



Advisory role in resource planning

December 2014

One of the key responsibilities of the Grand River Conservation Authority is to assess changes in land use in or near the natural resources of the watershed.

The GRCA does this by:

- controlling development in and around natural areas such as wetlands and floodplains, through the permit process; and
- providing advice on planning and land-use matters to municipalities as well as provincial and federal agencies.

The process for issuing permits is based on Ontario Regulation 150/06 which is supplemented by a number of policies approved by the GRCA board. (This process is described in more detail in the Background Briefing entitled "Permits for Development in Regulated Areas.")

The GRCA's role as a planning advisor is authorized by several provincial and federal Acts, regulations and agreements. The GRCA also has agreements with watershed municipalities to provide planning and technical advice.

Advisory role to municipalities

The GRCA provides advice to municipalities on development applications under The Planning Act. The focus is on natural hazards (e.g. floodplains, steep slopes, stormwater management, wetlands, Lake Erie Shoreline) and natural heritage (e.g. woodlands, fisheries).

The GRCA will provide policy wording and mapping for



Stormwater management is one issue addressed by GRCA technical staff during the review of a subdivision plan.



The GRCA provides advice to municipalities on the impact of development on environmental features.

officials plans, comprehensive zoning bylaws and community plans or secondary plans. GRCA staff will review applications for official plan and zoning changes, plans of subdivision, severances, condominium applications, site plan approvals and others.

These services are implemented through service agreements with participating municipalities or as a part of the GRCA's overall watershed programs.

GRCA technical staff review the application and technical reports for potential impact of development on water quality, water quantity, hydrology, hydrogeology, storm water management, slope stability and other matters. Advice is provided to the municipality on how environmental issues can be addressed in municipal planning documents, or by the proponent of a development in a Planning Act application

In many cases, the advisory service also ensures that any permits issued by the GRCA meet current technical and policy requirements.

Environmental Assessments

Environmental assessments are required under provincial law to evaluate the potential effects or benefits of projects undertaken by municipalities, the province or other agencies, including the GRCA. They are done under the Environmental Assessment Act to identify and manage the

potential effects of a project before implementation. An environmental assessment balances economic, social, cultural and natural environmental needs.

The GRCA receives notices of projects under the Environmental Assessment Act. When there are elements of a project that may have an impact on an area of interest to the conservation authority, GRCA staff participate in the process by providing comments, technical support and/or participating on a steering or technical committee.

The GRCA staff will provide advice and comments to the municipality or provincial agency conducting the EA. If the project is approved, GRCA staff may also have to review permit applications if any are required.

Staff provide notice to the board of new EAs and comments on the potential impacts of an EA through monthly reports.

Provincial roles

Various provincial acts and agreements give conservation authorities a role to represent provincial interests in planning matters.

● **Resource management responsibilities:** Under the Conservation Authorities Act, the GRCA is responsible for developing programs that reflect the resource management needs of the watershed. The GRCA board has approved policies and programs in areas such as flood damage reduction, water quality, water supply, protecting



GRCA planning staff will meet with a proponent on site to learn more about a proposal.



A proposed development will be reviewed to assess the potential impact on natural features.

natural areas, watershed planning, environmental education and recreation.

● **Provincial interest in plan review:** The Ministry of Natural Resources has delegated responsibility to conservation authorities to represent provincial interests in planning matters near floodplains, dynamic beaches, erosion areas and other natural hazards identified in Section 3.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement 2005. The GRCA reviews and provides comments on municipal policy documents (e.g. official plans and comprehensive zoning bylaws) as well as applications submitted to municipalities under The Planning Act.

● **Status as a commenting agency:** The GRCA has been identified as a commenting agency under several provincial acts including The Planning Act, Clean Water Act, Environmental Assessment Act, Drainage Act, Aggregate Act, Places to Grow and others. These Acts require that the GRCA be notified of applications so it can provide comment as the local resource management agency.

The GRCA as a landowner

The GRCA owns about 20,000 ha (50,000 acres) of land in the watershed.

It may become involved in the planning process as the owner of land adjacent to a proposed development.

It may also be involved as the proponent of a planning application. In a situation where the GRCA is the applicant, an alternative conservation review mechanism is established in consultation with the municipality.