

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Jane Mitchell
Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Guy Gardhouse
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Kelly Linton
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	Chris White
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, 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	George Wicke
Halton Region	Cindy Lunau
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

Chair and vice-chair are returning

Jane Mitchell, a Waterloo Regional Councillor, was acclaimed for a fifth one-year term as chair of the Grand River Conservation Authority in January.

Vic Prendergast, who represents the City of Brantford, was re-elected as vice-chair. A member may only hold the position of chair or vice chair for five years and both will need to step down or seek new positions at the end of this year.

While there was no change in the leadership, half of the board members were newly-appointed for 2015. The other half are reappointed from the previous year.

An orientation meeting took place for all board members on Feb. 18. The GRCA board is made up of 26 members appointed by the municipalities of the Grand River watershed.

New website

The GRCA is working on a new website.

Feedback from users was collected through an online survey and interviews. The Waterloo-based eSolutions Group is assisting the GRCA with this project.

The existing website is extremely popular, with close to 1.1 million unique visits in 2014 and more than 3.2 million page views. However, the design and structure of the website are more than a decade old.

The site is going to be rebuilt to take advantage of improvements in design and technology to make it user-friendly and to expand the range of online services and information.

New snow sensor installed at Luther Marsh

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry provided funding for an automated snow water sensor that will be installed at Luther Dam

this winter.

The sensor will allow snow-pack information to be collected in real time. This information estimate the amount of water on the landscape and helps the GRCA to manage the reservoir system and forecast flooding.

Currently the GRCA manually collects snow-pack information at several stations across the watershed every two weeks. The water volume in the snow pack is combined with rainfall and temperature estimates to produce a forecast for spring thaw and mid-winter snowmelt events.

Collecting more precise real-time data will help with flood forecasting, and with adjusting the reservoir operating strategies in response to climate change.

Winter activities underway

Grand River Parks opened for winter activities in January.

The four parks that offer winter activities are Belwood Lake, Laurel Creek, Shade's Mills and Pinehurst Lake. Activities include ice fishing, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

For this reason, winter activity listings are updated regularly in the Newsroom of the GRCA website.

Secondly, a winter activities page on the website outlines information that doesn't change, such as whether equipment is available to rent and the hours of operation at each location.

Two workshops Feb 10

Conservation Services at the GRCA is offering two workshops for landowners on Feb. 10 at different locations.

One is Trees and Bees in Cayuga at 6:30 p.m. This will provide information on planting to attract pollinators, enhancing shoreline vegetation to protect aquatic species at risk, and creating treed areas for wildlife habitat. This popular workshop was offered in several locations in 2014.



The second is a new workshop being held for the first time about erosion control. Staff from the GRCA will present erosion risk mapping developed for parts of the Upper Nith River watershed. This mapping shows areas of gully formation as well as areas at highest risk for sheet erosion. Specialists from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will discuss steps farmers can take to keep the soil on their land. Topics will include erosion control structures and the use of cover crops.

Dry but cold January

Precipitation in January has been well below the long-term average across the watershed with a low of 45 per cent at Shade's Mills in Cambridge and a high of 77 per cent at Laurel Creek.

This followed a relatively dry December. While December was on average 2.5 degrees warmer than normal, January has been nearly 3 degrees colder than the long-term average, without any real snowmelt. Snow pack is now lower than normal.

However, this followed a wet fall with saturated ground conditions, so there is still a risk of flooding.

The three large reservoirs were within their normal operating range at the end of January. Luther Dam levels are slightly higher than normal, however still within the acceptable range for the time of year.

Community grants available

Applications are now being accepted for grants for schoolyard and community environmental projects.

The grants are offered by the Grand River Conservation Authority and the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Deadline for applications is Feb. 27. Grants will be distributed in the spring to schools and in the fall to community groups.

Community groups can get up to \$1,000 for conservation projects that are tangible and available for use or benefit of the entire community. For example, previous recipients have built a river access point, carried out habitat restoration and planted trees.

Elementary schools in the Grand River watershed can get up to \$750 to pay for natural elements (e.g. trees, shrubs, seeds, plants) of a schoolyard naturalization proj-



Checking the thickness of the ice at Pinehurst Lake in January. Yes, it was safe for ice fishing.

ect.

Details and an application form are available on the www.grcf.ca.

Heritage Day Workshop in Guelph, Feb. 13

Registration is underway for the annual Heritage Day Workshop.

The theme is Timeline/Waterline: Grand Culture at the Confluence. The workshop takes place in Guelph Friday, Feb. 13. It will be about Guelph's connection to World War I and the natural and cultural history of the Guelph area. Registration is free but space is limited so participants must register in advance.

The Heritage Day Workshop is an annual event coordinated by the Heritage Working Group, which is made up of heritage groups from throughout the watershed. The working group was formed to promote the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.

Water exhibit

The Waterloo Regional Museum is bringing in a water-based exhibit from the United States called Ocean Bound.

Museum staff worked with the GRCA, the Region of Waterloo and the Children's Water

Festival on locally-developed material to complement the main exhibit.

This exhibition runs from January 30 to May 10, 2015.

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Feb. 27 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre.

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GRCA budget approved

The GRCA is holding the line on spending in 2015 with a budget that is slightly less than last year.

The 2015 budget is \$29.5 million for programs that protect water quality, reduce flood damages, protect natural areas, support responsible development and provide outdoor recreation and environmental education. This is down about \$256,000 from last year.

Municipalities will contribute about \$10.5 million to the GRCA this year, about 36 per cent of the total budget. That works out to about \$10.39 per resident. The municipal levy is up about 2.5 per cent this year.

Government grants, primarily from the province, are worth about \$3.9 million, representing about 13 per cent of the budget.

Finally, the GRCA generates about \$13.8 million (about 47 per cent per cent) of its own revenue through an assortment of fees and revenue sources including camping fees, park admissions, hydro sales, property rentals, tree sales and donations raised by the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Chair Jane Mitchell noted that even though the GRCA has contained its spending, senior staff are continuing to look for efficiencies and additional revenues. She noted that a number of retirements in the coming year will provide an opportunity to review operations. Some additional parks may open for winter activities, boosting revenues. There may be opportunities to generate more revenue from rental properties, she added.

give flood managers, municipalities and others better information about the potential extent of flooding and its impact on property. It will also assist with flood preparedness.

Improved floodplain mapping has become a priority of the federal government in the wake of serious floods in Calgary and Toronto as well as concerns about the impact of climate change.

Parks reservations system

The new camping reservation system for Grand River Parks opened on March 6, allowing campers to set-up user profiles and become familiar with the system before taking campsite reservations at the end of the month.

All Grand River parks open for online and call centre campsite reservations on Wednesday, April 1 at 9 a.m.

An early booking opportunity for Hillside Festival attendees to reserve campsites at Guelph Lake will be available on Tuesday, March 31 at 9 a.m.

The service, found at www.grcacamping.ca is available 24-hours a day until mid-October. As well, those who want to reserve a campsite by phone can call toll-free at 1-877-558-GRCA (4722), from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday & Sunday.

The GRCA is the second largest campground operator in Ontario offering 2,500 campsites throughout the Grand River watershed. Of the GRCA's 11 parks, eight offer nightly, monthly, and seasonal camping opportunities.

Floodplain mapping grant

The GRCA has received a grant of about \$170,000 from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to investigate new approaches to developing floodplain maps.

These maps will take advantage of improved aerial and digital technology. Most existing floodplain maps across Ontario were developed decades ago and few have been digitized. The maps will

Emerald ash borer

About \$400,000 will be spent this year responding to damage inflicted by the invasive insect.

Most of the money will go to remove hazardous trees in the areas where the infestation is the highest. Some money will also be spent on a continuing program to inoculate about 200 trees against the bug.



River Festival
Riverprize 2000
For excellence in river management



Conservation Ontario
Natural Champions



The Grand River
A Canadian
Heritage River



It was a great winter for people who love outdoor activities and these carried on into March. Big Chill events took place at Guelph Lake and Rockwood Park on Family Day in February. Neither park is normally open during winter, however conditions were ideal, bringing people and raising funds for a new Guelph Lake Nature Centre. This photo was taken at Rockwood.

Risk of spring flood

February's forecast issued by the GRCA anticipated a high risk of flooding this spring.

The forecast was presented at the annual meeting of municipal flood co-ordinators who gathered at the GRCA head office in Cambridge.

Though the weather was relatively dry through December and January, regular snowfalls in January and February resulted in 20 to 50 cm of snow across the watershed by early March. Snow accumulation was highest in the northern part of the watershed in Dufferin and Wellington counties. It was also extremely cold during the winter, with several temperature records broken.

GRCA staff keep a close eye on the situation and issue updates as required through the year, however March and April are especially busy.

The GRCA operates seven reservoirs which are used to capture water from the spring melt. That has the effect of lowering river levels downstream of the reservoirs.

At the end of February, the reservoirs had between 60 and 90 per cent of their storage space available, which sets them up to handle large inflows of water.

Two Rivercams — one at West Montrose and the other in Brantford allow people to check the website to see river conditions throughout the year. River data also provided realtime flow information.

In March residents were reminded to use

extreme caution near all watercourses. Many streams and ditches are hidden by snow, ice cover is unstable, stream banks are slippery, and water is very cold.

With the March Break upon us, parents are reminded to keep children and pets away from watercourses.

Watershed heroes

Do you know a watershed hero?

Nominations for 2015 Watershed Award recipients can come from anyone in the watershed and must be made by May 1.

These awards go to individuals, families, groups and businesses that put their time and energy into improving the Grand River watershed. The GRCA has presented these awards each year since 1976.

More information on the program, including short biographies of past winners and a nomination form, can be found on www.grandriver.ca/awards.

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

A grand talk

Communications manager Dave Schultz will speak about the role the GRCA plays in protecting and managing water April 20 at Waterloo Region Museum at 1:30 p.m.

The talk is associated with the museum exhibit called Ocean Bound that features themed exhibits about watersheds and the

ocean, as well as aquatic animals and ecosystems.

The exhibit also showcases local connections, created in partnership with the GRCA, Region of Waterloo Water Services, the Waterloo Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival, and the University of Waterloo Earth Science Museum.

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March 27 at 9:30 a.m.,
Waterloo Region Museum, Kitchener.

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April 2015 • Volume 20 Number 4

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GRCA camp programs prove popular

March Break adventure camps at Laurel Creek and Guelph Lake nature centres were fully booked with 30 campers at each location.

Apps' Mill Nature Centre offered daily registrations, and was 88 per cent full.

Summer camp registration at five locations (Guelph Lake, Laurel Creek, Rockwood, Apps' Mill and Belwood Lake) opened on Feb. 24, with 1,564 available camper weeks in July and August. By the end of March, more than 45 per cent of the spaces were booked.

The camps provide an opportunity for children to experience nature in a fun, yet educational way.

Dry weather in March

Precipitation in March was well below the long-term average across the watershed, with only 20 to 30 per cent of the normal rainfall.

Most of the snowpack in the central and southern part of the watershed had melted by the end of the month. Cold weather helped slow down the melt and the average temperature at Shand Dam was 5.1 C which is 2.5 degrees colder than the long-term average. Forty-nine days of below freezing temperatures ended on March 10, when the mercury rose to above freezing.

The large reservoirs were all within their normal operating range at the end of March.

Brant Park controlled burn

A controlled burn will take place at Brant Park in early April.

The goal is to maintain and enhance the tall-grass prairie and other native plants on the property owned by the GRCA. The burn will be held when weather conditions allow. There must be several days of dry weather in advance of the burn, and there must be light or no wind on the burn day. About five hectares will be burned.

Fire is a normal part of the life cycle of prairie habitats. Native species can tolerate fire, so burning the land clears out non-native species. Fire also releases important nutrients into the soil, which promotes growth and increases seed yields.

At one time, about 25 per cent of the Grand River watershed was tallgrass prairie. Today, only one per cent remains.

Good winter for parks

Winter programs operated at four parks — Laurel Creek, Shades Mills, Pinehurst Lake and Belwood Lake.

Cold weather and snow conditions led to favourable conditions for ice fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing this year, starting in January and continuing until mid-March.

Park revenue this winter was over \$100,000.

New reservation system

The new park reservation system opened for business on March 31 for the 2015 season.

Only reservations for Guelph Lake's Hillside Festival were taken on the first day and bookings filled quickly. Hillside fans represent the overwhelming majority of customers using the GRCA's reservation system on the first day each year.

The campsite reservation system for all 2,500 campsites at eight parks was activated on April 1. Bookings will continue to be taken until they close Oct. 15.

The new reservation system had been online since March 6 to give customers a chance to learn their way around the new website and to set up a personal account before the system began taking bookings. Campsites may be booked online at www.grcacamping.ca or over the phone by calling 1-877-558-GRCA (4722).

Each summer the GRCA hires approximately 250 students to work in 11 parks.



Aerial river photos

Flights of the river system took place March 18 and 19 to provide aerial photos of ice conditions.

At that time, most of the ice had moved out of the Speed River. The Nith River was partially ice covered, while the Upper Grand and Conestogo Rivers were mostly ice covered.

The southern Grand River had stable ice sheets above the dams in Caledonia and Dunnville, but in many areas the ice was breaking up.

The photos provided information to assist the GRCA with managing the reservoir system during the spring melt.



This view of Shade's Mills Reservoir in Cambridge was taken in mid-March to see how much ice remained on rivers and reservoirs in the watershed. The photos provided information to assist the GRCA with managing the reservoir system during the spring melt.

Queen's Park reception

The GRCA is holding a reception for watershed MPPs at Queen's Park at the end of April.

A similar event took place in 2012. GRCA staff, members of the board and members of the Grand River Conservation Foundation will be on hand to discuss GRCA programs, issues affecting the watershed and to encourage continuing partnerships with the province.

Displays will be focused on those areas where the province and the GRCA can build a stronger working relationship.

10 tree planting events

The public is being invited to get down and dirty at 10 tree planting events across the watershed.

These take place April 19 to May 11 in a variety of communities, sometimes with partner organizations.

The events provide an opportunity for residents from across the watershed to plant trees to benefit the natural environment and the watershed. The majority of plantings take place on GRCA or municipal property.

In 2014, GRCA staff partnered with community organizations to host 1,500 volunteers at 14 events where more than 11,000 trees were planted.

The full list with details about the public events is available online at www.grandriver.ca/events.

Six flood messages

The GRCA issued six flood messages in March.

In the middle of March warm weather moved into the watershed and started to melt snow, resulting in the first watershed conditions statement March 13. A flood watch message was issued March 16 for the entire watershed, noting potential for ice jams in Grand Valley, West Montrose, Brantford and Cayuga as well as flooding on the Nith River.

Updates were issued March 17 and 18, when the southern Grand River was the main area of concern, including Brantford and Cayuga. A termination message was issued March 19.

Warm weather and rain resulted in a water safety conditions statement on March 25.

Watershed heroes May 1

The annual call for nominations for watershed award recipients is underway with a nomination deadline of May 1.

Anyone can nominate someone who they think is deserving of an award — an individual, family, group or business — by completing a simple one-page form. There are two types of awards — Honour Roll Awards for a sustained record and Watershed Awards for

outstanding examples of environmental work.

More information on the program and the nomination form can be found at www.grandriver.ca/awards.

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Successful Brant Park burn

Perfect weather led to a very successful prescribed burn on six hectares of mature tallgrass prairie habitat at Brant Park April 12.

Burns are held periodically to create or improve tallgrass prairie habitat at specific locations on GRCA land. Tallgrass prairies require occasional fires to remove non-native invasive plants and woody plants and help germinate native prairie seeds.

The GRCA hires an experienced contractor to develop and carry out these burns. This will help bring back native species such as little bluestem, Indian prairie grass, green milkweed, round-headed

bushclover and wild bergamot, as well as provide habitat for native wildlife.

Burns require very specific conditions and must be carried out during early April when the weather is dry. Burns have taken place at Brant Park in 2006, 2008 and 2010.

Osprey cam operating

A new webcam is giving watershed residents a bird's eye view of an osprey family living near the gatehouse at Belwood Lake Park.

The nest has been occupied by osprey for several years. A breeding pair arrived back at the Belwood nest on April 8, when the camera had already been put in place.

The live feed was set up on April 25 and at that time, the osprey were sitting on the nest which had two eggs. The camera is now operational and there are three eggs in the nest. The live feed can be viewed at www.grandriver.ca/osprey.

This webcam is a special project that helps people connect with nature, and it generated a lot of interest when it was announced on social media even before the camera went live. Donations were solicited for the set-up cost.

Osprey numbers declined between 1940 and 1970 as a result of eggshell thinning and egg mortality which has been linked to DDT and other

compounds used in pesticides. After DDT was banned in 1972, osprey have come back.

Based on the dates the eggs appeared, they should hatch sometime close to June 2.

Water Festivals

The Grand River Conservation Authority is a proud partner in three children's water festivals that all take place this month and all are celebrating significant anniversaries this year.

The Waterloo Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival (May 25 to 29) turns 20 and was among the first in Ontario. Over the past 20 years, this festival has educated 80,000 Grade 2 to 5 students at Doon Heritage Village and the Waterloo Region Museum in Kitchener. Water consumption is well under the Canadian average for both these municipalities, and the festival has helped bring about that change. The Brantford/Brant Children's Water Festival May 12 to 14 turns 10 this year. It is exclusively for Grade 4 students and about 15,000 from Brantford, Brant and Six Nations have attended this event through the years.

The toddler of the trio is the Haldimand Children's Water Festival which took place for the first time last fall at Taquanayah Nature Centre, Cayuga. This year it will held in September for the second time with funding committed for the next three years.

While the GRCA assists with these festivals, funding comes from donors.

Source protection consultation complete

All public consultation meetings for updates to the Grand River Source Protection and the Long Point Region Source Protection Plan are now complete.

Revised plans will be submitted to the Source Protection Authority in June 2015, with submission to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to follow.

The Ministry has confirmed funding for this



program for the 2015/16 fiscal year, with \$572,000 allocated to staffing and \$909,000 allocated to Tier 3 Water Quantity Risk Assessments.

New Guelph agreement

The GRCA and the City of Guelph have negotiated a new updated maintenance agreement for recreational use of GRCA land within the city limits.

The GRCA has 63 different municipal maintenance agreements across the watershed, many of which date back 30 to 50 years. Four previous agreements with the City of Guelph have expired. The new agreement replaces these four agreements. It also clearly outlines the responsibilities of Guelph for maintaining those lands.

Most GRCA lands are passive parkland, but some have become more actively used with sports fields, playgrounds, trails and swimming facilities. The GRCA owns some land along the rivers and Hanlon Creek Conservation Area within Guelph.

Over the next five years, the GRCA and Guelph will work together to evaluate all the lands and related water infrastructure and determine if the GRCA or the City are the appropriate landowners.

The GRCA owns 19,400 hectares within the watershed, including urban parkland. Many of these land parcels were acquired for flood control purposes or were purchased by the GRCA at the request of the municipality with provincial grants for land acquisition that are no longer available.

Normal weather in April

Precipitation was close to or above average for April, allowing the GRCA to fill the reservoirs to seasonal levels.

Temperatures were 5.8 degrees, which is very close to the long-term average. Daytime highs were above freezing and reached 20 degrees C April 13, however it snowed April 23.

Higher stream flows helped bring the reservoir levels back to their normal operating range. All of the large reservoirs have met the filling target level for April 1 and are on target for May 1.

Lake Erie was slightly below the long-term average at the end of the month. Ice cover on the lake gradually melted throughout the



Photo by Kevin Tupman

A successful controlled burn took place at Brant Park in April to improve the tallgrass prairie habitat. The burn kills invasive plants and gives a boost to native vegetation. This area of the park has been burned in previous years.

month with no ice left at the end of April.

Two watershed conditions statements were issued in April, both for water safety. The first was issued April 2 and warned of rising water levels from precipitation and melting snow. The second on April 9 was based on a forecast of 35 mm of rain. No major flooding occurred during either event.

Foundation turns 50

The Grand River Conservation Foundation dates back 50 years to April 12, 1965, when it received its letters patent from the province.

Over the years it has raised \$11 million for GRCA-related projects and programs. It is gaining momentum, with \$1 million raised in each of the last three years.

As of April, the GRCF has a new logo. The update will help prepare for the next 50 years. The new logo continues themes of water, land and trees, with a new modern twist.



Parks opened May 1

Grand River Parks opened for business May 1 and will close Oct. 15.

The weather on opening weekend was ideal and the camping reservation system is fully functional.

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Park Hill hydro proposal

A proposal for a new hydro plant at Park Hill Dam in Cambridge is being prepared by GRCA staff.

The proposal must be submitted to Ontario Power Authority (OPA) for a new round of projects under the Feed-in Tariff program in July.

The Park Hill Dam project is expected to cost about \$5 million to increase the GRCA's hydro production capacity. It is expected to produce about 500 kwh of power, a little less than the existing Shand Dam facility.

This is the third time that a request has been made under this program, which will guarantee up to 24.6 cents per kilowatt hour for the next 40 years.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation is raising funds to assist with construction costs for this new facility, if it is approved.

The GRCA already operates three hydro generating facilities — at Shand Dam, Conestogo Dam and Guelph Dam.

Niska buildings

The GRCA plans to demolish some vacant buildings on the GRCA's Niska property on the outskirts of Guelph.

The buildings are on the 47-hectare (116-acre) site that was leased to the Niska Wildlife Foundation until 2014. Six buildings are in poor condition and it is expected to cost \$180,000 to \$230,000 to demolish them. However there may be additional costs.

The demolition is part of the site rehabilitation. An additional shed is in good condition and the GRCA is considering moving it to a conservation area.

Despite signs that prohibit trespassing, the buildings have been broken into several times and they are a safety concern. Several kilometres of fencing have been taken down. The Kortright Waterfowl Park operated at this location until 1995.

Emergency training at Rockwood

An emergency training exercise called Exercise Tempest took place at Rockwood Park in May.

This involved many GRCA staff members, including some who were acting as park visitors impacted by a tornado. As well, the OPP, the Guelph/Eramosa Fire Department and Wellington County Emergency Services were called to the park after the phantom tornado hit. Emergency personnel who arrived at the scene faced several challenges all at the same time.

This exercise was undertaken in order to verify the effectiveness of emergency procedures and improve communications.

Dam and dike projects

The GRCA anticipates spending \$1.3 million on dam and dike projects over the next year.

The major projects that will be undertaken are \$200,000 for heaters at Shand Dam to melt ice and a further \$200,000 to restructure the Drayton channel on the Conestogo River. In Brantford about \$150,000 will be needed for dike repair work. A further \$140,000 will be used for railings to improve public safety at several locations.

Several other projects include a dam safety study at Laurel Dam, Conestogo Dam pavement repairs and emergency generator upgrade and embankment repair at Wellesley Dam. An asset management plan for water control structures, and continued dike safety studies for Brantford, Bridgeport and Cambridge dikes are also planned.

Dry warm weather

Only a few years have been drier than 2015 so far.

Rainfall during the first three weeks of May was lowest at six per cent of normal rainfall at Woolwich Reservoir, compared to a high of 40 per cent at Luther Marsh. Fortunately the month of May ended with a significant amount rain over two days that helped to alleviate the dry conditions. At



Shade's Mills, for example, 75.4 mm of rain was recorded during the last two days of May. This is what is normally received during the entire month.

GRCA reservoirs are within the normal operating range and river flows were low during the month. A lot of water coming down the river in May originated in the reservoirs — about 50 per cent through Kitchener, 20 per cent through Brantford and 20 per cent below Guelph in the Speed River.

Temperatures across the watershed were also warmer than normal — about 2.8 degrees above the long-term average for May. This reverses the cold weather trend of the first months of the year.

Groundwater recharge started later in the year than normal and could be less because of the dry weather.

Road resurfacing

The GRCA will spend nearly \$200,000 on road surface treatments this year and the work will be carried out by Cornell Construction Ltd. of Brantford.

The GRCA maintains about 146 kilometres of paved roadways and 11.6 hectares of parking lots. Park and cottage lot roads are heavily used during the summer season.

Cornell Construction was the only bidder on this project and has carried out the surface treatment for the GRCA in previous years.

Conservation grants awarded

Four community groups and 10 schools are receiving Community Conservation Grants from the Grand River Conservation Foundation and the GRCA.

Grants were awarded to qualified groups (i.e. a registered charity), and to elementary schools that are undertaking conservation projects in Grand River watershed communities. Grants support environmental projects that are tangible and available for the use or benefit of the entire community. The grants for \$500 are going to these community groups:

- Arthur Trails Group, for two information kiosks that will be located at each end of the Arthur River Trail in Wellington North
- Pollination Guelph, for a pollinator



GRCA staff, firefighters, police and emergency personnel worked together at a mock emergency at Rockwood Park in May. The goal of this training exercise was to put the emergency response plan for the park to the test and see what improvements could be made for a more effective response during a real emergency. This is one of several scenarios that were underway at the park in the aftermath of a tornado as part of the exercise.

habitat on the grounds of Hospice Wellington in Guelph

- rare Charitable Research Reserve, to establish honey bee hives to improve pollination and education at rare in Cambridge
- Trout Unlimited Middle Grand Chapter, to restore a reach of Hiller Creek in Plattsville

The 10 schools receiving grants of \$300 each for schoolyard greening projects are Branlyn Eco-Club, Brantford; Edna Staebler Public School, Waterloo; Emily C. General Elementary School; Ohsweken, Eramosa Public School, Rockwood; Gateway Drive Public School, Guelph; Holy Family School, Paris; Jean Little School, Guelph; Oneida Central School ECO Club, Caledonia; River Heights School, Caledonia; and St. John Catholic School Parent Council, Arthur.

June events underway

About 35 public events are slated for June that either take place in the parks and nature centres or involve the GRCA.

These include a workshop on windbreaks for landowners June 16, many educational events for families, a few community runs and Friday Night movies each week at Shade's Mills in Cambridge.

Tubing is operating at the Elora Gorge on

weekends. The 1.5 acre pool at Brant Park opens June 12 and the two-acre pool at Byng Island opens June 21. The splash pad at Elora Gorge also opens in the middle of June but the date is not yet firm.

For a full schedule of events, visit www.grandriver.ca/events.

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Funds sought through Canada 150 program

The GRCA has submitted a request for funding for three projects through the Canada 150 Infrastructure Program that was announced by the federal government in May.

The projects would see an elevator added to Apps' Mill Nature Centre, near Brantford, as well as several other improvements to provide easier access for those with mobility challenges. The total cost of these is about \$424,000.

Renovations to the 61-year-old Kay Marston Pavilion at Elora Gorge Park would strengthen the structure, upgrade the kitchen and improve accessibility in the washrooms. This project would cost about \$167,000.

Rehabilitation of the FWR Dickson Nature Trail and boardwalk near Cambridge is the third project that was submitted. The boardwalk would be replaced, the trail network re-established and sections of trail would be restored to provide greater access to more people. This project is estimated to cost \$187,000.

Federal funding through this infrastructure program could cover one-third of the Apps' Mill upgrades and half the cost of improvements to the Kay Marston Pavilion and the FWR Dickson trail. The GRCA and Grand River Conservation Foundation would contribute the remaining funds.

Very wet June

June was a very wet month throughout the watershed.

Rainfall at Conestogo and Guelph dams was more than twice the average rainfall during the month. This resulted from local thunderstorms and watershed-wide rainfall events.

The Low Water Response Team met June 3 and declared a Level 1 condition based on below average precipitation in March, April and May. But by June 17, this condition was removed due to heavy rainfall.

Water levels in the large reservoirs (Shand, Con-

estogo, Luther and Guelph) were in the normal operating range by the end of the month, however high rainfall resulted in numerous reservoir operations to manage these water levels.

The GRCA issued Watershed Safety Statements on June 9, 12 and 26. No major flooding occurred, but high reservoir discharges resulted in flooding of some low-lying areas. Water levels in Lake Erie were also high during the month.

June saw a return to temperatures slightly below the long-term average after above seasonal temperatures in May.

Plans underway for multi-use Grand River trail

The GRCA is among many organizations interested in a multi-use Grand River trail that would incorporate other trails within the watershed.

Two meetings included representatives of local municipalities, tourism organizations and operators, GRCA, local hiking groups and members of the public.

A small steering committee has been formed to develop the trail concept and the first meeting took place June 16. The group has noticed increasing interest in inter-regional trails from all levels of government, organizations and the general public.

The GRCA will not lead this project, but will provide some GIS mapping, meeting facilities and limited administrative support. The eventual goal is for a formal association or other organizational structure to manage future development of the trail.

Snyder's Flats Master Plan

A progress update about the future of Snyder's Flats in Waterloo was presented to the board.

GRCA staff is working on an updated Snyder's Flats Master Plan that outlines appropriate use of the area. This includes consideration of an off-leash dog park. The area does not currently have this type of facility, however many local dog own-





On June 26 two young osprey were removed from their nest at Belwood Lake to be banded by master bird bander David Lamble. From left, Lamble puts a band on the leg of one of the young osprey; close up of the banded feet; and a parent watching over the young once they had been returned to the nest. Banding takes place before the nestlings begin to fly and this is expected at the end of July. Check www.grandriver.ca/osprey for more photos and to watch the live osprey cam.

ers have expressed an interest in establishing an off-leash dog park at this location.

Inventories of plant communities through the seasons will be completed by early July and this is an important element of the master plan. The draft master plan will be completed by the fall. This will be followed by public consultation before the plan is finalized and comes into effect.

Research has been undertaken into off-leash dog parks within southern Ontario and the Grand River watershed as part of this process.

Mill Creek Rangers receive \$10,000

Nestlé Waters Canada announced that it has donated \$10,000 to the Friends of Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers program.

The donation helps to support the Friends of Mill Creek in its efforts to undertake fisheries and stream rehabilitation, including stream bank reconstruction, stream bed regrading, tree planting, culvert replacement and farm fencing repair. The work is performed by the Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers, four local high school students and a crew leader hired over an eight-week period each summer. Educational opportunities are combined with practical experience. The Rangers will complete their work on Aug. 21.

Nestlé Waters has donated \$121,350 to the Friends of Mill Creek since 2003. Many

other local companies have also supported this project through the years.

Tourism award for Elora Gorge

Elora Gorge Park was awarded a certificate of excellence by Tripadvisor.

The popular website considers this “a prestigious award that can only be earned through consistently great reviews”.

When the park opened in 1954, it was Ontario’s first official conservation area and has grown in popularity due to its spectacular scenery, location and numerous recreational opportunities.

50 Things contest

The GRCA is holding a 50 Awesome Things to Do contest between July 4 and Sept. 8.

Participants in nature programs at the Grand River Parks will have the chance to win a weekend for two glamping at Elora Gorge Park, an eco-birthday party or an annual Grand River Parks pass.

The contest encourages participation in family interpretive programs at Grand River Parks. These programs are led by GRCA nature guides. Park visitors can experience nature-themed activities at seven parks within the central part of the Grand River watershed, including Laurel Creek (Waterloo),

Rockwood, Guelph Lake, Shade’s Mills (Cambridge), Pinehurst Lake (near Paris), Brant Park (Brantford) and Elora Gorge.

At each event, people will receive a contest ballot for a chance to win a prize. The more park programs attended, the greater the chance of winning.

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Canadian rowing team at Guelph Lake

The Canadian National Men's Rowing Team is using Guelph Lake for a training camp this summer as it prepares for an Olympic qualifying event.

That means other boaters will have to take care as they travel around the lake. The team is practising July 24 to Aug. 14 to prepare for the Olympic qualifying regatta in France. They will be holding two or three practice sessions a day in a special course set aside for their use. The practices will usually be held at 7 a.m., 11 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. In addition, the team may also row in other parts of the lake.

As a safety precaution during practice times, other boaters are asked to avoid entering or crossing through the race course to avoid interfering with the rowing shells. The training camp is hosted by the Guelph Rowing Club, which has its home base at Guelph Lake.

New controlled gates at Grand River Parks

Shade's Mills Park will be the first Grand River Park to have access-controlled gates, which will be installed this fall.

Installation of this type of gate was recommended through business plans that were prepared for each of the conservation areas in 2012.

The new gate will allow visitors with a membership to gain entry to the park using their membership card. Others will be able to pay the entrance fee at the gate using automated equipment.

The automated gate may be used for year-round access to Grand River Parks and will reduce staffing and overtime costs. Shade's Mills now has an "honour box" where visitors can deposit their fees, but few people use the fee box. The GRCA's new membership card system was put in place in 2013 to replace the vehicle window sticker.

Over the next five years, controlled access gates will be installed at all 11 Grand River Parks: Brant

Park and Laurel Creek in 2016, Pinehurst Lake and Rockwood in 2017, Belwood Lake and Guelph Lake in 2018, Byng Island and Elora Gorge in 2019 and Conestogo Lake and Luther Marsh in 2020.

Key West Industries of Guelph won the contract to supply the gate, cash station, card reader and other related equipment at Shade's Mills at a cost of about \$40,000. The total cost of the new gates at all the parks is estimated to be \$417,000.

Filming at Rockwood

Rockwood Conservation Area continues to be popular for film producers.

An episode of *Reign*, a television series about Mary, Queen of Scots, was filmed on July 13 at Rockwood and is expected to air this November.

A new children's movie, *Bark Ranger*, has been released on DVD. This movie was filmed almost entirely in the park last summer.

Pollinator garden at Guelph Lake

TDI International of Guelph was awarded a contract to create the Operation Pollinator Garden at Guelph Lake Park.

This will be installed on a 3.7-hectare (nine-acre) parcel of land near the main park entrance as part of the planned Guelph Lake Nature Centre Complex. TDI will excavate two ponds and create viewing mounds that will be surrounded by interpretive and recreational trails. These will provide teaching opportunities associated with nature centre programs. An outdoor classroom and amphitheatre are included in the design, but are not part of the project.

Excavation of the ponds and creation of mounds is the first phase of the project. The tender was issued May 15. There were eight bids on the project, and TDI's was the lowest bid for \$96,000 plus taxes.

A donation of \$100,000 from Syngenta will be used for this project. The donation came through



the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Work got underway in late July.

A combination of aquatic and wetland plants will be planted in the ponds, while native meadow plants and wildflowers will be planted in the pollinator garden. A variety of native trees will also be planted.

Stocco named new communications manager

Lisa Stocco, a communications professional with more than 15 years in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, becomes the Manager of Communications for the Grand River Conservation Authority on Aug. 4.

She joins the GRCA from the Halton Catholic District School Board where she has worked since 2003. She served in several posts, most recently as manager of strategic communications. Prior to joining the school board, she was the assistant manager of public and media relations at the former Intesa Bank Canada. Stocco holds a degree in mass communication and French studies from York University, and a post-graduate certificate in journalism from Humber College. She is an accredited member (APR) of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) where she currently serves as co-president of CPRS Hamilton.

Stocco replaced Dave Schultz as communications manager. Schultz joined the GRCA's communication department in 2002 and will be staying at the GRCA to help develop a new GRCA website until his retirement at the end of the year.

New amphitheatre at Shades Mills

Construction of a new amphitheatre and trails in the area above the beach at Shade's Mills Park in Cambridge is underway.

The amphitheatre will accommodate up to 75 people and will be used for the very popular Movies Under the Stars series on Friday nights. It will also be used for nature centre programs and special events.

Visitors will notice construction of this \$30,000 project underway until mid-September. A stage and upgraded projection system are also part of this project. Accessible trails will be winding through the area and will eventually link the beach, parking lot and amphitheatre areas.



Photo by Bill Chan

Luther Marsh, July 29: GRCA staff counted 76 egrets, four active heron nests (all with young still on the nest), five ospreys, a pair of sandhill cranes, a single loon, several hundred swallows and more. Luther is a birding hotspot within the watershed.

Contract for union staff

The GRCA board voted in support of a new three-year collective agreement which covers 111 full-time, part-time and seasonal staff who are members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

The previous collective agreement expired at the end of 2014 and negotiations for a new agreement concluded on July 8. The agreement provides for a wage increase of 1.5 per cent in 2015 and 2 per cent in each of 2016 and 2017.

expected to drop slightly over the rest of the year.

Reservoirs are at or slightly above the normal operating range for this time of year. River augmentation has been less this year than is typical for July.

Dry July follows wet June

Although rainfall was below average in many parts of the watershed, the wet conditions in June left the ground saturated in July.

Rainfall in July was about average only at Conestogo and Woolwich reservoirs. The two locations with the lowest recorded rainfall for the month were Brantford at 51 per cent and Shand Dam at 38 per cent. Intense storm events resulted in high runoff early in the month.

July was also slightly cooler than average for the first three weeks, but then it heated up toward the end of the month with temperatures reaching 35 C in some locations.

Water levels in Lake Erie are well above the long-term average. However, the lake is

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Good summer for revenue

A combination of sunny weekends and rainy weekdays has led to good revenue for the GRCA this summer.

Year-to-date park revenue is approximately \$800,000 higher than it was at the same time last year. Park revenue is generally closely tied to favourable weather for those who enjoy outdoor recreation. This increase may also be due to additional marketing efforts by the GRCA.

The GRCA's three hydro turbines have also been operating at full capacity due to rain that has mostly fallen on weekdays. The turbines have been generating a lot of power, which means the GRCA has higher revenue from this source as well.

Hydro production can be viewed on the GRCA's website at www.grandriver.ca/riverdata.

Three GRCA projects

Funding is in place for three projects to improve recreational facilities in 2016.

Improvements will be made to Apps' Mill Nature Centre in Brant County, as well as the Kay Marston Pavilion at the Elora Gorge Conversation Area. The boardwalk at the FWR Dickson Nature Trail just south of Cambridge will also be restored.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation will also help fund these projects on behalf of the GRCA.

Dam and dyke projects

Three tenders for dam and dyke projects have been approved.

Bronte Construction will repair concrete slabs along the Brantford dykes for \$226,000.

Belwood Electric Ltd. will supply and install gain heaters to melt ice at the Shand Dam gates, for about \$255,000.

Rehabilitation of a small section of the Conestogo River near Drayton will be carried out by R & M Construction of Acton at a cost of \$258,000.

These projects will be funded by the GRCA levy and matched by the provincial Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program.

Work on these projects gets underway in September with completion expected by the end of the year.

Provincial review underway of conservation act

The province is reviewing the Conservation Authorities Act and comments related to a provincial discussion paper about the act are sought before Oct. 19.

The review of the act is focused on governance, funding mechanisms and the roles and responsibilities of conservation authorities. A working group of Conservation Ontario, the association of conservation authorities, is preparing a response to the discussion paper.

The GRCA's report on the issue was presented at the board meeting. It will be forwarded to partner watershed municipalities for consideration. Any resulting changes will be discussed at the GRCA's September board meeting, before being forwarded on to the province.

Caledonia mill proposal

A private group seeking to rebuild the Caledonia Mill and turn it into office space made a presentation to the GRCA board.

The mill was constructed in 1856 and operated as a mill until 1965. The interior of the building has not been used for 50 years. It is designated as an historic building and is a landmark for Haldimand County. Attempts by others to re-purpose and restore the mill have not succeeded.

This group plans to take the building down and rebuild it with a similar footprint. Components of the building as well as the foundation will be reused where possible. The intent is to maintain a similar structure, aside from an overhang that was a late addition onto the front of the building. The overhang will be removed to allow a river trail to continue through the property.





It has been a great summer to get out and enjoy Grand River Parks. This young man was enjoying the Byng Island pool for the first time.

The mill is in an area that is regulated by the GRCA. Planning staff will report back on the project after they review the details of the proposal. The project has been endorsed by Haldimand County.

Water conservation urged in some areas

The low water response team decided Aug. 5 to place the lower Nith, Eramosa and Whitemans subwatersheds at Level 1 under the Ontario Low Water Response Plan.

By Sept. 2 this changed to Level 2 on Whitemans Creek. The team noted water levels in the creek dropped to below half of the average summer flow.

Also on Sept. 2, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry asked anglers to refrain from fishing in Whitemans Creek. Low water levels and high water temperatures can put the fish under stress, which can be compounded by fishing.

Level 1 means water users are asked to cut their consumption by 10 per cent, because stream flows were below normal summer levels. Level 2 is a request for a voluntary 20 per cent reduction in water consumption by holders of water permits.

August had variable rain

Rainfall in many areas in the central and northern watershed was above average for August, while the southern watershed was drier than average.

For example, only about half the normal

rain fell in Brantford, while Conestogo's rainfall was 37 per cent above average.

August was 0.6 degrees warmer than the long-term average at the Shand Dam, where daytime temperatures there averaged in the mid- to high-20s, with one day reaching 30 degrees. But the central and southern watershed was warmer. Shade's Mills in Cambridge recorded daytime highs at or above 30 degrees on seven days.

Lake Erie remains above the long-term lake level. It is most likely that the lake levels will drop over the rest of the year, but will remain higher-than-normal. Reservoir levels in Shand, Luther and Guelph are within the normal range, while Conestogo is slightly above the normal range.

River augmentation increased slightly in August. On average, reservoir water accounted for about 60 per cent of the flow through Kitchener.

Planting trees for trout

A free workshop in Burford will help property owners learn about things they can do on their land to help improve the fish habitat in nearby waterways.

The Trees and Trout Workshop will be held Tuesday, Sept. 15 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Scott family property in Burford. A rain date has been scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2015.

The focus of the workshop is on planting native trees, shrubs and plants to create habitat and improve water quality in the nearby creek. The workshop will also pro-

vide information about funding opportunities for water quality improvement projects, and will include an electrofishing demonstration, weather permitting.

The workshop is an initiative of the GRCA's Conservation Services.

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Wastewater optimization improves water quality

More wastewater plants within the Grand River watershed are finding ways to make the best of what they have in order to improve water quality.

The wastewater optimization program began in 2010 and has now been extended to all municipal wastewater treatment plants across the watershed. The program brings wastewater operators together for meetings, workshops and hands-on training.

Participants share their experience to make improvements not only at their wastewater plants, but also at other operators. The program taps the full potential of existing wastewater infrastructure and promotes excellence in infrastructure management.

Like the GRCA's Rural Water Quality Program, it is a voluntary program, which is open to all municipal operators.

Annual watershed-wide wastewater reports are providing data that is another key ingredient to making improvements. Reports for 2012 and 2013 are complete, and the one for 2014 is underway.

Warm dry September

September was both drier and warmer than normal.

Only one-quarter of the monthly rain fell at Shand Dam, which received the lowest rainfall during the month.

The average temperature for the month was five degrees above the long-term average of 14 degrees. The warm dry weather is likely due to El Niño, a warm water stream in the Pacific that could bring a warm, dry winter to the Grand River watershed and Ontario.

Water levels in the large reservoirs were within or slightly above normal at the end of September, but less water has been flowing into the reservoirs due to dry conditions.

On average, about 70 per cent of the river flowing through Kitchener is from the reservoirs, while reservoir water accounts for 40 per cent of

the flow at Brantford and 50 per cent of the flow below Guelph.

The Level 2 Low Water Response issued Sept. 2 continues to be in effect for water users in the Whitemans Creek sub-watershed in Brant and Oxford counties.

Herbicide used at Snyder's Flats

Portions of the Snyder's Flats Conservation Area near Bloomingdale were closed to the public Sept. 14 to 18 while herbicide was used to control a limited area of Phragmites, a very invasive plant.

Phragmites came to North America from Eurasia and it spreads quickly. It out-competes native species for water and nutrients and releases toxins from its roots into the soil that hinder the growth of surrounding plants. Phragmites reduces the habitat available to wetland wildlife birds, amphibians and reptiles.

A licensed applicator applied glyphosate, also known as Roundup, which was applied by hand to individual plants. This practice has been adopted by conservation organizations as a safe and effective way to remove invasive species.

Phragmites control plan

The natural heritage department is developing a management plan for Phragmites at a property along the southern Grand River.

Nearly \$6,000 was provided for this plan by the province through the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. The funding has allowed mapping of Phragmites to determine the location and development of a plan to bring it under control. The mapping shows that 21 per cent of the 65- hectare property is covered with Phragmites.

While Phragmites is a problem throughout the province, it is a special concern at this location — one of only areas in Ontario where an endangered plant, Virginia mallow, grows. Controlling the Phragmites is an essential step in ensuring that the



Virginia mallow will continue to thrive throughout the riparian habitat.

Virginia mallow is a perennial that can grow up to three metres tall. It has clusters of white flowers that bloom in late summer.

Once the Phragmites plan is complete, the next step will be to find funding to implement the plan and bring the Phragmites under control.

New Nolan Melchin Outdoor Classroom

On Saturday, Oct. 3, the Nolan Melchin Memorial Outdoor Classroom at Laurel Creek Nature Centre in Waterloo will officially open.

The 11 a.m. ceremony will celebrate Nolan's life and will include an interactive animal show, bug hunt, frog slosh, dragonfly count, face painting and crafts at the new discovery tables.

Nolan Melchin passed away on March 28, 2013, following a courageous battle with an aggressive brain tumour. Since his passing, Nolan's family and friends have raised \$30,000 for this outdoor classroom.

Reduced river flows downstream of Shand Dam

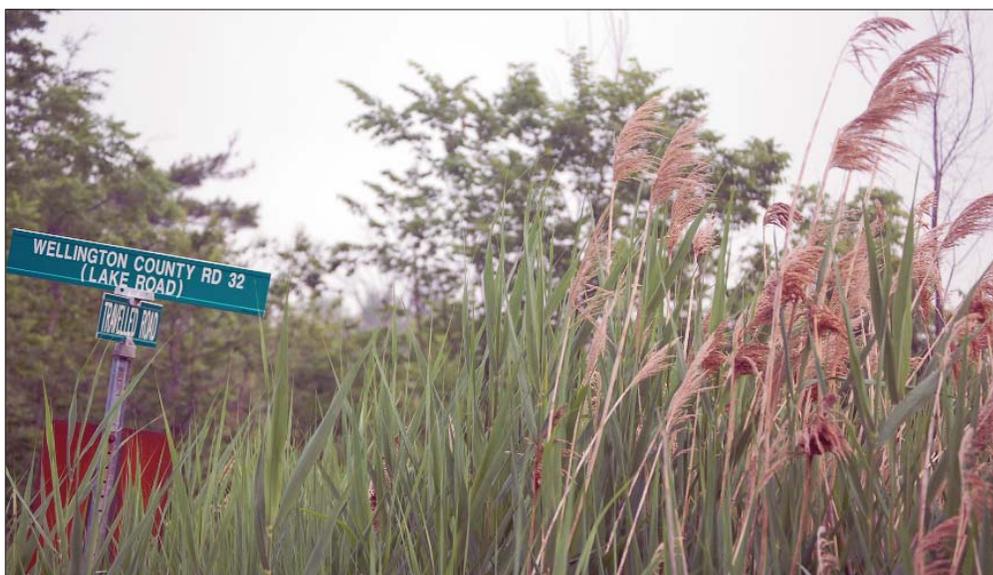
The GRCA had to reduce flows downstream of Shand Dam to approximately three cubic metres per second (m³/s) for a few days toward the end of September.

The flow was reduced while Bissell Dam in Elora was being repaired, but flows were brought back up by Sept. 25. By this time, the repairs were completed and flows returned to normal for the tail end of the trout season.

Flows were also reduced in this section of river during the week after Labour Day in order to facilitate a fisheries enhancement project being completed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry upstream of West Montrose.

New chair for source protection

Wendy Wright-Cascaden has been appointed as the acting chair of the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee.



Phragmites, also called European common reed, is a very tall invasive reed. The GRCA is taking steps to bring it under control at Taquanyah and Snyder's Flats. Once you know what it looks like, you will notice it in roadside ditches throughout the watershed.

She has replaced Craig Ashbaugh, who served as chair for eight years. Wright-Cascaden is a Waterloo resident who has been a Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee member since 2007 and was been actively involved in the development of the plans.

She chaired the Municipal Working Group responsible for drafting the policies, some public consultation meetings and, more recently, the Implementation Working Group. She is a retired professional planner with over 35 years municipal experience.

Short-term trail closings in Drayton and Brantford

Rehabilitation of a 500-metre section of a channel on the Conestogo River in Drayton began the week of September 21 and will be completed by mid to late October.

During construction, the section of the trail that runs along the Conestogo River from Main Street to Mill Street is closed to the public. Barriers have been placed at both ends of the trail.

Repair to a 200-metre section of concrete slabs protecting the Brantford Dyke, just downstream of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, is set to begin the week of Oct. 5 and will be completed in late November. During construction, the section of the Trans Canada Trail that runs along the top of the dyke will be closed to the public and parking will be restricted at the entrance.

Order trees now

Landowners can order trees to be planted in the spring 2016 starting Oct. 2.

Trees to be planted by the GRCA must be ordered before Dec. 1, and those to be planted by landowners can be ordered before March 1, 2016.

To order trees and find out the details visit <https://www.grandriver.ca/TreeOrders>.

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Vice-Chair	Vic Prendergast
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Guy Gardhouse
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Kelly Linton
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	Chris White
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Elizabeth Clarke, Sue Foxton, Helen Jowett, Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell, Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth, Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	George Wicke
Halton Region	Cindy Lunau
City of Hamilton	George Stojanovic
Oxford County	Bruce Banbury
County of Brant	Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons
City of Brantford	Dave Neumann, Vic Prendergast
Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

2015 Watershed Awards

The GRCA held the 40th annual awards event on Oct. 15.

The top award — the Honour Roll award — went posthumously to **Brad Whitcombe** who passed away suddenly a year ago as a result of a rare illness. He undertook many environmental initiatives, including co-founding the Friends of Mill Creek and Wellington Green Legacy.

Six 2015 Watershed Awards were also given out. These went to **Bill Christmas** (Caledonia), founding president of the Ted Knox Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada; **Derek Lippert** and **J.P. Bartle** of The Grand River Adventure (Ayr), who paddle the Grand River each spring to raise funds to plant trees and increase awareness about water issues; long-time GRCA board member **Barry Lee**, who represented Halton Region; **Bob Scott** (Brantford), who has had a hand in many environmental initiatives in Brantford over many years; **Waterloo Region Nature** for environmental education and monitoring, protecting wildlife and supporting wise policies that increase biodiversity; and **Dr. Hugh Whiteley** (Guelph), a retired University of Guelph hydrologist who developed the program used by the GRCA and other conservation authorities to forecast flooding. Award nominations for 2016 can be made anytime by anyone.

Information session on Snyder's Flats plan

The GRCA is holding a public information session to present the Snyder's Flats Management Plan on Monday, Nov. 9, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Centre, 1031 Snyder's Flats Road, Bloomingdale.

The GRCA is in the final stages of completing the draft plan for its Snyder's Flats Conservation Area. Display boards and copies of the draft plan will be available at the information meeting, and GRCA staff will be on hand to answer questions. The management plan is expected to be presented to the GRCA board on Friday, Dec. 18.

Information will also be presented regarding the GRCA's consideration of Snyder's Flats as an off-

leash dog area. In August, 2014, the GRCA began conducting research into design and operation of off-leash dog areas, in response to a request received from the public to consider designating Snyder's Flats as an off-leash dog area. The session will also include a site assessment of Snyder's Flats that, based on the evaluation criteria, will specify whether or not the property is suitable for off-leash dogs.

G.M. Mac Coutts Tract

A property near the headwaters of the Grand River is being named the G.M. Mac Coutts Tract.

Gordon Mac Coutts served as the general manager of the GRCA from the time that it formed in 1966 when two founding organizations — the Grand River Conservation Commission and the Grand Valley Conservation Authority — joined together.

Coutts retired from this post in 1992. Many partnerships and current GRCA programs got underway thanks to his leadership.

Environmental scholarships

Three scholarships were given by the Grand River Conservation Foundation to support students attending post-secondary institutions in the watershed.

The SC Johnson Environmental Scholarship of \$4,000 went to Callee Marie Rice, University of Waterloo. The Allan Holmes Scholarship of \$3,000 went to Laura Sauder, University of Waterloo and the McEwen Clean Water Prize of \$3,000 went to Joel Gretton, University of Guelph.

Scholarships are awarded by the Foundation each year.

Farmers get help to improve water quality

The successful Rural Water Quality Program (RWQP), now in its 18th year of operation provides financial assistance to qualifying landowners



to share the cost of implementing selected best management practices that improve water quality.

So far, farmers in the Grand River watershed have received over \$16 million in grants to help complete more than 5,400 projects to protect water quality on farms.

Grants range from 50 to 100 per cent of the project's cost, with the balance paid by the landowner. Eligible projects include erosion control structures, cover crops, manure storage facilities, fencing livestock from creeks, tree planting, fuel storage, well upgrades and well plugging projects. Farmers must have completed an Environmental Farm Plan on their property to be eligible for grants. Eligible projects vary by county.

The program is largely funded by most municipalities in the watershed. The total value of all the investments in clean water projects since the program began is more than \$44 million.

For more information on RWQP grants, landowners can contact 519-621-2761 or ruralwater@grandriver.ca.



One Honour Roll Award and six Grand River Conservation Awards were given out by the GRCA in October 2015. From left (back row) are GRCA Chair Jane Mitchell, Lise Burcher (receiving a posthumous Honour Roll Award for Brad Whitcombe), Bill Christmas, Bob Scott, GRCA CAO Joe Farwell, Barry Lee, (front row) JP Bartle, Josh Shea (representing Waterloo Region Nature) and Derek Lippert. Award recipient Hugh Whiteley was unable to attend.

Typical October weather

Dry weather continued well into October, until the remnants of Hurricane Patricia arrived at the end of the month, bringing heavy rain.

The GRCA issued a watershed conditions statement Oct. 28 due to heavy rain and high water levels, but no major flooding. A high lake level warning for the Lake Erie shoreline was also issued due to high winds that accompanied the storm.

Total monthly rainfall was close to or over the long-term average after the storm, which brought 35 mm to Shades Mills in the middle of the watershed and over 40 mm south of Brantford.

October was typical of autumn weather with several days of light rain and a few intense rainfall events. Some parts of the watershed recorded the first traces of snow.

The month was also a degree warmer than the average temperature of 7.7 C at the Shand Dam climate station, resulting in the second month in a row with above-average temperatures.

Reservoirs were within the normal operating range for this time of year. Augmentation of river flows from the reservoirs was fairly high in October. However it decreased at the

end of the month.

Crowdfunding boost

A "Join Dan" crowdfunding initiative got underway in October and will continue until Dec.23.

This was set up by the Grand River Conservation Foundation to channel funds to help build the new Guelph Lake Nature Centre. Dan Schneider retired from his position of senior resource interpreter at Guelph Lake and is central to this fundraising campaign.

Donors will be rewarded with a number of unique gift opportunities, including T-shirts, engraved stepping stones that will be placed on a trail around the new facility, or a movie night on the Guelph Lake island.

A link to this initiative is on the GRCA website's home page.

50 Things contest

From July 4 to Sept. 8, the GRCA ran the "GRCA 50 Things" contest.

Mark Sayewich of Guelph won the grand prize of a two-night glamping retreat at the GRCA's Elora Gorge Park. Randy Whiteford of Cambridge won second prize, a Grand River Parks membership pass that provides a

year of free access to all 11 parks.

The contest highlighted opportunities to get outside and explore nature at the Grand River Parks and nature centres. It attracted 1,200 entries.

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Chris White

City of Guelph
Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury

Region of Waterloo
Les Armstrong, Elizabeth Clarke,
Sue Foxton, Helen Jowett,
Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell,
Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth,
Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch

Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East
George Wicke

Halton Region Cindy Lunau

City of Hamilton George Stojanovic

Oxford County Bruce Banbury

County of Brant
Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons

City of Brantford
Dave Neumann, Vic Prendergast

Haldimand and Norfolk Counties
Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

Award for dam safety

The Canadian Dam Association has recognized the GRCA with a corporate award for work in the area of dam safety.

This is an award related to advancing dam safety and the GRCA has been recognized by its peers within the Canadian dam safety community.

The award itself says that it “recognizes valued contributions, commitment and support of advancement of knowledge and safe management of dams.” The GRCA has been improving its dam safety program over many years to bring it to the rigorous program that it is today.

The GRCA operates 27 dams. Seven of these are actively used to manage river flows within the watershed and are classified as multi-purpose dams. These dams serve two key functions — controlling floods and supplying water to the river when there is not much rainfall. Other benefits include hydro production and recreation in the reservoirs that are created by the dam system.

The GRCA’s other 20 dams are generally run-of-the-river dams or earthen embankment dams with small head ponds.

Changes to park fees

New 2016 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 activities such as canoe rental, ski rental and tubing. This will be the third season of the membership program, which replaced vehicle windshield stickers. The change is popular.

Daily admission rates are going to be constant at all parks: \$6 for adults and \$3 for children. Many parks had the \$6 fee in 2015, but for some the fee was \$5.75.

The rate structure for overnight camping has been simplified and 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.

Ice storm funding received

The GRCA has been reimbursed for cleanup costs that came in the wake of the severe ice storm in December 2013.

The cleanup of hazard trees on GRCA-owned land took six months. The GRCA submitted a claim for \$548,000 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by the December 2014 deadline. The province reimbursed the GRCA in two payments--\$192,000 this past April and the balance of \$351,000 in October. This is \$5,000 shy of the overall claim.

This money is going back into the GRCA reserves, which is where it initially came from.

Source Protection Plan approved in December

The GRCA announced Dec. 3 that the plan to protect the sources of municipal drinking water in the Grand River watershed was approved by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and will take effect July 1, 2016.

The Grand River Source Protection Plan was approved by Minister Glen Murray. The plan and its associated documents are available at www.sourcewater.ca.

The source protection planning process began in 2006, when the Ontario government passed the Clean Water Act to protect the sources of municipal drinking water throughout the province. The plan is based on technical studies, collaborative policy development and public consultation.

The process was guided by the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee, which is made up of representatives from municipalities, business, industry, farmers, landowners and other stakeholders. The committee also developed plans for



the Catfish Creek, Kettle Creek and Long Point Region watersheds.

New planning fees

New resource planning fees comes into effect Jan. 1, 2016.

The fees remain the same as last year for minor applications. But the new schedule reflects a two per cent increase for permit applications, plan review, title clearance and inquiries.

The number of permits and planning applications changes each year. To Oct. 31, 2015, 650 permit applications were received, compared to 671 in 2014 and 753 in 2013.

To date in 2015, there have not been any below water table aggregate applications, while only one large fill permit was received.

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

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

Warm weather trend

Precipitation in the northern part of the watershed was near the long-term average through November, but well below average in the southern watershed.

The first significant snowfall was recorded Nov. 21 and 22, with over 20 cm of snow at Luther Marsh. But warm weather that followed meant this snow melted and river levels went up.

For the third month in a row, temperatures have been above average, due to El Niño. The average temperature in November at Shand Dam was 5.7 degrees, which is 4.7 degrees above the long-term average. The thermometer reached 20 degrees in November on some days and in some locations, which is rare for the time of year.

The level of Lake Erie is well above the long-term average. Lake Erie shoreline flood messages were issued on Oct. 28 and Nov. 12 due to high winds that caused the lake to rise at Port Maitland. Some minor flooding was reported as a result of the second incident. Reservoirs are slightly above normal.

The Grand River Low Water Response Team removed the Low water conditions on



Photo by Anne Loeffler

This was the first major snowfall at first light on the morning of Nov. 22 near the Nith River. However, the warm rays of the sun melted the snow quickly. We are likely to have a mild winter due to the warming impact of El Niño.

Nov. 9; it had been in place since Aug. 6 through the Lower Nith, Eramosa, Mckenzie and Whitemans subwatersheds.

www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

These programs feature nature-themed activities with the goal of introducing children to a lifetime of appreciation for the natural world.

Two GRCA houses to be demolished

The GRCA will demolish two vacant houses in Erin Township that are on property that the GRCA has owned since the mid-1970s.

Houses are sometimes part of larger property acquisitions that have been made by the GRCA. These two 1940s bungalows on Highway 125 share one driveway. They were initially rented out, but are now vacant.

Demolition of vacant houses on GRCA-owned property reduces liability.

Winter adventure camps

Winter Adventure Camps are scheduled at Laurel Creek and Guelph Lake nature centres during the winter holidays.

The camps take place Dec. 21-23 and Dec. 29-31 at Guelph Lake and Dec. 21-22 and Dec. 29-30 at Laurel Creek.

These camps allow children 6 to 12 to get outside and experience nature during the holidays. Registration is available

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