventory means that the two-thirds of the bridges that don't have any heritage value can be immediately screened out and this will help municipalities streamline their Environmental Assessment process.

The inventory was completed over the past year by the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo with funding from several sources. It is available on the GRCA website.

Brantford Dike agreement

The GRCA and the City of Brantford entered into a 20 year agreement that outlines roles and the responsibilities for maintaining the flood control works in the City of Brantford.

After the 1974 flood, the city and conservation authority worked together to construct a dike system along the Grand River in Brantford to minimize flooding. The agreement ensures that the current inspection and maintenance program will continue into the future.

The GRCA is responsible for costs associated with the inspection and capital repairs related to structural integrity of the dike. The GRCA also cuts the grass, removes trees and maintains gabion baskets.



Riverfestival
2000
Riverprize
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Conservation
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Any capital repairs required due to recreational use or public access, are the responsibility of the city.

Cold and wet April

April was very wet throughout the watershed.

The climate station at Laurel Dam recorded the highest April rainfall since the station began operating in 1969 at 151 mm of rain. Rainfall during other months has been higher. A few other stations were near the highest April rainfall as well.

It was also 3.2 degrees cooler than average at Shand Dam.

The Flood Operations Centre was active and issued five messages. During the week of April 8, the watershed received 60 to 75 mm of rain, including some freezing rain. Flows were high throughout the watershed and resulted in some minor flooding of low lying areas.

Flooding thresholds were exceeded through Elora (the board walk shops) the Nith River through Ayr and in the Grand River from Brantford downstream.

The ice storm that hit much of the Grand River watershed on April 12 damaged and weakened some trees on GRCA properties, so clean up was needed.

Byng Island water main

The provision for a new water supply to Byng Island Conservation Area may cost the GRCA up to \$853,000 based on preliminary estimates for engineering and consultants.

MTE Consultants has been hired to provide consulting engineering services for the project. A new water supply is proposed to cross the bridge on Rainham Street from the water treatment plant in Dunnville and then to follow an internal route across the islands and weirs within the conservation area to connect to the existing waterlines.

The project will not be complete by mid-June. However the GRCA will provide temporary potable water supplies for campers until the project is complete. GRCA is trying to minimize any disruption to park visitors as a result of this work.

This project will be funded from the conservation areas capital reserves, as this project was not anticipated.



Many hands made for light work during the fish stocking at Soper Creek in Cambridge April 24. The rainy weather was great for fish and lots of people came to give the fish a new home in this cold water stream.

\$500,000 paving bill

The GRCA will spend more than \$500,000 for paving projects in 2013.

Cornell Construction Ltd. of Brantford won a contract valued at \$192,000 to pave parking lots and roadways. The GRCA maintains 146 km of paved roads and 11.6 hectares of paved parking lots at conservation areas and nature centres.

Sousa Concrete will repave the interior roadways and parking lots at the GRCA's Administration Centre in Cambridge for nearly \$325,000. These roads have been deteriorating for several years. A consultant recommended that a new asphalt layer should be added, while the entrance roadway will be widened to provide better two-way traffic.

Both of these contractors supplied the lowest bid to win these contracts. This work will be covered through the 2013 budget, with an additional \$90,000 coming from the reserves.

Brown trout stocking

The Friends of Mill Creek, a community based organization, helped the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources with stocking brown trout in Mill Creek at Soper Park in Cambridge.

In total, 40,000 brown trout are stocked in the Grand and Conestogo rivers each spring and this is one of the locations for stocking.

On April 24, around 500 fish that had been raised in the MNR Harwood Fish Culture Station were released with help from the Alison Neighbourhood Association, Fiddlesticks Neighbourhood Association, Community Living and members of Cambridge City Council.

Mill Creek has improved to the point where MNR decided that this urbanized portion of the creek can support brown trout and recreational angling opportunities.

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Next board meeting: May 24 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

Meeting Reports and agendas are at www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

For coming events, please see www.grandriver.ca/Calendar.

Grand Actions newsletter available at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

GRCA Current



June 2013 • Volume 18, Number 6

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2nd Vice-Chair	Jan d'Ailly
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Rockwood turns 50

The breathtaking beauty of Rockwood makes it unique to southern Ontario and it turns 50 this year.

In 1925 the successful Harris Woolen Mill closed and owner William Harris decided to use the stunning landscape that surrounded it for a park called Hi-Pot-Lo Park. Visitors were charged admission.

In 1959, the GRCA purchased the mill and 79 hectares of land from the Harris family. A couple of years later, the road system, parking lots, gatehouse and pavilion were constructed, laying the ground work for the conservation area to open in 1963. Today, over 85,000 patrons visit every year to enjoy the geological wonders of the park and visit the historic and beautiful mill ruins. The park offers 110 campsites, canoeing, hiking, fishing and swimming. The pond is stocked with brown trout each spring.

The geology and natural heritage mean it is a provincially significant area for its biology, geology and caves.

Join the healthy hikes

The GRCA and its partners have kicked off a new hiking campaign called Healthy Hikes.

Healthy Hikes encourage people to energize their body and mind by spending more time in nature at GRCA conservation areas, nature centres and trails. Participants can also hike at more than 270 other conservation areas throughout Ontario managed by Ontario's 36 conservation authorities. The program continues until October.

Ontarians are encouraged to take the Healthy Hikes challenge by registering online and then recording hiking time at www.healthyhikes.ca. They can earn bonus points by participating in qualifying activities at conservation areas and nature centres. There are \$2,500 worth of great prizes up for grabs.

Information on GRCA events is on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca/calendar. Other organizations partnering with the GRCA, Conser-

vation Ontario and the conservation authorities include the Canadian Mental Health Association, Trees Ontario, York Region, the Ontario Trails Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Bruce Trail Conservancy and the David Suzuki Foundation.

Dry with rainstorms

May was mostly dry, but this was interspersed with storms that brought wet weather.

During the second weekend in May temperatures dropped, resulting in a mix of rain, hail and even snow. Later on May 21, farmers in the Walenstein area reported 100 mm of rain between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. The flow at St. Jacobs in the Conestogo River changed from 4.4 cubic metres per second at 7 p.m. to 50 cms at 8 p.m. and 91 cms by 9 p.m.

As a result, on May 22 the GRCA issued a high water safety statement to advise the public of changing river conditions. Another advisory was issued May 31 due to rain during another storm.

May was also about 1.8 degrees above normal at the Shand Dam, however this year has seen swings in temperature. Groundwater levels have recovered from the dry period in 2012 and are near normal for this time of year, with water levels in wells still increasing. Reservoirs are in their normal operating range for the time of year.

GRCA moving to yellow booms at dams

Canoeists and anglers in the Grand River watershed are going to start seeing booms of a different colour at some dams.

The GRCA will gradually install yellow booms to replace orange warning booms that are installed upstream of some GRCA dams. The change is consistent with regulations set by Transport Canada, which oversees navigable waterways. The booms are made of plastic floats joined together by a chain.

Yellow booms were installed this year on Cedar



The Grand River
A Canadian
Heritage River

Creek in Ayr and Baden Creek. Yellow booms will be installed at other dams as the older orange ones wear out.

These booms and buoys warn boaters and anglers of the dangers around dams.

At “low head” or “run of the river” dams, water flows across the entire width of the dam so they can sometimes be difficult to spot from upstream. The water looks peaceful but the currents can be quite strong and exceptionally dangerous on the downstream side. The churning water, known as the “boil” can trap people under water.

Larger dams, such as Conestogo, Shand, Woolwich, Luther and Guelph, are regulated by gates and valves, which can create dangerous currents in the dam area.

Bobolink research

Bobolinks at Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area will be part of a research project that is looking into why the number of bobolinks is declining.

Dan Kim from Oregon and Roz Renfrew from Vermont have worked with bobolinks and geolocators in the United States. They are working with Canadian Wildlife Service songbird biologist Mike Cadman, a student and some volunteers.

They are searching the area for nests, and watching birds to map territorial boundaries. They will lure the birds into the nets, band each with a government band and given a geocator. The researchers hope to band 20 males and 20 females.

Next year, these same birds will need to be recaptured and the data downloaded to find out where they have been. This data will be added to data about this species in other sites across Canada and the U.S. to see what may be causing the decline in bobolink.

Jefferson salamanders

It's confirmed — Jefferson salamanders are living at Taquanuah Conservation Area in the southern Grand.

Jefferson salamanders are endangered provincially and nationally and are protected under the Ontario Endangered Species Act.

Despite the cooler start to spring, a record number of salamanders were found at Taquanuah. Two vernal ponds were confirmed as breeding ponds for the first time this year.



Yellow is the new orange for booms at GRCA dams. Yellow booms were installed at Baden and Ayr. Eventually all dams will have yellow booms as the orange ones need to be replaced,

A vernal pool is a temporary water body that fills with water from melting snow, storm water or groundwater during the spring. These pools usually dry up during the summer.

Eggs that were found are most likely Jefferson salamander, but could be Jefferson-Blue spotted complex salamander. GRCA staff take a small tissue sample from the tail to test the salamanders DNA to find out which species it is, because this is the only way to know for sure. A visual inspection is not enough.

Beach testing underway

From late May to Labour Day, the GRCA and local health units regularly test the water at designated beaches in GRCA Parks to ensure the water meets the guidelines set for swimming areas in Ontario.

Beaches are posted when levels of E. coli bacteria exceed the Ministry of Health guidelines. A posting is a recommendation that swimming should be avoided or that individuals swim at their own risk.

Testing is done at 10 locations within the conservation areas. One of them, Elora Quarry, doesn't open until later in June.

For updated results, check www.grandriver.ca/newsroom/news.cfm.

Paddling fundraiser for trees

For two years running, Derek Lippert and JP Bartle of the landscape firm Quiet Nature Ltd. paddled the Grand River, from the scenic upper reaches to Lake Erie at Port Maitland.

The pair raised over \$3,000 each of the past two years for the GRCA's tree planting program.

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Next board meeting: June 28 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

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Emerald ash borer strategy

The GRCA board has approved a strategy to combat emerald ash borer.

This strategy aims to minimize the risks to property and human health, preserve ash trees, participate in initiatives across the watershed and provide support to landowners. Its main focus is on GRCA-owned lands.

The GRCA is continuing to collect information about the anticipated impact and has a multi-faceted strategy. Monitoring traps have been placed throughout the watershed. Insecticide treatment will be used in order to preserve some trees and replacement planting will also take place for the lost ash trees.

EAB infestation generally kills all ash trees within a region within a decade, but it takes two to four years for an infected tree to die.

Once the disease is established, trees become weakened and a hazard, so they may fall and cause damage to property and injure people.

The EAB infestation is expected to cost \$5 to \$10 million over the next five or 10 years. Most of the cost will be due to removing hazard trees.

Contamination removed from Brantford property

Remediation work on a small 1.6 hectare parcel of land owned by the GRCA that was leaking a tar-like substance into the Grand River has been carried out at a cost of \$35,000.

In April a canoeist alerted the Ministry of the Environment about leakage from two barrels that was seen on the River Road property in Brantford.

The area had been used as a municipal landfill site from the 1930s to 1955. The GRCA took ownership of the land in 1974.

Three barrels were removed in May and a large asphalt-like deposit was cut into sections and also removed. Another asphalt-like deposit may need to be removed. A permanent bank stabilization plan is being developed to prevent spring flooding from eroding the bank any further.

New splash pad installed at Elora Gorge

The new splash pad at Elora Gorge Conservation Area went into operation at the end of June.

The 2,100 square foot water works has 18 spray and splash features to keep kids busy during the hot weather. The GRCA decided to build the new splash pad after an old swimming pond was taken out of operation in 2010. The berm around the pond was starting to fail.

The splash pad was built by Twin City Interloc of Kitchener. The cost of the project was about \$340,000.

Elora Gorge Conservation Area is one of 11 parks operated by the GRCA throughout the Grand River watershed. It is about 200 hectares in area and has more than 500 campsites. It is alone among all GRCA parks with its season-long ban on alcohol.

The park also offers visitors the chance to ride through the gorge on inner tubes. Tubing, which has been weekends only through June, moves to full operation in July and August when water levels permit.

Water services restored at Byng Island Park

Water services are back to normal at Byng Island Park in Dunnville following installation of a new water line to service the conservation area in Dunnville.

The new water lines were put into operation on June 26. The park's two-acre pool is also open.

Water services have been limited in the park since it opened in the spring. The park was served by a water line from the town which ran along the bed of the Grand River. The line developed a leak last fall and could not be repaired.

A new, temporary supply line has been run across the Rainham Road bridge to tie into the park's distribution system. A permanent line will be installed later this year.





Elora Gorge has a brand new splash pad ready and waiting to cool off young kids this summer, while bigger kids and adults can enjoy tubing in the gorge. The GRCA decided to build the new splash pad after an old swimming pond was taken out of operation in 2010.

Byng Island Park is one of the busiest of the Grand River Conservation Authority's 11 parks. It has more than 350 camp sites and records more than 225,000 paid visits a year. The pool is one of the largest in Ontario. Boaters can get to both the Grand River and Lake Erie from the park.

A wet cool June

June was cool and wet, with lots of rain at the end of the month.

The total rainfall for the first half of 2013 was well above the long term average. A Level 1 Flood Warning was issued for New Hamburg and Ayr as a result of heavy rains June 28. In addition, flows in the central Grand River from Waterloo to Dunnville were higher than normal, but this didn't result in flooding.

During the last week of June there were high temperatures. This year has seen swings in temperature with one month above the long term average and the next month below, but generally June was cooler.

At the end of the month, reservoir levels were near the upper end of their normal operating range for the time of year. Reservoirs were operated to accommodate higher-than-normal inflows. Moving into the aug-

mentation season, the reservoirs will continue to be operated to route high flows from storm events and to maintain flow targets in the rivers.

Groundwater levels in the monitoring wells near Mill Creek and Whitemans Creek were near the long-term average at the end of the month. Reports are available on www.grandactions.ca/WSconditions.

Workshop on improving natural areas

Haldimand landowners who want to learn about protecting and improving natural areas on their property can get some free tips at a workshop on July 13.

The workshop is sponsored by the GRCA at the Taquanyah Nature Centre, 870 Townline Road West in Cayuga. It will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Participants will get a preview of a major restoration project nearing completion at the adjacent Taquanyah Conservation Area. The site of the old Taquanyah Dam has been returned to its natural state. Wetlands have been enhanced and new ponds and pools constructed. New trails and interpretive signage are being developed to be ready for an official opening this fall. The workshop will

explain how the work was done and give landowners some ideas that they can use on their own properties. More information is available on the GRCA's website on www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm.

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GRCA Current



September 2013 • Volume 18, Number 8

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2nd Vice-Chair Jan d'Ailly

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Byng Island watermain

Kenwood Trenching and Excavating Ltd. has begun work on a \$466,000 project for the second phase of the water main at Byng Island.

The first phase of this project was completed in June. It entailed installing a private water service through the park and a temporary waterline to connect it to the municipal water supply. This second phase will see the temporary waterline replaced with a permanent one buried within the right-of-way for County Road 3, also called Rainham Road.

Work is underway and is expected to be completed by the end of October. Funds for this project will come from the GRCA's capital reserve.

Dry August follows wet July

July was warmer than normal with varied rainfall and August was cooler and drier.

A large deluge hit the watershed Aug. 1 when rainfall averaged between 30 to 65 mm. More rain fell between Aug. 7 and 9.

River flows have been well above the long-term average to August. Groundwater levels are higher than what they were at this time last year, but are now starting to level off.

This year has been unusual with flood warning messages every month except January. These have primarily been water safety messages, warning people to stay away from the river, but the messages have also included flood watches and warnings.

A short, persistent dry spell led to a drop in flows in Whitemans Creek and the lower Nith River in Brant and Oxford counties. On Aug. 29 water users in the area were asked to conserve water by reducing their consumption by 10 per cent.

The call for the reduction came from the Grand River Low Water Response Team which met in a conference call. The team is made up of representatives of major water users including municipalities, farmers, golf course operators, aggregate businesses, Six Nations and others.

Luther Dam construction

A project to bring the 60-year-old Luther Dam up to modern dam safety standards is expected to be completed this month.

The work on the dam in Grand Valley in Dufferin County is expected to cost about \$300,000. The contractor on the project is Drexler Construction Ltd. of Rockwood.

The project involves raising the height of the dam about one metre to provide more protection against waves spilling over the top. The downstream embankment will be reshaped to have a lower slope to address some settling that had taken place over the decades.

Luther Dam is one of seven dams owned by the GRCA to reduce flood damages and augment river flows during the summer and fall. It was built in 1952 and creates a reservoir and wetland area that is at the core of the Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area. The reservoir takes up 1,500 hectares of the 5,915 hectare management area.

Access to the dam area and the road on top of the dam may be limited during construction.

The Wildlife Management area has been selected by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources as an outstanding natural area of provincial significance. It is particularly well known as a major bird habitat with more than 130 species nesting there, representing close to 60 per cent of all breeding bird species in southern Ontario.

Work underway on Drimmie Dam in Elora

The long-awaited reconstruction of Drimmie Dam in Elora is underway.

Xterra Construction Inc. of Kitchener, the contractor on the \$1.2 million project, has prepared its staging area on the former Little Folks property on the south side of the Grand River in downtown Elora. The majority of the work in the river should be completed by January, while final site cleanup work will be finished in the spring.



Drimmie Dam was built in the 19th century to provide power to a nearby mill. In recent years, there has been a hydroelectric power plant in the Elora Mill Inn. The dam and the pond it creates are part of the allure of Elora and have been featured in numerous photos and paintings, including an iconic work by A.J. Casson of the Group of Seven. It is on the cover of the July/August issue of the inflight magazine. for American Airlines.

The dam has been owned by the GRCA since 1984. The GRCA carried out improvements to it but it deteriorated. In recent years, chunks of concrete have fallen off the façade of the dam during high flows. The dam also constricts flows of the Grand River through Elora.

The new dam will allow more water to flow through the town and reduce the potential for flooding during periods of high flow.

Demolition of the old dam and construction of the new one will have minimal impact on the commercial area along Mill Street. There will be some noise and vibration from machinery during demolition periods and to prepare the bedrock under the new dam for concrete to be poured.

The cost of the project is being split three ways: The GRCA is paying about \$400,000, the Township of Centre Wellington is paying \$200,000 and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is paying about \$600,000 through its Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Program.

Cover crop payments for Wellington farmers

Cover crops such as red clover and oilseed radish provide multiple benefits to farmers and to the environment. They protect the soil from wind and water erosion, help suppress weeds, improve soil structure, and tie up nitrogen after application of manure. Therefore cover crops help protect water quality for downstream users.

The Wellington Rural Water Quality Program is offering financial incentives to farmers who incorporate cover crops in their crop rotations. The program is offering \$100 per acre on a maximum of 30 acres to farmers who establish crops used exclusively to cover the soil. Crops that are harvested or grazed are not eligible for this incentive.

Priority is given to areas directly adjacent to watercourses. Farmers must have completed an Environmental Farm Plan to be eligible for the program.



Construction is underway on the Drimmie Dam in Elora and during construction photos of the progress will be posted on the GRCA's Facebook page.

For more information contact Conservation Specialists at the Grand River Conservation Authority at 519-621-2761: Jenn Deter at Ext. 2268 or by email at jdeter@grandriver.ca, or Anne Loeffler at Ext. 2242 or by email at aloeffler@grandriver.ca.

Whitemans Creek farmers get help

Many farmers are relieved that this year has been wetter than the drought year of 2012.

But that means it's the perfect time for farmers to think about how they'll manage the next drought and ensure there's enough water available to meet their needs.

Water supply issues can be particularly severe in the Whiteman's Creek area of Brant and Oxford counties where many farmers rely on irrigation for a wide variety of crops grown in the sandy soils of the Norfolk Sand Plain.

To help farmers in this area, a workshop was held on Aug. 29 about efficient and effective ways to manage water during dry times.

Enjoy more fall for less at some GRCA parks

You can enjoy more of the fall weather for less at Laurel Creek and Shade's Mills conservation areas, where the price of an adult one-

day admission has been cut to \$3. That's a savings of \$2.50 over regular rates. For kids from six to 14, the price will be \$2, a savings of 75 cents. Children five and under are free.

The reduced rates are in effect until the parks close Oct. 15.

Camping rates are also lower at all GRCA parks this fall. Campers will enjoy price reductions of about 10 per cent compared to summer rates.

Camping is offered at eight Grand River parks.

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Flood spillway proposed for Grand Valley

Thomasfield Homes has asked the GRCA for support in advancing a possible new flood spillway at Grand Valley.

Grand Valley is along the Grand River upstream of Shand Dam. The spillway would help minimize flooding in Grand Valley where about 75 residences and businesses are within the floodplain.

Thomasfield owns a former gravel pit along the Grand River and is thinking of incorporating the spillway as a water feature on the property. Extraction in the pit is complete and the spillway would be included as part of the pit rehabilitation. The company intends to build housing within five or 10 years. The spillway would only pass flows during periods of flooding.

The GRCA board agreed to support investigation of the spillway diversion channel as part of the Ministry of Natural Resources site rehabilitation plan. If study concludes that the spillway is feasible, further steps would include an Environmental Assessment. The public will be invited to provide input at that time.

Thomasfield will carry out and fund the necessary studies.

Honorarium reduced

At the Sept. 12 special board meeting, the GRCA board passed a resolution to reduce the honorarium paid to the chair from \$41,000 to \$25,000 per year.

At the same meeting, the board approved a new by-law which will eliminate one vice-chair, resulting in a savings of the \$2,500 honorarium. These changes will come into effect following the January 2014 elections of officers.

Last year the GRCA reduced the number of monthly board meetings from two to one, which saved the per diems paid to board members and travel costs.

GRCA reviews green energy projects

Since the approval of the Green Energy Act in 2009, the GRCA has been reviewing aspects of some renewable energy projects.

Proponents of these projects need to consult conservation authorities to find out the type and scope of technical studies that may be needed when applying for a green energy project. Those projects that are on regulated areas such as floodplains and wetlands may need a permit from the GRCA.

GRCA staff visit sites, provide comments on technical studies and notify the applicant if a permit is required from GRCA. Upon the completion of the green energy project, staff include a summary of the project in the Environmental Assessment report that goes to the GRCA board.

Staff from resource planning, terrestrial resources, aquatic resources and engineering participate in the review of Green Energy proposals, while operations staff may also provide input on applications that may affect GRCA lands.

Architect selected for new nature centre

A new Guelph Lake Nature Centre is a step closer to reality as the Ventin Group has been selected as the architect.

The new nature centre site will be located in the conservation area, just north of the day use beach. Ventin will design a 7,000 square foot building with three classrooms, park administration space and a large area to be used for visitor service programs and teaching.

The conceptual and schematic design gets underway immediately. The majority of the funding for this project will be raised through public donations. The GRCA will cover the portion of the costs related to the new park administration offices. The Grand River Conservation Foundation has already raised approximately one-third of the funds required to build the new centre. The second phase of the project — detailed design and





Photo by Kevin Tupman

The GRCA's administration Centre in Cambridge on the first day of October. The building official opened 40 years ago on Nov. 6, 1973.

construction — will take place once most of the funding is in place.

Ventin will be paid \$124,000 for the design and concept. The GRCA received 11 bids on the project that ranged up to \$213,000.

GRCA staff looking into Line 9 pipeline issue

A delegation representing the Waterloo Region Coalition Against Line 9 asked the GRCA to sign a statement of concern to be submitted to the Energy Board of Canada hearing.

Dan Keller spoke before the GRCA board on behalf of the coalition which represents 25 local organizations. The coalition opposes plans by Enbridge Energy Inc. to pump bitumen from Alberta through the line which runs under the Grand River. They are worried about the danger of a potential spill in the river.

GRCA staff are looking into the matter in more detail, and will report back to the board.

Wet September

September was on track for average rainfall until a month's worth of rain fell overnight Sept. 20, when 40 to 100 mm of rain came down during that one event.

Rain has been fairly evenly distributed across the watershed during the month, with the exception of Woolwich, where there was

not much rain until near record rainfall on Sept. 21.

Reservoir levels were above the upper rule curves due to the heavy rains. As a result, water was released into the rivers to ensure there would be enough storage capacity to accommodate more water. The rain combined with water release from the dams resulted in higher flows towards the end of the month.

A watershed conditions statement was issued after the rainfall due to the high flows. In fact, 13 water safety statements have been issued so far this year, along with one flood watch and eight flood warning messages. This is unusually high.

GRCA tree orders start Oct. 1 for spring 2014

The GRCA has an inventory of 300,000 native trees available to watershed landowners with a property that is greater than one hectare (2.5 acres) exclusive of buildings, within the Grand River watershed.

Trees may be ordered online starting Oct. 1 from www.grandriver.ca/treesales by landowners who would like to do their own planting, where the full details of this program are listed. Orders are accepted until March 1. The GRCA also will plant trees on private land and these orders must be placed by Dec. 1. Funding for up to 90 per cent of the cost may be available.

GRCA staff do site visits with landowners to create planting plans. Sites may have to be

prepared this fall to be ready to plant in the spring. A phone call to the GRCA now means your name will be added to the list for site visits. Demand for this service is high, so the sooner you call, the greater the likelihood that you will have trees on your property next spring. Call the GRCA office at 519-621-2761 and ask for the forestry specialist for your area.

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Next board meeting: Oct. 25 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

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Grand Actions newsletter available at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Jane Mitchell
1st Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
2nd Vice-Chair	Jan d'Ailly
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Tom Nevills
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Joanne Ross-Zuj
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	John Brennan
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Maggie Laidlaw
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Todd Cowan, Jan d'Ailly, Rob Deutschmann, Jean Haalboom, Ross Kelterborn, Geoff Lorentz, Claudette Miller, Jane Mitchell, Warren Stauch
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	George Wicke
Halton Region	J. Barry Lee
City of Hamilton	Jeanette Jamieson
Oxford County	Bruce Banbury
County of Brant	Brian Coleman, Steve Schmitt
City of Brantford	Robert Hillier, Vic Prendergast
Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Lorne Boyko, Fred Morison

Smaller Parkhill hydro project proposed

A smaller Parkhill hydro proposal will be submitted to the Ontario Power Authority during a new window for applications in November.

In June the GRCA learned that a proposal for a 1,200 kW power generating station at the dam in Cambridge was turned down by the OPA's Feed-In Tariff program. But a new window for applications is expected Nov. 4 to Dec. 14 and the GRCA is set to submit a plan to build a 500 kilowatt unit. This could result in \$600,000 in revenue each year for the GRCA once it is operating. The GRCA already operates power plants at Guelph, Shand and Conestogo dams.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation has raised \$280,000 for the project, which is expected to cost about \$5 million.

Enbridge pipeline safety

Enbridge's senior public relations advisor Ken Hall was invited to make a presentation to the GRCA board about the pipeline that crosses the Grand River watershed.

In September people concerned about Line 9 made a presentation and asked the GRCA to sign a statement of concern to be submitted to the National Energy Board. The pipeline dates back to 1976 and runs between Montreal and Sarnia. Changes have already been approved to the part of this line called Line 9A that runs between North Westover in Hamilton and Sarnia and through the Grand River watershed.

Last summer Enbridge applied to reverse the flow and increase the capacity of Line 9B that runs between North Westover and Montreal. This is undergoing the hearing process. The GRCA will write to the National Energy Board and request that any safety requirements applied to Line 9B through the current hearing process, also be applied to the approved Line 9A, which crosses this watershed.

GRCA staff plan to meet with Enbridge Pipelines to discuss safety systems and protocols

for the pipeline, particularly the siting of isolation valves at key river crossing. These include the Grand River, Horner Creek, the Nith River and a branch of Fairchild Creek.

Wet balmy October

October was four degrees warmer than usual at the Shand Dam, where daytime temperatures hit the low 20s early in the month, although went down later in the month.

Lots of rain meant that river flows throughout the watershed were above average. Whitemans Creek and the lower Nith River have recovered from low water levels earlier in the fall. The reservoirs are also higher than normal due to the rain.

Two watershed conditions statements were issued in October due to heavy rainfall which rapidly increases river flows on Oct. 7 and Oct. 22, leading to concerns for safety of those close to the rivers. The first resulted after watershed wide rainfall of 20 to 50 mm of rain, while the second was specific to the upper part of the watershed which received 40 mm over a few days, saturating the ground.

The watershed conditions reports are available on www.grandriver.ca/WSconditions.

2013 Grand River Watershed Awards

The GRCA held an awards night on Oct. 23 and gave out six awards.

The top award — the Honour Roll award — went to **Ron and Nancy Clark** of Caledonia

The Clarks have given generously to the Grand River Conservation Foundation over many years. They were the lead donors for the restoration of Taquanyah Conservation Area and Nature Centre. They have also worked with the municipality to revitalize Kinsmen Park on the river in Caledonia.

In addition, five 2013 Watershed Awards were given out. They went to:

- **Paul Clark** is a Guelph teacher who has been



River Festival
Riverprize 2000
For excellence in river management



Conservation Ontario
Natural Champions



planting trees for 17 years. He ensures that all students at St. Peter School plant trees each year. This has transformed the area around the school.

- The **Turtle Island News** has been holding an Earth Day Festival for the past seven years in Oshweken. Since 2006, thousands of trees have been given out.
- The late **Lynne Woolstencroft** of Waterloo was a dedicated politician who undertook many environmental initiatives during her political career.
- **Bernd Brandt** has planted 25,000 trees of 20 species on his property in Oxford County, creating a beautiful forest
- **George and Peggy Sarson** of Waterloo started Run for the Toad at Pinehurst Lake in 2002. Now it is Canada's biggest trail run and the Sarsons have improved the amenities at Pinehurst.

Awards are given out each fall by the GRCA. More information and videos are available on the GRCA website: www.grandriver.ca/award.

Two scholarships awarded by GRCF

The Grand River Conservation Foundation awarded two scholarships in October.

This was the second year for the **Allan Holmes Scholarship**, named for the former CAO of the GRCA who passed away in 2010. The recipient is Celia Kennedy, a PhD student in environmental sciences at the University of Guelph. She is working to develop a suite of field methods and tools for investigating how groundwater and surface water interact in bedrock rivers, like the Eramosa River. The \$5,000 scholarship will help with her river-related research.

The **S. C. Johnson & Son Limited Scholarship** of \$1,500 went to Michelle Burger, a University of Waterloo student who is majoring in environment and resource studies with a minor in biology. This award has been given out for 13 years to a full-time student in their third or sixth semester of an honours program at a watershed university.

GRCF gives out conservation grants

The Grand River Conservation Foundation awarded four Community Conservation Grants as well as awards to four schools.



One Honour Roll Award and five Grand River Conservation Awards were given out by the GRCA in October 2013. From left are Ron and Nancy Clark, George and Peggy Sarson, Amy Catherwood (for Turtle Island News), Peter Woolstencroft (for Lynne Woolstencroft who passed away in May), Jane Mitchell (GRCA chair), Bernd Brandt, Joe Farwell (GRCA CAO) and Paul Clarke.

- A grant of \$500 to **Ruthven National Historic Site** near Caledonia will help provide more nesting habitat for purple martins, a small bird that is in decline in Ontario.
- A grant of \$500 went to the **Hamilton Naturalist Club** which will restore a riverside area at the Amaolo Nature Sanctuary along Fairchild Creek. The sanctuary is in a part of Hamilton that is within the Grand River watershed.
- A grant of \$1,000 went to the **Alma Community Recreation Association** to create a labyrinth surrounded by a native species Memory Arboretum.
- The **Guelph Enabling Garden** received \$500 for the therapeutic garden at Riverside Park along the Speed River for native trees, plants and supplies.

In addition conservation grants of \$500 each are being provided to four schools. The schools use the grants for projects including school-based gardens, outdoor learning areas and educational conservation projects. These grants were presented at each school. The winning schools are:

- St. George German School, St. George
- Forest Glen Public School, New Hamburg
- St. Joseph Catholic School, Fergus
- Saginaw Public School, Cambridge

Heritage River fact

It was a long and winding river road that led to the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.

The Grand River and its major tributaries were designated 20 years ago in 1994 as Canadian Heritage rivers. But the designation process began five years before that.

The Grand and its tributaries were the first in southern Ontario to be designated.

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Aggregate extraction north of Everton

The GRCA is considering a proposal by Cox Construction to extract aggregate from a part of a GRCA property in the Town of Erin.

Cox operates a gravel pit and wants to expand their pit onto adjacent GRCA land north of Everton.

GRCA staff have told Cox that there needs to be a net environmental gain in the long term if this project is to be completed. A rehabilitation plan would be approved by the GRCA and negotiations for compensation may consider royalty payments and potential future land exchanges.

Staff will return to the GRCA board with a recommendation regarding the proposal once Cox Construction has provided details and the implications for GRCA.

\$80,000 in Upper Grand Restoration Fund

About \$80,000 is in the GRCA fund for water quality projects on private land in the Upper Grand.

Since 2002 the Rural Water Quality Program has provided a total of \$315,000 to landowners in the Upper Grand for 135 projects. The funds for these projects come from a variety of sources such as Trees Ontario and the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Fund. In 2007, the GRCA set up the Upper Grand Restoration Fund to make sure consistent funding is available. The fund provides up to \$50,000 annually for projects.

Through this program, 66 tree planting projects have been undertaken with 132,000 trees planted on 78 hectares (194 acres). In addition, 14 kilometres of windbreaks have been planted and one kilometre of living snow fence. Six kilometres along rivers have been fenced to keep 800 livestock out of the waterways.

The Rural Water Quality Program provides funding to landowners to share the cost of projects that improve water quality. Many watershed

municipalities provide annual funding for the RWQP. In the Upper Grand Dufferin County provided \$50,000 in 2012, and is being asked to provide money each year.

Dam and dyke maintenance update

Several large capital projects are being completed this year and many more are included in the five year forecast.

The Luther Dam embankment repair is now nearing completion, while the elevator at the Guelph Dam will be finished by the end of this year. Reconstruction of the Drimmie Dam in Elora should be finished early in 2014. The total cost of these projects in the 2013 budget is around \$2.7 million.

The five year dam and dyke maintenance forecast shows that the GRCA expects to spend \$1.5 million per year between 2014 and 2018.

The GRCA owns 29 dams, including seven that manage river flows and 22 smaller, run-of-the-river dams or earthen embankment dams. These dams are regulated by the province, which released new Technical Guidelines for approved projects that could have a significant impact on the biggest future project for the GRCA, which is a proposed emergency spillway at the Conestogo Dam.

New Feb. 28 deadline for conservation grants

The community conservation grant application deadline in 2014 is Feb. 28.

The GRCA is awarding grants of up to \$1,000 to qualified community groups and up to \$750 to elementary schools. The grants are for tangible conservation projects in communities throughout the Grand River watershed. Eligible projects will be available for the use or benefit of the entire community to receive grants.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation wants to let people know about the earlier cut off



for applications. The change allows schools and organizations to receive the funds earlier, as most projects take place in the spring.

School grants are for trees and other greenery that is part of school yard greening projects.

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

Applications can be downloaded from the Foundation section of the GRCA website at www.grcf.ca, or by contacting the Grand River Conservation Foundation in Cambridge at 1-866-900-4722 or 519-621-2763 ext. 2372 or email foundation@grandriver.ca.

Watershed full of water

November started out wet, with the highest single-day rainfall (20 to 35mm) for the month recorded on Nov. 1, when a watershed conditions statement for high flows was in effect.

The Conestogo Reservoir climate station recorded the wettest conditions during the month with 152 per cent of normal precipitation, while the Shade's Mill climate station recorded the least with only 78 per cent of the long-term average to date.

Although the temperature was 0.8 C above the long term average at the Shand Dam, there was still a mix of rain, sleet, freezing rain and snow. Daytime temperatures ranged from the mid-teens to below freezing, while overnight the thermometer dropped to -14 C on one occasion.

Reservoir levels have been high throughout the fall due to precipitation and construction in the river which required low flows. By the end of the month, all reservoirs except Conestogo were at, or close to, their normal operating range.

Stream flows throughout the watershed have been high and the ground was saturated, resulting in a lot of runoff.

Trail access for hunters

Tony Jackson of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters made a presentation to the GRCA board about access to the rail-trail north of Paris for hunters.

In 2012 signs were installed along the GRCA-owned rail-trail that say, "Possession



Merry Christmas from the GRCA to you! This deer lives at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area.

and carrying firearms on trail prohibited." Jackson asked that the wording be changed to "All firearms must be unloaded and encased while using this trail".

Hunters use the trail near Blue Lake Road and East River Road to get to an island in the middle of the Grand River that is used during duck hunting season, September until December.

The board asked staff to look into the matter and report back in December.

Send your children on a Winter Adventure

Winter Adventure Days are taking place at Apps Mill (near Brantford), Laurel Creek (Waterloo) and Guelph Lake nature centres on Jan. 2 and 3.

Kids can come for one or both days. Register online at www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

Winter Adventure day camps are fun and educational. Children 6 to 12 will have hands-on, environmental programs that feature activities such as snow shoeing, tobogganing, snow sculpture building and animal tracking (depending on weather conditions). The adventure days are a great opportunity to get the kids away from their holiday electronics and outside for some winter fun.

The cost is \$37.50 per day, with the possibility of extending the program to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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The November-December issue of Grand Actions newsletter available at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions