

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

Land donated to the GRCA

The GRCA now owns 13 hectares (32 acres) south of Cambridge along the Cambridge to Paris Rail-Trail thanks to a donation.

In December ownership of an island and shoreline was turned over to the GRCA by the Girl Guides of Canada which had owned the property since 1961. The area was used as an overnight campsite and excursion destination during the summer, but had not been used in recent years.

The property includes an excellent example of a continuous wooded Carolinian valley in the Grand River watershed and it is a high priority acquisition for the GRCA. It is also a Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). The property is completely wooded, containing 4.5 hectares (11 acres) of shoreline and a 8.5-hectare (21-acre) island.

New pass replaces windshield stickers in 2014

The GRCA is replacing the windshield stickers that have been used for many years to gain entry into conservation areas with a wallet membership pass in 2014.

The card-based system will help the conservation areas move to install automatic entry gates. Patrons will also be able to carry the pass with them when they walk to the conservation area.

The card will allow the GRCA to move towards a year-round system that is good for 12 months from the date of purchase. The new card is part of a membership that will include incentives such as two complimentary day passes and a free ski or snowshoe rental.

The fee for a wallet membership will increase from \$122 to \$125, while the senior/disabled pass will increase by a \$1 to \$110.

Individual season passes will be decrease by about \$1 to \$40 for a child, \$50 for adults and \$45 for seniors.

New 2014 park fees

New 2014 park fees will come into effect Jan. 1.

Seasonal camping rates will increase by about three per cent and there will be an incremental increase in camping rates for waterfront sites, but daily entrance fees and camping rates will not go up.

A new disability discount will bring the price for this group of patrons down to the same level as the senior discount, which was new last year.

The conservation area fees changed significantly in 2013 due to new business plans for all the parks. The new fees will be posted online at www.grandriver.ca/parks. The report on the changes is available as part of the December agenda on www.grandriver.ca/meetingreports.

Partnership agreement with DFO

The GRCA will no longer review projects on behalf of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as a result of amendments to the federal Fisheries Act that came into effect on Nov. 25.

Under the federal Fisheries Act it is unlawful to carry out a project that causes serious harm to fish unless authorized by DFO. This applies to work conducted in or near water that supports fish and fish habitat, or areas that are part of a commercial, recreational or Aboriginal fishery.

Conservation authorities are working with DFO on a possible new agreement. In the meantime, GRCA staff have been asked to direct questions from landowners to DFO and a notice about the end of the agreement is posted in the planning section on www.grandriver.ca.

GRCA staff will continue to carry out advisory reviews of changes that involve fish habitat and aquatic resources through provincial legislation.

Park revenue down

Grand River Parks earned nearly \$6.4 million in 2013, which was about \$380,000 less than expect-



ed. This was due to wet weather and the delayed opening of Byng Island Conservation Area because of water issues. High river flows in Elora Gorge meant tubing was suspended for part of the summer for safety reasons and this also resulted in less revenue.

The revenue shortfall is being offset by a reduction of \$150,000 in capital spending and the rest will be covered by funds from the reserves.

The 2014 budget revenue is expected to be \$6.9 million based on average attendance.

Water Management Plan will be released in 2014

The draft of the Grand River Water Management Plan is complete and has been released for endorsement by partners and municipalities.

Their approval is expected by May. The final Water Management Plan will be launched in January 2015.

The partner members on the steering committee, project team and working groups have been actively involved in drafting this plan in recent years. It will ensure the Grand River can be sustainable as the population grows. The findings are reassuring because the 1982 plan upon which it is based was a good one and also due to a culture of best practices for water management throughout the Grand River watershed.

It is a very practical plan and many action items are already part of GRCA's current and planned work. It is a voluntary plan that is based on partnerships of the organizations involved which are not legally required to carry out the actions that have been incorporated into the plan.

Planning fees change effective Feb. 1

A new resource planning fee schedule comes into effect Feb. 1.

The new fees were approved by the board in December and reflect a two per cent increase for permit applications, plan review, title clearance and inquiries. Minor fees were not changed. GRCA staff discussed the increase with the Home Builders/GRCA Liaison Committee and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association.

These fees help cover the cost of staff time for planning, engineering, terrestrial, aquat-



Hoarfrost on the Grand River taken by Peggy Dietrich for the 2012 GRCA photo contest. A new contest with great prizes is starting Jan. 6. Check www.grandriver.ca/photocontest for details.

ics and information systems. Over 700 permits were processed in 2013.

The volume and nature of Plan Review applications are more variable than permits and are down slightly to 414 processed in 2013.

Source water plans being reviewed

The process of developing a drinking water source protection plan for the Grand River watershed is quietly moving forward.

After several years in development, a source protection plan was submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Environment for its approval. The process to develop the plan was led by the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee, which also oversaw development of plans for the Long Point Region, Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek watersheds.

Ministry staff are reviewing all four plans to ensure they meet the terms of the Clean Water Act, which launched the planning process in 2006.

The review process can take some time, particularly for large and complex plans such as the Grand's.

As the province reviews the Grand River plan, it may make suggestions on ways to

ensure that the plan conforms to the Act and its regulations.

If the province proposes substantial changes, a public information or consultation process may take place in 2014.

A total of 38 source protection plans were produced across Ontario. So far, just the plan for the Thunder Bay area has been approved.

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Jane Mitchell to serve fourth term as chair

Jane Mitchell has been acclaimed to a fourth one-year term as chair of the Grand River Conservation Authority.

The election took place at a GRCA board meeting on Friday, Jan. 24. 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 acclaimed as vice-chair was Vic Prendergast, who represents the City of Brantford. He was a vice-chair since 2000.

In a change this year, the board elected only one vice-chair compared to two in the past. One position was eliminated as part of a cost-reduction overhaul approved by the board in September. At the same time, the honorarium paid to the chair was reduced to \$25,000 from \$41,000 a year. The vice-chair receives \$2,500 a year. All board members, including the chair and vice-chair, also receive an additional per diem of \$138 to attend a board meeting.

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

What to expect in 2014

After Jane Mitchell was re-elected as chair, she said that 2013 was a year of significant change and the next year promises to be the same.

The draft version of a new Water Management Plan for the Grand River watershed was completed in 2013, and this year it will be circulated to municipalities, provincial and federal ministries and First Nations for their endorsement.

The GRCA faces millions of dollars in costs over coming years to deal with the emerald ash borer. Climate change will also make the water management process more complex in the future if it leads to more floods, ice storms and other significant weather events.

Internally, the GRCA is faced with a large number of retirements so effort will be put into capturing the knowledge of those who are leaving and reviewing operations to make the organization even more efficient.

\$275,000 ice storm bill expected for GRCA

The GRCA's costs related to the December ice storm are expected to add up to around \$275,000.

Thousands of trees were damaged during the ice storm on the 20,000 hectares of land owned by the GRCA. Dozens of staff, augmented by four private tree firms, have been working steadily since December to clear out hazardous trees and branches. In addition, trained and properly equipped volunteers belonging to snowmobile clubs have been working on some trails. Some GRCA seasonal staff will be recalled early to assist with the clean up.

The forestry costs of the December ice storm could be as high as \$200,000 and the cost to repair hydro is expected to be around \$75,000. The GRCA is looking for ways to cover these costs.

The damage is so heavy that some popular areas and trails have not yet seen work crews. Grand River Parks were late to open for the winter activities and Pinehurst Lake will remain closed until spring.

The GRCA posted "No Trespassing" signs on trails, parks and natural areas to urge people to stay out while crews continue to clean up. The red and white signs read: "No Trespassing — Dangerous conditions exist beyond this point — Area closed."

GRCA Parks staff have authority under provincial law to issue trespassing tickets and will do so to those who ignore requests to leave a property or return after having been asked to leave.

Cold snowy January

A thick blanket of snow covered the watershed at the end of January, despite the mid-January



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thaw that resulted in high river flows and melting water.

The GRCA issued a Watershed Conditions Statement on Jan. 10 based on the rain and snowmelt that was expected. Most of the rainfall was absorbed into the existing snowpack, although there was some runoff, especially in urban areas. This brief warm period and increase in flows didn't result in much ice movement in the river system.

Precipitation in January was close to the long-term average through most of the watershed, but it was 25 per cent above the long-term average at the Luther Dam climate station.

Temperatures were variable during the month with some days below freezing, however the weather was also extremely cold and will be remembered for its harsh weather with lots of snow shoveling.

Large sections of the river system were ice covered, with open water in the urban areas and locations with high groundwater discharge.

Reservoir levels at the major dams were slightly above normal for January.

New Heritage Awards

The GRCA is seeking nominations for the 2014 Watershed Awards, including special Heritage River awards.

If you know a company, organization or individual who you think could receive an award, please nominate them by the May 1 deadline. The GRCA is giving out three types of awards:

1. An Honour Roll Award for a sustained record of achievement over an extended period of time
2. Watershed Awards for outstanding examples of conservation and environmental work.
3. Heritage River Awards to acknowledge work done to enhance the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River in the areas of Human Heritage and Recreational opportunities.

Nominations are due May 1, and full details and nomination forms are available online at www.grandriver.ca/awards.

Elora's Drimmie Dam nearly complete

Work on the Drimmie Dam in Elora has



Photo by Gerd Proeschel

The stop logs were put in place on the new Drimmie Dam in Elora in January on a very cold day. Construction has been underway throughout the winter.

taken place throughout the winter and the new dam is now nearly complete.

The GRCA budgeted nearly \$1.2 million to replace the old dam, which was crumbling. The new dam will allow more water to flow through the town and reduce the potential for flooding during periods of high flow. It replaces a dam constructed in the 19th century to provide power to a nearby mill.

GRCA staff requested that the contract to build the dam be increased by \$150,000 based on additional work and modifications to the design in the final approval by the Ministry of Natural Resources. A two week shut down of the project in the fall was also necessary due to heavy river flows. The construction is being carried out by Xterra Construction Inc.

The dam has been owned by the GRCA since 1984. The GRCA carried out improvements to the dam previously, but it has deteriorated significantly and required replacement.

Scholarships available

The GRCA is accepting applications for three scholarships for students at a watershed institution:

- The Allan Holmes Scholarship for a graduate-level student focused on applied research.

- The SC Johnson Environmental Scholarship for a student in third year or sixth semester.
- The McEwen Clean Water Prize also for an undergrad student.

Scholarship Applications are due in May and can be downloaded from www.grcf.ca or are available by contacting the Foundation in Cambridge at 1-866-900-4722 or 519-621-2763 ext. 2372. The email address is foundation@grandriver.ca.

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GRCA Current



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GRCA cuts budget in 2014

The cost of doing business is dropping for the Grand River Conservation Authority in 2014.

The GRCA board approved a budget Feb. 28 calling for total expenditures of \$29.4 million this year, a drop from the \$30.7 million budgeted last year.

About \$10.3 million, or 34 per cent, comes from municipalities of the watershed which collect the money from residents through property taxes or water bills. The municipal share of the budget is about \$10.45 per person this year.

Even though the overall budget is smaller this year, the cost to municipalities is up about 2.5 per cent. That's because other sources of revenue, such as provincial grants and some types of self-generated revenues do not grow as much as basic operating costs.

For example, a provincial operating grant was reduced in 2013 and remains frozen at the lower level. In addition, provincial grants for drinking water source protection planning are down, as the bulk of the work of that program has been completed.

Government grants in 2014 total \$3.6 million, about 12 per cent of the budget, while 46 per cent of the GRCA's revenues — about \$14 million — comes from self-generated revenues.

Major projects for 2014

The 2014 budget includes major projects to improve the environment, reduce flood damages and protect water supplies. For projects involving work on dams and dikes, the provincial government covers half of the cost. These are the projects expected for this year.

Emerald ash borer — \$900,000. The invasive pest has spread through most of the southern part of the watershed, creating potentially hazardous situations in GRCA parks, trails and other properties. Effort will go into assessing the potential risks and beginning to remove or treat trees as required. The actual amount spent will depend on how far the disease has progressed and the amount of work that needs to be done.

Cambridge dike work — \$280,000. The bulk of the money (about \$250,000) will be spent to repair a section of the flood wall in Galt that has deteriorated since it was built about 25 years ago. About \$30,000 will be spent on the next phase of a dike safety study. These studies are done regularly on GRCA dikes.

Drayton channel restoration — \$200,000. Removal of a buildup of material in the Conestogo River channel to increase flow capacity and reduce the potential for flooding.

Major Dam upgrades and maintenance — \$385,000. This covers investments in six of the GRCA's flood control dams for a variety of projects to ensure their continued safe operation. Projects are scheduled at Conestogo, Guelph, Luther, Shand, Woolwich and Shade's Mills dams.

Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area Grassland Restoration — \$73,500. This project will create about 49 hectares of grassland habitat suitable for Henslow's sparrow, an endangered species. Financial support is provided by Environment Canada and Hydro One.

Conestogo Lake Conservation Area Restoration — \$20,000. The first year of a multi-year project to create grassland habitat for bobolinks, a threatened species.

High risk of spring floods

After a cold and snowy winter, residents along the Grand River could be facing a spring of high water.

The possibility of flooding in the Grand River system is the highest it's been in years, according to flood control staff.

Municipal flood co-ordinators were told recently that the snow pack is higher than it has been in about 30 years. Almost the entire river system is covered in ice, as is Lake Erie.

A rapid melt or a rapid melt in combination with rainfall will result in very high runoff, high river flows and break up river ice.

The high volume of ice in the river system increases the risk of ice jams. Ice jam flooding can result in a very quick rise in water levels which means there



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In March there is still lots of snow on the ground, including at the GRCA Administration Centre. Three parks will be open for March break and there is also a high risk of spring floods because of the cold snowy winter.

is sometimes little opportunity to issue flood warnings. Communities such as Grand Valley, West Montrose, New Hamburg, Ayr, Paris, Brantford, Cayuga and Dunnville are particularly prone to ice jam flooding.

A further complicating factor this year is the debris left behind by the December ice storm. As branches and trees are carried downstream, there is the chance that they will clog bridges and culverts, resulting in localized flooding. This year, many of the snow survey locations are recording two or even three times as much water content in the snowpack as the long-term average.

Do you know a watershed hero?

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

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

The GRCA thinks they deserve to be acknowledged, so is looking for nominations for its annual Watershed Awards. The GRCA has presented the awards since 1976.

Once again, there are the two regular categories for environmental work. But this year a special one-time category was added in honour of the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Grand River system as a Canadian Heritage River. Here are the award categories:

- **Honour Roll Awards** are presented for a sustained record of environmental achievement over an extended period of time.

- **Watershed Awards** for outstanding examples of environmental work.
- **Special Heritage Awards** for those who have advanced the river-related heritage and recreational attributes that were recognized in the Canadian Heritage River designation.

More information on the Heritage River designation can be found in the "Heritage River" section of the GRCA website.

Nominations can be made by May 1 and can come from anyone in the watershed. The form is posted online at www.grandriver.ca/awards.

Spring tree planting

The GRCA is hiring two companies to plant 200,000 trees on private land at a cost of about \$200,000.

Black River Tree Planting and Bartram Woodlands Ltd. will carry out the planting projects this spring.

The cost of the reforestation projects on private lands are paid for by the individual property owners, who may also receive grants to help pay for the costs. Reforestation on GRCA lands is funded through grants from agencies such as Trees Ontario.

In addition, there are many community tree planting events that GRCA staff work with partners to carry out.

Members of the public are invited to help out at the events listed online at www.grandriver.ca/calendar.

Enjoy Spring Break at a Grand River park

While some jet off to warmer climates for March break, three GRCA parks are offering a full slate of winter activities.

Shade's Mills in Cambridge, Laurel Creek in Waterloo and Belwood Lake east of Fergus will be open daily during March Break for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing. Skis, and snowshoes are available to rent at Laurel and Shade's, while the latter also offers ice huts.

More information including hours of operation and fees can be found in the Winter Activities section of the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

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Flood watch underway

March ended with a flood watch message for what could be a challenging spring melt.

At the end of the month, the Grand River watershed had above-average snowpack. Snow melt began to expose some bare fields in the southern part of the watershed, however woodlots and fence rows still had snow. The north still has full winter conditions and the snow melt is expected to continue through most of April.

Ice along the Grand River was beginning to deteriorate with the increased flows and sunshine. Ice between Lake Erie and Cayuga was generally intact at the end of March. Risks included potential for ice jams in the river system and initiate ice movement was underway. Common ice jam locations include Cayuga, New Hamburg, and West Montrose and the associated river systems.

The County of Haldimand, in conjunction with the GRCA, asked the Coast Guard to send an icebreaker to clear ice from the mouth of the river and offshore in Lake Erie.

The Samuel Risley arrived March 30 and broke up the ice to reduce the risk of flooding along the Grand from Dunnville to the mouth during the spring melt.

Both the lower Grand River and Lake Erie have had heavy ice cover this winter. Typically, during the spring melt, ice on the river breaks up before the lake thaws. As river ice reaches the mouth, it has no place to go. The resulting ice jam blocks the flow of water from the river into the lake, leading to flooding.

At the end of March, the major reservoirs at Belwood, Conestogo, Guelph, Luther, Woolwich, Laurel, and Shades were at low winter holding levels and had maximum storage available.

Post ice storm cleanup shifts to rail-trails

Cleanup work on GRCA properties moved to the Cambridge-Paris Rail-Trail on March 31. A team using an excavator worked its way from Cambridge to Paris, removing trees and branches

damaged in the December ice storm.

The work on this trail was expected to last about a week.

Most GRCA parks and trails remain closed while GRCA crews and contractors continue their efforts to make the properties safe again.

Three parks that were open for winter activities (Laurel Creek, Shade's Mills and Belwood Lake) have completed their winter season and are now closed.

Those three parks and most other GRCA paid-admission parks are scheduled to open for the summer season on May 1.

Ready for tree planting season

Some tree numbers are up and some are down as we get set for tree planting season in the Grand River watershed.

The GRCA has seven planting events in watershed communities that the public is invited to attend and help out. There are many other projects that involve specific groups of volunteers, such as students, companies and community organizations. These volunteers are helping to plant trees while also learning about ecology. This is more than the usual number of planting events.

The GRCA has hired contractors to plant 290,000 trees in many locations this spring, which is about on par with last year. The most northerly of these projects is a riparian buffer on a property close to Shelburne. The most southerly project is a living snow fence that will be planted in Haldimand County to help make Junction Road safer during winter weather. This is the first living snow fence for Haldimand through the Rural Water Quality Program.

About 38,000 trees were sold to landowners both online and over the phone, and these will be picked up at the GRCA. This number is a little lower than last year.



Trees and shrubs removed along dikes

In March, contractors worked along sections of the Brantford Dike and the Bridgeport Dike to remove trees and shrubs to maintain the structural integrity of the dike.

The work was done along Morrison Road in Brantford, which runs off Mohawk Road and leads to the Brantford Sanitary Landfill during the last two weeks of March. A crane used to remove the trees and shrubs from the top of the dike.

Trees pose a threat to the integrity of the dike. The root balls can weaken the structure of the dike. In addition, if a tree were to fall over it could leave a hole in the dike that could be eroded by heavy rain or high water, potentially leading to a failure.

Similar work was done on the section of the dike that runs through the Bridgeport Sportsfield in Kitchener. Trees and shrubs are being removed from the face of the dike. The trail on top of the dike was closed during the work.

Maintenance of this sort is carried out regularly on the dikes. They were built in the 1980s to provide protection to low-lying sections of the city.



Photo by Art Smith

The Canadian Coast Guard ship Samuel Risley came to the mouth of the Grand River at Port Maitland on March 30 to clear a path for the ice to come down the Grand River during the spring melt.

Children's water festival coming to Haldimand

A new children's water festival is coming to the southern Grand River watershed.

About 350 children will visit the Haldimand Children's Water Festival in early October at Taquanyah Nature Centre. The festival will teach children about the importance of water conservation, protection, technology and ecology. It offers hands-on learning that is fun and interactive and will be the third children's water festival in the Grand River watershed.

The Waterloo-Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival was among the first children's water festivals in the province when it started in 1996, and there are now 26 children's water festivals in Ontario.

Over the past 19 years, the Waterloo Wellington festival has educated 75,000 students at Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener. This year the festival takes place May 26 to 30, thanks to donors and hundreds of volunteers.

The annual Brantford/Brant Children's

Water Festival debuted in 2006 and will be held May 13 to 15 at Mohawk Park in Brantford for students from Brant, Brantford and Six Nations.

First winners of GRCA photo contest

Three random draws for a Grand River Parks membership have been drawn for the GRCA photo contest, which is continuing until Oct. 31.

The winners of these random draws are Heather Mead (Fergus) in January, Heather Greg (Rockwood) in February and Nick Wagner of Kitchener in March.

At the end of the contest there will be winners in three categories of prizes — recreation, riverscapes and historic photos taken before 1975. The prizes are gift certificates valued at \$500, \$250 and \$100.

For full details and to submit photos, see www.grandriver.ca/photocontest.

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Flood waters rose high during spring melt

Rain and snowmelt meant that flood waters rose high in April and 11 flood messages were issued by the GRCA, including two flood warnings.

Fortunately the weather allowed for gradual melting of the river ice and snow pack with limited rainfall.

The two biggest reservoirs, Belwood Lake and Conestogo Lake, were filled to capacity in mid-April. Snow on the land was enough to fill the reservoirs two times over.

While flooding did occur in low-lying areas close to the waterways, the impact of the flooding was much less than it could have been because of the gradual melt.

The 11th flood message on April 16 was a termination notice.

While there were a few ice jams, these were relatively minor, considering the amount of ice in the river system.

Rivercams in Brantford and West Montrose

The GRCA has installed webcams at two locations along the Grand River to help with real-time monitoring of river conditions.

Every hour, at the top of the hour, the most recent photo and video are posted on the GRCA's rivercam page. These supplement the data that comes from the GRCA's network of river flow, rainfall and temperature monitoring stations.

One camera is in West Montrose near the covered bridge and looks downstream.

The other camera is in downtown Brantford looking downstream at the Veterans Memorial Parkway (formerly BSAR) bridge

These areas are prone to ice jams which can cause sudden increases in water levels and flooding. These cameras are particularly helpful during the winter and spring to monitor ice conditions and water levels.

Storm damage to trees

The GRCA now expects to spend more than \$400,000 on clean up related to ice storm damage. However as the clean up continues, this number could increase.

At the end of April GRCA spending on ice storm clean up had reached \$375,00.

The provincial government has announced a program to provide financial assistance to municipalities and conservation authorities that have been impacted by the ice damage.

If the GRCA is eligible for this funding program, then the majority of the clean up costs could be covered by the program.

Any costs not covered through this program will have to come from the GRCA's budget or from reserves. Program guidelines will be released in May.

Some delays to opening Grand River parks

Most Grand River Parks opened May 1, but there are some delays during the early part of the season due to continuing work to clean up damaged trees left behind by the devastating December ice storm.

Clean up has been completed at Belwood Lake (Fergus), Brant (Brantford), Byng Island (Dunville), Laurel Creek (Waterloo), Rockwood (Rockwood) and Shade's Mills (Cambridge). Conestogo Lake opening has been delayed to May 15 due to the cleanup.

While the Elora Gorge opened May 1, camp sites on the south side will open May 15 and those on the north side will open in mid to late June. At Guelph Lake, some trails may remain closed and customers should check with park staff for up-to-date information.

At Pinehurst Lake day-use areas, camping areas and the Captain Kidd Trail are open, but other trails will remain closed until further notice.

At all parks, customers should use caution in wooded areas and be alert to hanging or damaged



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branches and trees. Elora Quarry, Elora will open in June, as it normally does.

Unfortunately it will take even more time for the damage to be cleared away from the passive areas, and residents need to check the Newsroom for updates.

New website project

The GRCA is planning to redesign two websites and has a project team working toward this goal.

A consulting firm will be hired for each of two phases of this website project. The first phase is design and this is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The websites will then be built in 2015.

The websites are www.grandriver.ca and www.sourcewater.ca.

Plans are underway for former waterfowl park

The GRCA has taken the first steps towards rehabilitating the former Kortright Waterfowl Park on Niska Road in Guelph.

The 47 hectare park had been leased by the Niska Wildlife Foundation but the lease has ended and the land has now returned to the GRCA. For the rest of this year, the property will remain closed to the public while the GRCA carries out safety assessments and addresses deficiencies.

The GRCA intends to work with the community to develop a master plan for the property. The park opened in 1977 and was popular but attendance dropped off in the 1990s and the park was closed in 2005.

"No Trespassing" signs have been posted. GRCA staff will examine boardwalks, bridges, a dam and other water structures to see what state they are in. It's also expected that there is considerable damage to the trees as a result of overgrazing by deer, as well as damage caused by several ice storms.

The GRCA is also urging the public to stay off the property to respect the privacy of two representatives of the Niska Wildlife Foundation who will continue to occupy a home and other buildings until the end of the year

Lots of camp programs

Grand River Parks and nature centre summer camps are great places for kids to con-



Photo by Ann Loeffler

Extremely high river flows due to melting snow and rainfall in mid-April brought some flooding in low lying areas. This is the view from the Conestogo Dam when flows were around 170 cubic metres per second. They did get as high as 250 cms, compared to 4.5 cms during the summer. The fog was created by the cold lake water being discharged into 20-C air temperatures.

nect with nature this summer.

The GRCA has updated and increased the variety of summer camps on offer at the five nature centres locations (Belwood Lake, Rockwood, Guelph Lake, Laurel Creek and Apps' Mill). Many kids come for a few weeks each summer. A few camps are already sold out but there are still many different types of camps for kids six to 16 years old.

Camp information is available on www.grandriver.ca/naturecentres and camp registration website is www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

In addition, nature centre staff are providing many visitor service programs suited to families at the Grand River parks. For more on these programs and on other GRCA events, check www.grandriver.ca/calendar.

40 years after the flood

On a beautiful sunny day 40 years ago — May 17, 1974 — residents of the Grand River watershed were shocked when floodwaters came barreling down the river to overwhelm Galt and communities further south.

This 50-mm rainfall across the top of the watershed caused an estimated \$6.9 million (\$34.4 million in today's dollars) in damage, excluding cleanup. After the deluge and the cleanup, a provincial inquiry into the flood

took months.

There were many lessons learned and changes made to prevent this from happening again. GRCA staff, municipal flood coordinators, emergency personnel and residents are always on the alert for flooding — especially now 40 years later during the spring of 2014.

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Next board meeting: Friday, May 23 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

Reports mentioned in *GRCA Current*: www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

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

The current issue of *Grand Actions* newsletter is available at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

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Farmland to forest at Conestogo Lake

New forests are rising on old farm fields in Mapleton Township in an effort to improve water quality in streams feeding Conestogo Lake reservoir.

About 70,000 trees are being planted this year and next on two parcels of land totalling 40 hectares (100 acres) on the north side of the reservoir.

The GRCA is planting a variety of species that are native to the area, including spruce, tamarack, white pine, bur oak, silver maple and cottonwood.

In addition to the new forests, the GRCA will also do some reshaping of the landscape to create some seasonal wetlands that will also help improve water quality and provide additional habitat.

As the trees grow in coming years, the areas will quickly become home to a variety of animals, such as deer and wild turkeys. Later, as the forests mature, it's expected that several bird species including scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds and great horned owls will take up residence.

A 12 hectare parcel near Wellington Road 10 and Concession Road Five has been planted this year. The second parcel of 28 hectares is near Concession Road 5 and Sideroad 15. About 18 hectares has been planted this year and the rest will be planted in 2015. The land was acquired by the GRCA when it built the reservoir in the 1950s. It has been leased to farmers since then.

Cool with average rainfall

Rainfall in May was close to or above the long-term average throughout the watershed.

The average temperature in May was 11 degrees, about 1.2 degrees cooler than normal at the Shand Dam climate station.

Reservoir levels at Shand, Conestogo, Luther and Guelph Lake were within the normal operating range for the time of year, and close to their normal maximum operating level.

A watershed conditions statement for water

safety was issued on May 16. Canoeists, kayakers, anglers, hikers and other recreational river users were warned to be alert to high water in much of the Grand River system at that time.

Continued help for Whitemans irrigators

Farmers in the Whitemans Creek area of Oxford and Brant counties can tap into a program that will help them adopt new irrigation techniques to reduce the impact of water takings on the creek.

The Whitemans Creek Drought Contingency Planning Pilot Project is part of the Water Adaptation Management and Quality Initiative (WAMQI). It is successor to the Water Resource Adaptation and Management Initiative that took place in the Whitemans Creek area in 2013.

The program will help farmers who hold Permits to Take Water to develop drought contingency plans. It will also showcase innovative technologies and solutions for agricultural water conservation and efficiency. That way, farmers can get the water they need while reducing the impact on the creek.

For example, the 2013 program helped restore several old farm irrigation pond to store water during wet days so it can be used during dry spells.

In addition, the 2014 program will support projects that encourage the efficient use and management of nutrients to protect water quality.

For further information on the project, contact Sue Brocklebank, GRCA Conservation Specialist at 519-621-2761, Ext. 2278 or at sbrocklebank@grandriver.ca.

Beach sampling begins

The beach sampling program for 2014 got underway at the end of May, as it does every year.

The signs at the beaches read "Swim at Your Own Risk" until test results are in. From late May to Labour Day, the GRCA and local health units regularly test the water at designated beaches in



Grand River 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.

Beach postings often occur after heavy rains. In urban areas, stormwater washes fecal material from dogs, cats, birds and other wildlife into storm sewers that flow directly into nearby rivers and lakes. Contamination can also come from waterfowl that congregate at reservoirs, so please do not feed these animals.

Beach conditions are posted in the Newsroom on the GRCA website and watershed health units also provide this information.

Movies under the stars at Shade's Mills

Come watch movies under the stars starting at dusk every Friday night beginning June 6 until the end of September at Shade's Mills Park on Avenue Road in Cambridge.

The movies are free for GRCA Park Membership and day pass holders. Or, up to six people in a vehicle can gain admission for a special flat fee of \$10 on Friday nights starting at 7 p.m.

This has been very successful for the last few years. People come from all over. Visitors should bring lawn chairs and blankets to sit in front of the big screen. Cancellations due to poor weather or schedule changes will be posted on Facebook and twitter or call the park at 519-621-3697.

Movies start shortly before sunset, and the times vary between 8:45 p.m. during the longer days of June and July to 7:15 p.m. in September.

There is a full slate of activities on www.grandriver.ca/events with over 80 events listed in June and July.

2014 Tree Facts

- Across the entire watershed, the GRCA will plant about 400,000 trees this year, including 95,000 on its own land and 300,000 in partnership with private land owners.
- The GRCA operates a nursery near Burford, in Brant County, where it grows



The wet spring was great for trees, but not so good for the people who were planting them. However the 92nd Kitchener Sparks and Brownies had better luck at the end of May, when they planted trees at Shade's Mills Park. Thanks to the Girl Guides of Canada national service project, native trees and shrubs were donated. Resident pollinators and wildlife will benefit from the trees as they grow. About 400,000 trees were planted across the watershed this spring and planting extended throughout May and even into early June.

more than 150,000 trees a year from 60 different species.

- Since it was created in 1934, the GRCA has planted more than 27 million trees on both private land and its own land.
- The Grand River watershed was 85 per cent forest 200 years ago. However, tree cover dropped to just five per cent by 1900 as land was cleared for farming and urban areas. Today, the tree cover has rebounded to about 19 per cent. Environment Canada suggests a healthy watershed needs a tree cover of about 30 per cent.
- To learn more about the GRCA's tree planting program, go to the Tree Planting section of the GRCA website. The GRCA will help private landowners develop planting plans, plant the trees and find grants to offset costs.

also event listings through until October. It is expected that the booklet will be published each year and it is supported by advertisers.

Check out the link to the publication at www.grandriver.ca/Parks/Your-GuideToGrandRiverParks.pdf.

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Reports mentioned in *GRCA Current*: www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

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

The *Grand Actions* newsletter is available online at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

New park booklet for 2014

Park booklets for Grand River Parks were completed and have been distributed throughout the parks and tourism organizations.

This new publication includes a section on each park, information about recreational activities and GRCA programs. There are

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Snyder's Flats and dogs

Recent efforts to enforce the regulation that requires dogs to remain leashed at Snyder's Flats in Woolwich Township have resulted in a great deal of interest from the public.

Some members of the public are in support of the enforcement efforts while others advocate that this should become a leash-free dog park. Feelings on both sides are strong.

Increased enforcement in June came about in response to a complaint from a resident whose children were frightened by off-leash dogs.

During June, GRCA staff visited the site on nine occasions. They laid seven charges for dogs off leash, three trespass bans and 21 people received warnings for swimming in the ponds. While there are six off-leash parks in Guelph, the number in Waterloo Region is more limited, so this is a well-used location.

Snyder's Flats has been owned by the GRCA since 1969 and recent work on the property had the primary goal of increasing fish and wildlife habitat within the Grand River floodplain. Volunteers and donor organizations helped achieve this by contributing funds for a variety of wetlands and habitats as well as an interpreted trail.

The presentations on the issue and discussion at the board table revealed that board members are also on both sides of this issue.

GRCA staff were asked to provide a report with more details about the impact of dogs at Snyders Flats. This report will be brought to the board in July.

ner watershed municipalities, the provincial ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Food, Natural Resources, Environment Canada, Six Nations of the Grand River and the GRCA came together to review the current water management, address critical issues and identify action plans. These will be carried out by partners collectively.

The provincial and federal government ministries and the two First Nations in the Grand River are also being asked to endorse the plan.

For more information check www.grandriver.ca/wmp.

New appointments to GRCF

Two new directors were appointed to the Grand River Conservation Foundation in June— Wayne Fyffe of Paris and James den Ouden of Kitchener.

At the same annual general meeting, Brantford resident Joy O'Donnell was elected as chair while Doug Brock from Waterloo became the past chair.

Founded in 1965, the GRCF channels donations from individuals, foundations, groups and businesses to Grand River Conservation Authority projects. More than \$10 million has been raised so far.

The annual report is posted on www.grcf.ca and printed copies are also available.

Warm June weather

June began very dry with below the long-term average rainfall in the first half of the month across the watershed, except at Guelph Lake.

During the middle of the month, there were rainfall events in the northern part of the watershed, but the southern Grand remained dry. Rainfall near the end of the month was widespread.

The average temperature was 18 degrees, about one degree above the long-term average at the Shand Dam climate station. The warm weather in May and June has ended a six month stretch of cool weather.

Reservoirs are within the normal operating

Board endorses Grand River Water Management Plan

The GRCA endorsed the updated Grand River Watershed Water Management Plan as a plan of best practices.

The draft plan was posted to the website in April for endorsement by member municipalities. Most have endorsed the plan which has been developed over the past five years. Staff from part-



range for this time of year. Augmentation from the large reservoirs accounted for about 40 per cent of the flow through Kitchener, 15 per cent at Brantford and 15 per cent on the Speed River below Guelph.

Wet conditions since last fall resulted in rising groundwater levels at various monitoring wells throughout the watershed.

Apps' Mill Nature Centre receives major gifts

Apps' Mill Nature Centre in Brant County will get a major upgrade next year thanks to donations made through the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

SC Johnson & Son Ltd. of Brantford has taken a leadership role on the renovations with a \$100,000 donation that will support upgrades to classroom and outdoor learning spaces as well as improved accessibility to the centre. The company is a long-term partner of the GRCF.

Improvements that are being undertaken include an elevator, exterior landscaping such as the outdoor classroom, ramps, better storage and fully accessible washrooms and classroom upgrades.

While the project is still in the planning stage, the upgrades are planned for the summer of 2015. So far about \$250,000 has been raised of the \$300,000 that is needed from many donors.

If you would like to contribute to this or any other project supported by the GRCF, please contact Sara Wilbur at 519-621-2763, ext. 2272.

GRCA provincial offences officers

The GRCA has 28 staff members who are designated to enforce the regulations applicable on land owned by the GRCA.

Five new staff members were appointed as regulations officers in June. Typically, park superintendents, assistant superintendents and park operations technicians have been designated as POA officers once they have completed training.

Over the years, the role and importance of the GRCA's enforcement program has changed due to shifting needs. The current challenges result from increased pressure on GRCA properties that are used by the public. With increasing use of GRCA lands, there



This is a rest stop for kayakers exploring Conestogo Lake Park, which has excellent boat launch facilities. The lake is especially popular for fishing, power boats, sailing and camping, but it is also a great place for paddlers.

are an increasing number of issues such as alcohol abuse, vandalism, dogs that are off-leash and trespassing. Local police are not always in a position to respond and the GRCA must ensure that adequate staff are available to protect the land, GRCA staff and the public at these locations.

One-year contract

The GRCA and Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 259, which represents unionized staff, have negotiated a one-year contract that will expire on Dec. 31, 2014.

The contract includes a 1.1 per cent wage increase, changes to benefits for full-time, temporary and seasonal staff, as well as language about lateral transfers, sick days and one new personal day off.

Negotiations between the union and the GRCA took place this spring over five days.

River recreation surveys

DSS Management Consultants Inc., on behalf of Environment Canada, is carrying out surveys to learn more about recreational activities in the Grand River.

You can help by participating in these surveys on boating, fishing and swimming.

The work is being financed by Environment Canada under its Great Lakes Nutrient Initiative, which is aimed at improving the health of Lake Erie. The Grand River watershed is a major source of water to the lake.

The survey results will be used to help estimate the types, levels and distribution of these activities as well as their economic value. To see the surveys go to www.grandriver.ca/newsroom/news.cfm.

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Reports mentioned in *GRCA Current*: www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

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GRCA Current



August 2014 • Volume 19, Number 8

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New volunteer program

A \$273,800 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will allow the GRCA to set up a new formalized volunteer program over four years.

A volunteer coordinator will be hired to promote existing and new volunteer opportunities, develop a list of GRCA projects suitable for volunteers and match volunteers to the GRCA's needs. This new staff person will also seek support to make this program sustainable in the long-term and to ensure that health and safety processes are in place for volunteers.

GRCA staff members receive frequent questions about volunteer opportunities. Some of these can be accommodated in the area of tree planting, trail improvement and outdoor education, however until now many people have been referred to partner organizations.

This new program will engage new volunteers, help the GRCA look after passive lands and help connect people with the environment through outdoor experiences.

EAB to cost \$4 million

The GRCA expects to spend \$4 million over the next four years in response to the destruction caused by the emerald ash borer.

The GRCA's original plan called for spending of \$1 million each year between 2014 and 2017, mostly to remove hazard trees. This work was delayed in 2014 due to the need to reallocate resources to ice storm cleanup. The most recent forecast shows that \$200,000 will be spent this year for EAB, with the remaining \$3.8 million to be spent in future years.

The beetle is expected to kill all ash trees over a couple of centimetres in diameter within 10 to 15 years.

The cost of dealing with the arrival of this invasive beetle is subject to change due to many factors. These include the unpredictable rate of infestation, how and where hazard trees are removed and how much restoration will be done after trees are removed.

The forecast assumes that reserves will be used to fund infestation expenses. The money in those reserves is from the sale of surplus properties and can only be used for high-priority projects that have a provincial interest.

However, the GRCA is injecting 200 trees on GRCA land with a bioinsecticide to save these trees. The injections will be done every two years for eight to 10 years.

Mounting cleanup costs

Cleanup costs related to the ice storm last December continue to mount for the GRCA.

At the end of July, the cleanup cost was estimated at \$625,000, primarily due to hazard tree removal.

The province is helping municipalities and conservation authorities affected by the December 2013 ice storm by funding eligible response and recovery costs through a one-time Ice Storm Assistance Program. Eligible costs were incurred to protect public health and safety, or provide access to roads, sidewalks and frequently travelled routes.

The GRCA has already applied to the province for assistance in covering these costs and will be submitting its claim later this summer.

Campers of all ages

It is looking like a good year for people to get outdoors.

At the end of July, the Grand River Parks revenue was slightly more than \$3.8 million, which is on par with this time last year.

July was a busy month with many programs in the parks that were organized by both the GRCA and partner organizations.

Summer camp registration at the nature centres is also higher than last summer. The camps were 86 per cent full by the end of July and the program offerings at Apps' Mill are more extensive than in previous years. There are still a few spots left for



some camps in August.

Restoration work at Luther Marsh

A few restoration projects are taking place at Luther Marsh.

Spring tree planting saw about 25,000 trees planted at Luther this spring. Invasive species control of dog strangling vine will be carried out thanks to funding provided by a donor through the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Grassland restoration seeding was completed on four of five fields. The fifth field (27 hectares) will be sprayed and seeded in the fall.

Also at Luther, marsh and grassland bird surveys were completed.

Monitoring Asian carp

On July 7 the federal government announced a new Asian carp science lab has opened up in Burlington at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters.

This lab will allow scientists to quickly test fish DNA samples from the Great Lakes. This is part of the federal government's effort to identify the threat of Asian carp.

Two Asian carp were found last year near the mouth of the Grand River. Fortunately, they were sterilized fish and unable to reproduce.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Aquatic Science staff continue to monitor the southern Grand River for Asian carp, however no more fish have been found.

Four species of Asian carp were brought from Asia to North America in the 1960s and '70s. Since then, they have migrated north through U.S. waterways towards the Great Lakes. Preventing them from spreading into the Great Lakes is the best way to prevent harm to Ontario's native fish species.

Wet July weather

Rainfall was above the long-term average across the watershed in July and there were many rainstorms.

At Burford, about 100 mm of rain fell overnight toward the end of the month.

Two water safety messages were issued by the GRCA in July — one on July 14 for the Grand River from Shand Dam to Fergus due



GRCA forester Ron Wu-Winter gets set to inject an ash tree with a bioinsecticide to save it from the emerald ash borer. This is expensive and needs to be done to each tree every two years for 10 years. The GRCA is injecting 200 trees across the watershed to save them.

to dam gate testing. The other was on July 28 warning of high flows throughout the watershed due to heavy rainfall at the end of the month.

The temperature averaged 18.5 degrees, which is a degree cooler than the long-term average at the Shand Dam. Lake Erie was higher than average at the end of the month.

CHRS 10 year monitoring report

The 10 year monitoring report about the Grand River and its tributaries for the Canadian Heritage Rivers System is now posted on the GRCA website.

This report is required because this is the 20th anniversary of the designation of these rivers as Canadian Heritage Rivers. It covers the new threats, changes and losses related to heritage and recreational values as well as natural features within the watershed since 2004.

The Heritage Working Group and many GRCA staff were consulted in preparing the report. It also features photos that were submitted to the GRCA photo contest.

Mill Creek rangers

The Mill Creek Rangers and summer campers explored aquatic life in and near Mill Creek as it flows through Shade's Mills

in Cambridge on July 17.

The Rangers are four high school students and a university-aged crew leader who are spending the summer carrying out restoration projects along Mill Creek, which flows from the Guelph area to Cambridge (Galt) where it enters the Grand River.

The ranger crew is a project of the Friends of Mill Creek. They are employed for eight weeks to carry out projects to improve the health and diversity of Mill Creek.

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Hydro corridor restoration

A hydro corridor restoration project is taking place at the GRCA Administration Centre in Cambridge.

The project is expected to reduce the number of non-native invasive shrubs in the corridor, reduce the need for periodic herbicide treatments and improve aesthetics. It will also establish a seed source collection area for native plants and provide a demonstration site for alternative hydro corridor maintenance.

The area was cleared in August and will be seeded with native grasses and wildflowers in late fall.

Five vacant houses to be demolished

The GRCA plans to demolish five vacant houses on GRCA property.

These buildings are located at Luther Marsh, Everton, Puslinch Township and two at Guelph Lake. Most of the buildings have been vacant for some time and would be very costly to repair. An additional house on the Apps' Mill property was also slated for demolition. However it was destroyed by fire a couple days before the GRCA board meeting.

Municipalities have been consulted regarding these proposed demolitions which are expected to cost \$180,000 to \$230,000. They will save the GRCA money in the longer term. None of these buildings are considered suitable to be put up for sale because of the location or other issues.

Water Management Plan endorsed by partners

A plan to address water supply, water quality and flooding in the Grand River watershed has been endorsed by water management agencies from all levels of government and is ready for implementation.

The Grand River Watershed Water Management

Plan has been five years in the making. It's a product of a collaborative partnership of municipalities, provincial ministries, the federal government, Six Nations of the Grand River and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Copies of the plan and more information are available on www.grandriver.ca/wmp.

Representatives of the plan partners met in September at the GRCA head office to mark the completion of the plan and to discuss its implementation. The plan includes 43 recommendations and 165 action items that the partners have already agreed to undertake. The action items respond to the three key challenges facing the watershed today: high population growth, extensive agriculture and a changing climate.

As the action items are implemented there will be improvements in water quality in the Grand River and its tributaries. In addition, that will also have a positive impact on the health of Lake Erie because the Grand is one of the largest sources of nutrient pollution in the eastern basin of the lake.

New boardwalk at Laurel Creek Park

The Kitchener-Grand River Rotary Club completed a new boardwalk at Laurel Creek that was used at the Mud Puppy Trail Race in September.

About 250 metres of new trail now connect the boardwalk to the trail system. The boardwalk is on the green trail in the park brochure. The new water crossing means that an old route from a number of years ago has been reopened.

This is a significant improvement at the park and is the first of many trail enhancement projects that are expected at Laurel Creek in coming years.

Herbicide used to remove invasive plants

Portions of Snyder's Flats Conservation Area in Woolwich Township were closed to the public during the week of Sept. 29 while a herbicide was used to control an outbreak of phragmites, an



Riverfestival
Riverprize 2000
For excellence in river management



invasive plant species.

The affected sections of the trail network within the conservation area were marked as closed. GRCA staff will be applying the herbicide glyphosate, which is better known by the trade name Roundup, that has been adopted by conservation organizations as a safe and effective way to remove invasive species.

In most areas, the herbicide will be applied by hand to individual plants. Some larger areas will be tackled with backpack-style sprayers.

Phragmites australis, also known as European common reed, is a species that came to North America from Eurasia. The plant spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth and kill surrounding plants.

Warm wet September

September was wet with most rain falling during two storms early in the month.

The first rainstorm was Sept. 5 to 6 and widespread. However the central areas received the heaviest rainfall while very little rain fell in the headwaters area. Less than a week later, a second weather event covering the entire watershed resulted in saturated conditions and high runoff across the watershed. Shand Dam received the most rain in September with 187 mm, more than double the long-term average of 81 mm. The GRCA issued three warning messages in September.

September was also warm with an average of 14.5 degrees, about 0.5 degrees warmer than usual.

Reservoirs were above the normal operating range for the time of year with the exception of Conestogo, which needed to be drawn down due to maintenance on the dam gates that was planned for early October.

Ice storm funding request update

The GRCA has received an application package from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to be used to submit a claim for the ice storm cleanup costs.

The ice storm took place in December 2013 and GRCA forestry staff and contractors have been working to clean up the damage to trees that resulted from this storm.



Hundreds of Grade 4 students from Haldimand County, Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the New Credit attended the first ever Haldimand Children's Water Festival that took place Oct. 1 and 2 at Taquanyah Nature Centre. This is the third such festival within the Grand River watershed. It was a project initiated by the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

This was an unanticipated expense for this year's budget. However, the GRCA hopes that through this program, the province will provide financial assistance for the clean up.

The deadline for submitting claims has been extended from Oct. 31 to Dec. 31, 2014.

300,000 trees available for spring 2015

The GRCA has an inventory of 300,000 trees available to private landowners for spring 2015.

Trees help improve the water quality in many ways. These trees are available to rural landowners with property that is greater than one hectare (2.5 acres) exclusive of buildings, within the Grand River watershed.

Landowners who plan to plant their own trees can purchase a minimum order of 200 seedlings or 20 saplings or potted plants. They can order online or by mail anytime before March 1 for spring pick up at the GRCA. Orders opened Oct. 2 and the best selection is early on, as some more popular species sell out.

But for plantings that will be done by GRCA staff, the deadline is Dec. 1. The minimum order is 500 seedlings or 30 saplings

or potted plants. A site visit by a member of the GRCA staff is a necessary first step prior to Dec. 1.

This is part of the GRCA's long-term commitment to increase tree cover within the Grand River watershed. Information about funding assistance for trees through a variety of programs is also provided by GRCA staff.

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

Reports mentioned in GRCA Current: www.grandriver.ca/MeetingReports.

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

The August-September issue of Grand Actions newsletter is available at: www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions

GRCA General Membership

Chair Jane Mitchell

Vice-Chair Vic Prendergast

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

Warm with seasonal rainfall

Although October was drier than September, rainfall was still close to or above the long-term average across the watershed.

In contrast to September when most rain fell during two large storms, precipitation in October was spread throughout the month. The result was wet ground conditions and elevated river flows.

In some locations, river flows were altered somewhat in order to accommodate construction projects including ones at Conestogo and Guelph dams.

The average daily temperature was two degrees above normal at Shand Dam, making October unseasonably warm.

Lake Erie is about a half-metre higher than usual. This means the southern Grand will likely be more reactive to flooding as lake conditions change.

Funding for floodplain mapping

Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has provided \$170,000 to the GRCA related to floodplain mapping case studies.

The Grand River Conservation Authority, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and Conservation Ontario have received funds to review and document innovative floodplain mapping techniques. The intent is to document approaches, technologies and options available to update floodplain mapping.

This will be used by the provinces and federal government as they develop national floodplain mapping guidelines. This kind of mapping is considered increasingly important to improve preparedness for floods due to climate change and potential increased severity of future flooding events.

Ontario's conservation authorities have had floodplain mapping guidelines and related technical documents since the 1980s. A large portion of current floodplain mapping is in a paper or mylar

form. New updated mapping would be in a digital form, making it easier to maintain and use.

Digital maps for the Grand River watershed are continually being updated and are available on <http://maps.grandriver.ca> to view and download.

2014 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 Guelph's **Hillside Festival** that has taken place at Guelph Lake Park for the past 31 years. Hillside has undertaken many environmental initiatives to ensure that their festival is the greenest in Ontario.

In addition, there were five watershed award recipients. These included the **Guelph Hiking Trail Club** that has been encouraging people to get outside and hike since 1972; University of Waterloo professor Emeritus **Emil Frind** for his activities in water stewardship; Arthur residents **Buck Ross and Joyce Spies**, who have been excellent stewards of their land; **Bird Studies Canada** which has undertaken many monitoring programs within this watershed and engaged hundreds of volunteers; and retired teacher **Fraser Gibson** of Kitchener who has devoted lots of time and commitment to sharing his love of nature and education.

Special Heritage River Anniversary Awards

Heritage River Awards and pins were given out by the GRCA in October to mark the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Grand River and its tributaries as Canadian Heritage rivers.

The three recipients of the Heritage River award were active during the designation process and have continued their participation in heritage river activities since then. They are **Eva Salter**, a member of the Grand Strategy co-ordinating committee in 1994 and an excellent promoter of the Heritage River designation; the **Heritage Resources Centre** at the University of Waterloo which did





One Honour Roll Award and five Grand River Conservation Awards were given out by the GRCA in October 2014. From left are GRCA CAO Joe Farwell, Joyce Spies & Buck Ross, Marie Zimmerman (Hillside Festival), Fraser Gibson, Steven Price (Bird Studies Canada), Emil Frind, GRCA Chair Jane Mitchel, Dave Culham and Jim Hoare (Guelph Hiking Trail Club). Awards night was Oct. 23. The awards were photos from the GRCA photo contest.

the initial research for the river designation and has undertaken many projects including a survey of heritage bridges; and **Barbara Veale**, co-chair of the co-ordinating committee for the Grand Strategy in 1994 who has led many initiatives to keep the Canadian Heritage River designation on the front burner over the past 20 years.

In addition, about 20 people from around the watershed received Canadian Heritage River pins and certificates for their role in the designation process in 1994. Those invited to receive the pins included members of the steering committee, the coordinating committee, the GRCA board in 1994 and a few others.

Bradley Fauteux, the managing director of Ontario Parks and the Ontario representative on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, spoke at this event and also helped to hand out the awards.

Three scholarships awarded by GRCF

The Grand River Conservation Foundation awarded three 2014 scholarships to post-secondary students.

This was the third year for the Allan Holmes Scholarship, named for the former CAO of the GRCA who passed away in 2010. The recipient was **Keegan Hicks**, a PhD student at the University of Waterloo who is doing research on the Grand River.

The McEwen Clean Water Prize was received by **Graeme McDonald** who is enrolled in the Master of Science program at the University of Guelph. It is named after a long-time supporter of the GRCF.

The S. C. Johnson & Son Limited Scholarship went to **Joel Gretton**, a University of Guelph student. This award is given out each year to a full-time student in the third or sixth semester of an honours program at a watershed university or a college student in the second year.

GRCF gives out conservation grants

The Grand River Conservation Foundation awarded three Community Conservation Grants to organizations.

- Ruthven National Historic Site near Caledonia for a Butterfly Meadow Senses Project
- Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp & Retreat Centre near New Hamburg to naturalize a former gravel pit
- Rotary Club of Dunnville to beautify the "Muddy the Mudcat" statue area

In addition, conservation grants of \$250 each are being provided to 10 schools. The schools use the grants for naturalization projects. These grants were presented at each school. The winning schools are:

- Cambridge Christian School

- Forest Hill Public School, Kitchener
- King Edward Public School, Kitchener
- Grandview Public School, New Hamburg
- Holy Spirit Catholic School, Cambridge
- Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School Guelph
- Ponsonby Public School, Guelph
- Maryborough Public School, Moorefield
- Central Public School, Guelph
- Victoria Terrace Public School, Fergus

Community Conservation Grants are given out each year by the Foundation.

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Chair	Jane Mitchell
Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Member to be appointed
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Joanne Ross-Zuj
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	Member to be appointed
City of Guelph	Two Members to be appointed
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Sue Foxton, Helen Jowett, Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell, Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth, Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	Member to be appointed
Halton Region	J. Barry Lee
City of Hamilton	Jeanette Jamieson
Oxford County	Bruce Banbury
County of Brant	Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons
City of Brantford	Robert Hillier, Vic Prendergast
Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

Changes to park fees

New 2015 park fees will come into effect Jan. 1.

The rate for a Grand River Parks Membership will remain the same as last year at \$125. The membership includes a booklet of discount coupons for a variety of services such as canoe rental and tubing. This will be the second season of the membership program, which replaced vehicle windshield stickers. The change is proving to be popular.

Daily admission rates are going up by 25 cents. Admission at some parks will cost \$6 for adults and others will be \$5.75. The fee for children will be \$3 at all parks.

The rate structure for overnight camping has been simplified by reducing the number of fee categories. Seasonal camping rates will increase by about three per cent.

In coming up with the new rates, the GRCA looked at statistics from other camping providers in the area.

The report on these changes is available on www.grandriver.ca/meetingreports with the November agenda. The fees will also be posted online at www.grandriver.ca/parks.

New planning fees

New resource planning fees comes into effect Jan. 1, 2015.

This is the third year that fees for minor applications have not increased. However, the new schedule reflects a two per cent increase for permit applications, plan review, title clearance and inquiries.

The number of permit and planning applications changes each year. From October 31, 2013 to October 31, 2014, 675 permit applications were received compared to 732 during the same period in 2012-13. The number of plan review applications went down to 398 during this time period compared to 482 applications in 2012-13.

To date in 2014, no below water table aggregate applications and four large fill permits were

received.

These fees help to cover the cost of staff time for planning, engineering, terrestrial resources and aquatics.

GRCA staff consulted with the Home Builders/GRCA Liaison Committee and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association before setting the new fees.

2014 photo contest winners

Nearly 270 photos were submitted to the GRCA's photo contest and 11 winning photos were selected by a panel of judges.

The Grand Prize photo was snapped by Darlene Hewson of Brantford and depicts Whitemans Creek and the Cleaver Road Bridge in Brant County.

There were winners in three other categories. First place for riverscapes went to George Rosema of Wyoming, Ontario for a photo of the David Street Bridge and Elora Gorge. The second place winner was Sara Hannaford of Caledon for a photo of the Grand River near Belwood. Honourable mentions went to Bill Chan of Stratford and Lisa Cassidy of Brantford.

The Recreational first place winner was Tina McAuley of Waterloo for a photo taken of a canoeist at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area. Second place went to Sarah Gray of Cambridge for a photo of a cyclist at Shade's Mills Conservation Area. Honorable mentions went to Judee Richardson Schofield, Cambridge and Doug Hall, Brantford.

First place in the historic category went to Scott Munro of Rockwood for a photo of relatives playing on the beach at Belwood Lake in 1947. Second place went to Jeff Leader of Glen Morris for a 1920 photo of Old Stone Mill in Glen Morris.

The GRCA also held eight monthly draws for an annual membership to the Grand River Parks. These went to Nick Wagner (Kitchener), Brenda Astins (Fergus), Paul Baron (Arthur), Ron Rhodes (Waterloo), Sy Deeb (Cambridge), Lynn Boehler (New Hamburg), Scott Munro (Rockwood) and



Eleanor Grant (Waterloo).

The winning photographs can be viewed at www.flickr.com/grandriverconservation and will be published in the January/February issue of Grand Actions as well as other GRCA publications. These show the diversity of beautiful landscapes and recreational activities in the watershed today and in the past.

Wastewater optimization underway

GRCA staff are working with watershed municipalities to improve the efficiency of existing wastewater plants.

A GRCA staff member has been hired to work full-time on the wastewater optimization project for three years.

The optimization program helps operators of treatment plants to achieve higher performance from the plants they operate by sharing information, enhancing skills and improving efficiency. The result is cleaner discharges into local waterways.

A comprehensive performance evaluation (CPE) of the Arthur wastewater plant has been completed. An abbreviated evaluation was carried out at the St. George treatment plant and another is scheduled for Mapleton Township's wastewater lagoons near Drayton.

In addition, workshops for wastewater operators took place in November and more are scheduled for early 2015.

Concrete repair work at Wellesley Dam

The water level in Wellesley Pond was drawn down in November in order to repair to the dam.

It took several days to drop the water by about three metres, leaving large mud flats exposed. This was done gradually to minimize silt and to give fish time to move to other parts of the creek. The water continued to flow through the old creek channel at the bottom of the reservoir.

The repair work on the concrete was finished in early December and the pond was set to be refilled for the winter. The dam is owned and operated by the Grand River Conservation Authority. It's believed there's been a dam at the site continuously since the 1860s. The GRCA has owned the dam since 1957.



The winner of the grand prize in the 2014 GRCA Photo Contest was snapped by Darlene Hewson of Brantford. It depicts Whitemans Creek and the Cleaver Road Bridge in Brant County. About 270 photos were submitted to this contest.

Cool November

Four flood messages were issued at the end of November due to a heavy rainfall of about 25 mm that fell overnight Nov. 23.

Generally rainfall was close to or above the long-term average across the watershed during November.

The month was cooler than normal during a year with fluctuations of warmer and cooler months.

The reservoirs are above their normal operating range for this time of year and are now being drawn down to the appropriate winter level. Lake Erie levels are expected to be above the long-term average for the coming months.

The forecast for this winter shows that it will be seasonable and not as cold as last winter.

Winter adventure camps

Winter Adventure Camps are scheduled on four days at nature centres near Brantford, Waterloo and Guelph.

These take place on Dec. 22, 23, 29 and 30 to allow children 6 to 12 to get outside and experience nature during the holidays. Registration is for one or all four days at www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

These programs feature nature-themed

activities and adventures such as snowshoeing, tobogganing, snow sculpture building and animal tracking. The goal is to introduce children to a lifetime of appreciation for the natural world that sustains us all.

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Next board meeting: Friday, Jan. 23 at 9:30 a.m., GRCA Administration Centre.

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