



Background Briefing

Communications

December 2014

The communications department provides a wide range of services for the GRCA and the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Media relations

A key responsibility of the communications department is to handle media relations. The department issues press releases about GRCA activities and programs and distributes news feature stories for the use of media outlets. The department also takes calls from reporters and either provides the information directly or works with staff from other departments to get the information.

In 2010 the department issued about 85 news releases. Typically, GRCA releases are well used.

Members of the public can receive news releases and other GRCA information by subscribing, free of charge, to the GRCA News Service. Subscribers get e-mail versions of releases at the same time they are sent to the media. The service is particularly useful to those who live in flood-prone areas who can get flood warning messages directly.

The department also tracks what's being said and written about the GRCA and watershed issues by monitoring the media. The communications department subscribes to a commercial monitoring service as part of a group of 10 conservation authorities. Google News, RSS feeds and website reviews are also used.



Communications staff get the GRCA's message out to watershed residents.

Publications

The communications department is responsible for a wide range of publications.

- **GRCA Current:** a monthly digest highlighting decisions of the board and other authority and GRCA activities. Distributed by e-mail to municipalities, MPs, MPPs, the media and others

- **Grand Actions:** published six times a year for 4,500 subscribers. A magazine-style publication highlighting action taken throughout the watershed to protect and improve the environment.

- **The Grand:** About 210,000 copies are distributed as a newspaper insert. It provides information on GRCA activities and the state of the watershed.

- **Pamphlets and brochures:** The communications department works with other departments to produce a range of brochures and pamphlets on recreational opportunities, nature centre activities, program information and more. Materials are also produced for the GRCA to be used in its fundraising efforts.

- **Maps, posters and signs:** These include educational posters, pop-up displays for public events, maps for public meetings and open houses and similar materials.



Websites

The GRCA maintains two websites:

- grandriver.ca for the GRCA and the GRCA Foundation
- sourcewater.ca for the GRCA and three other conservation authorities in the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Region.

grandriver.ca

This GRCA website has about 900 pages of information and receives more than one million visit a year. Several online services are available including campsite reserva-

tions, book purchases, online mapping tools for planning applications, GRCA donations and event registration. The most popular sections include park pages, careers, planning regulations and river flow information.

During floods, website traffic grows dramatically as people go online for updates on river conditions and flow levels.

sourcewater.ca

This website contains information on the Source Protection Planning process including meeting agendas and reports, copies of technical studies, important documents such as assessment reports and other material.

New website

In late 2014 a project was begun to relaunch the GRCA and Sourcewater websites in 2015.

New media

The GRCA has established Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr accounts. Links to these are on the GRCA website.

- The **Facebook** page is used to promote upcoming activities and report on other information about the GRCA.

- **Twitter** feeds provide information on activities in conservation areas. One feed is used exclusively to send out flood messages. A tweet posted on this feed can sometimes be retweeted to reach thousands of Twitter users.



- Videos and slideshows are posted on the GRCA's **YouTube** channel. Content includes the video tributes to Watershed Award Winners and slideshows about recreational activities at GRCA parks.

- **Flickr** is a photo sharing service. The GRCA has uploaded packages of photos for conservation areas, which can be used (with certain restrictions attached) by others.

Watershed Awards

The communications department takes the lead on the annual presentation of Watershed Awards

Winners of the GRCA's Watershed Awards as well as GRCA grant recipients are honoured at this annual event.

Community outreach

Communications staff will make (or assist with) presentations to municipal councils, service clubs and community



The GRCA's Facebook page

groups. It also helps with displays at trade shows and public events.

Major project support

The department provides communications and public engagement support to two major initiatives.

- **Source Water Protection Planning:** Communications department staff work with other Source Protection Planning staff to ensure that provincial requirements for outreach and consultation are met. This includes managing a website, producing educational and background material for public education, advertising, media releases and organization of several series of public meetings. The cost of this program is paid entirely by the provincial government.

- **Grand River Watershed Water Management Plan:** This initiative is a partnership of the GRCA, municipalities, the province, the federal government, First Nations and others to address three key issues: flooding, water quality and water supplies. The communications department maintain a "micro-site" on the GRCA website, produces newsletters and prepares articles for use in GRCA publications and elsewhere.

In-house services

The communications department also provides "in-house" services for other GRCA departments.

- advertising and marketing support to other departments.
- writing, editing and photography services for other departments.