PLAY IT SAFE ON THE GRAND
by Dwight Boyd and John Bartlett, Grand River Conservation Authority

In spite of the warmth of the spring sun, the young men were wet and shivering uncontrollably. Their battered canoe was somewhere downriver, along with their clothing and camping gear. Even with normal teenage bravado, they looked confused and frightened as their boating buddies tried to find dry clothes and hot drinks for them.

This was the scene at the canoe take out in Paris three years ago. The May sun was bright and inviting for the youth group and their leaders. All had canoed before, and the leaders were reasonably experienced.

Recent rains and spring snowmelt had swollen the Grand. Serene and ladylike later in the year, the river was now high and racing. Its waters, still very cold from the winter, were unforgiving and the two youths had found it difficult to control their craft. The canoe overturned in the fast, turbulent water and they fought the current to get ashore. Both were strong swimmers, wearing lifejackets and had support from their friends. This story had a good ending, but many do not. Even skilled canoeists and kayakers have fought the river and lost in the spring floods.

What went wrong? Generally, the group leaders did not take into account the high flows of the river that day, and the hazards of cold water. River hazards change with the flow and the seasons. A skilled paddler should be able to recognize problems well ahead, and change the paddling plans accordingly. Clothing, too, should reflect the possibility of submersion, however sunny and pleasant the day. Dry suits or neoprene wet suits are the clothes of choice for experienced canoeists and kayakers, who dress for water rather than air temperatures.

Conditions on the river can change rapidly, particularly after periods of rain or snowmelt. Before setting out, a paddler should know the flow condition of the reach they are about to paddle. During high flows, the whole river reach may act like one long set of rapids. During high flows, the fast current may draw the unsuspecting paddler into other hazards. These include...
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entrapment in floating debris such as logs or ice, or sweepers and strainers.

A sweeper is an overhanging branch or tree whose branches extend into moving water from above. Running into a sweeper will push a canoe over or could push and hold the paddler below the surface of the water. A strainer is a submerged tree or branches under the surface of moving water. A paddler could become pinned against a strainer.

Submerged hazards, such as rocks, logs and other debris, are not easily seen in turbulent water. A collision can cause the boat to upset; the hull may be punctured, or the paddler may be injured in the collision.

Once out of the canoe, the canoeist may be overcome by the current or pinned by the canoe. A swamped canoe can weigh as much as two tons and a paddler can be crushed between a canoe and a rock.

Cold water (less than 15°C) can be lethal. During spring conditions or in late fall, the river water is cold, and if you spill you can very quickly be overcome with hypothermia. Even if the paddler reaches shore, wind chill and cold air temperatures can accelerate the dangerous drop in body temperature. Shivering is an indication of the onset of hypothermia, and victims usually become too disoriented to be responsible for their own safety.

A riverbank is often well removed from emergency services and homes where help can be obtained. The tough reality is that you may be on your own to deal with a life-threatening situation. The tough reality too is that a paddler in danger may also be putting a rescuer’s life in jeopardy.

Whenever you are on the river, it is important that you are prepared to deal with an emergency. Know where access points are along the reach of river that you are canoeing. Have a map of the reach that you are canoeing. Have a first aid kit and know basic first aid. Finally, a cellular phone in a waterproof bag may be invaluable in contacting help or emergency services.

Low head dams pose a special hazard to paddlers. In the fast waters, an upstream paddler may get too close to the crest of the dam and be swept over. A paddler may also get caught in the backwash current at the downstream side of the dam. Once in the backwash current, the paddler becomes trapped. Paddlers should use portages around these structures, and stay well clear of low head dams at any time of the year.

Boating safety awareness is not limited to the cold-water seasons. There are good solid rules that must be observed by prudent and safety conscious paddlers everywhere. Boating courses are an enjoyable way to prepare for any kind of boating.

Like the Boy Scouts advocate—be prepared. Being prepared before your trip can help avoid potential hazards or result in a positive outcome if an accident does occur. One of the most important considerations is a trip or float plan. Let someone know where you are canoeing, what your boat looks like and when you expect to return.

Before your trip, consider these important steps:

• Check weather conditions.
• Check flow conditions.
• Have maps or charts for your route.
• Make sure your clothing is suitable for water and weather conditions.
• Have sufficient safe drinking water for your trip.
• Protect yourself from the sun (sun block, hat and polarized sun glasses)
• Know the locations of boat launches and access points along the reach.
• Log a trip/float plan with your friend, spouse, parent or guardian.
• Have a first aid kit, basic tools and spare parts in the boat.
• Have a cellular phone in a waterproof bag.
• Have spare paddles.
• Ensure you have properly fitted personal flotation devices (life jackets) for everyone on board, and preferably be wearing them.
• Ensure all safety equipment is in working order.
• Get proper training before you venture out.

Other considerations include your refreshment preparations! Drinking
alcohol and boating are a dangerous mix. Fatigue, sun, wind and the motion of the boat dull the senses. Alcohol intensifies these effects, causing reduced reaction time and impaired judgment. Operating a boat of any kind in Canada under the influence of alcohol is a criminal offence. Penalties range from $300 to $2,000 for a first offence, three months to three years prohibition from using a boat, or a jail sentence of up to six months.

Some resources are available to Grand River boaters. Canoeing on the Grand is a publication produced and regularly updated by the GRCA. It details various reaches of the Grand River from Lake Belwood to Lake Erie. Copies are available from the GRCA or from local bookstores at a cost of less than $20.

Canoeing on the Grand also includes a partial list of some outfitters and trainers who may be able to recommend an accredited boating or canoeing safety course. For general boating safety information, call 1-800-267-6687.

Flow conditions can be obtained from the GRCA River Flow Information Line at (519) 621-2763. A voice recorded message is updated daily during the canoeing season and is accessible 24 hours a day. Flow information is also posted on the GRCA web site at www.grandriver.ca. Information on the website and the flow information line indicates the current flow conditions and the normal summer flow condition. The user can then relate the current flow conditions to the normal summer low flow at a given location on the river.

Local weather information may be obtained from the Waterloo Regional Airport. A voice message is updated hourly and can be accessed at (519) 658-5442. Other sources include the weather channel, weather radio, local radio stations and the Internet.

The Grand is a beautiful and accessible river and ours to enjoy. It is our individual responsibility to see that we enjoy it safely.

MILESTONES

Milestones are progress or products of The Grand Strategy Joint Work Plan.

Heritage Makes Sense

A capacity crowd of over 175 people attended the 4th Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration at the Walper Terrace Hotel in Kitchener on Heritage Day, February 19th. The theme was “Heritage Makes Sense: Discover Why”. Workshops sponsors were the City of Kitchener, the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation and GRCA. An excellent roster of speakers provided new insights on how to preserve and promote heritage as an important community asset. Some key messages offered were:

• Partnerships are important for undertaking actions to preserve, restore or interpret community heritage;
• The Grand River is our connection to the past and to each other - it is the thread that ties us together.
• History has an emotional appeal and is of immense interest to residents. Recent history books written by local authors, such as Dr. Ken McLaughlin, Barbara Martindale and Peter Meyler, are selling well and in some cases have been sold out literally weeks after the initial book launch!
• Peter Meyler stressed that the legacy of our black heritage has been largely ignored, mainly because the stories have not been told and there is very little evidence left intact to tell the story.
• The importance of “telling the story” cannot be underestimated as a tool to raise heritage awareness. Kim Seward-Hannam illustrated the use of costumes, newspaper articles, personnel photos and family histories, music, skits, festivals, books (fact and fiction) for helping people, especially youth, to learn about heritage.

Kanata in Brantford is one of best new tourist attractions in Canada. Detailed reconstructions like this longhouse enable visitors to learn first hand about the First Nations heritage in the Grand River watershed.

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HERITAGE
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financially rewarding for developers.

- Saving and reusing heritage structures in the city core can revitalize the area. The restorations of Alexandra School and Market Village in east Kitchener are examples provided by Shawky Fahel of JG Group Contracting.

- Paul Sapounzi emphasized that renovating of old buildings leads to employment opportunities for skilled labour (plaster, painting, woodwork, and masonry restoration).

- Restored buildings must be functional as well as true to the historical characteristics of the original structure. Projects such as the Shelburne Town Hall and Castle Kilbride are two examples by the Ventin Group that blend function with heritage preservation.

- Community heritage is vitally important to the people of Caledonia. Barbara Martindale highlighted the success of a campaign launched in the community to raise funds for heritage lighting associated with the need for roadwork in the business core. Donations towards this project have exceeded expectations; enough dollars have been raised to install the lights required for phase 1 (completed) and phase 2 (scheduled for 2002).

- Having a vision is powerful. The Pine Tree Native Centre had a vision to create Kanata as a tourism attraction. By building partnerships with the City of Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River, Tourism Brantford and others, the vision was shared and the dream became a reality. In its first year of operation over 17,000 visitors toured Kanata. In 2000, it was a recognized by Attractions Canada as “The Best New Site In Ontario”.

The 1876 Sheave Tower, in the village of Blair near Cambridge, is a heritage landmark that is being protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

- Kanata is an important educational experience, not only for visitors, but also according to Trudy Jones, to the youth of the community who need to reconnect with their native skills and culture.

- Tourists want to explore, learn and relax. Heritage tourism is a growing industry in Ontario and one that Grand River Country is promoting jointly through its partners throughout the watershed. Grand River Country offers unique experiences and authenticity based on the richness and diversity of the natural and cultural heritage associated with the Grand River. Clark Hoskin indicated that 32 million people visit Ontario each year generating about $618 million in Grand River Country.

- Education is key for increasing heritage awareness among the watershed’s youth. Dr. Frank Glew, with funding support from Canada Trust Friends of the Environment has developed a curriculum kit for Grade 4 teachers based on the natural and cultural heritage of the Grand River watershed. This resource kit has been endorsed by the public and separate school boards within the watershed and is being used for teaching a variety of subjects.

- Cruickston Park is a natural and cultural gem of 966 acres within the City of Cambridge. Mark Fretwurst and Jan Chaplin purchased the estate with a vision of preserving it for future generations. Financial support from the community to assist with developing a master plan for the site has been substantial. The biggest challenge is fending off external development pressures for transportation corridors through the property.

The keynote speaker, Ann Mulvale, President of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Mayor of Oakville, provided advice and wisdom. Mayor Mulvale’s message was that we are stewards of heritage resources. Heritage anchors us to a community. In her words “communities who know and build on their past are much more competent to recognize and fully utilize the opportunities of the day and the future.”

With governments downloading more responsibility for essential services to municipalities, the amount of discretionary funding left over for such items as heritage preservation and promotion is dwindling. Mayor Mulvale urged workshop participants to continue to be involved in the community in order to keep heritage concerns on the political agenda.

Participating on the Mayors’ Panel were Mayor Carl Zehr, City of Kitchener; Mayor Lynne Woolstencroft, City of Waterloo; Mayor Doug Craig, City of Cambridge; Chairman Ken Seiling, Regional Municipality of Waterloo; Mayor Karen Farbridge, City of Guelph; Mayor George Pinkney, Township of Centre Wellington;
Councillor Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, City of Brantford; and Phil Monture, Six Nations. Each panel member spoke about recent successes in their community with respect to conserving/promoting heritage, and outlined future plans to support heritage endeavours.

Participants in the workshop had an opportunity to offer ideas about what actions they would carry out if they were mayor. Some key responses from the 12 breakout groups included:

- eliminate up-front costs to developers when involved in a heritage project and make “rules” (i.e., zoning by-laws) more flexible;
- hire staff and appoint committees that are dedicated to heritage (i.e., hire a Heritage Planner, establish a LACAC);
- establish tax incentives and rebates for preservation and restoration of heritage resources and at the same time establish tax penalties and tax increases for destroying heritage resources;
- educate the people of the Grand, starting with youth, by teaching the historical importance of the Grand as the initial roadway to the present. The theme could be “A Grand River - Our Key to Survival”;
- showcase the successes of the Grand in linking cultural and natural heritage by holding co-ordinated celebrations across the watershed to commemorate the Grand - “A Grand Festival”;
- protect and improve water quality
- inventory past patterns of waste disposal (i.e., landfills, old industrial sites) using university and government dollars to fund student projects;
- promote the Grand River watershed as an entity by creating a forum for all Mayors and Band Councils to establish, maintain and improve communication of information and ideas;
- create a watershed-wide master plan for conserving, interpreting and celebrating heritage resources;
- Detailed proceedings of the workshop will be published later this year.
- A highlight of the day was an announcement by the Waterloo County and Area Quilt Festival that the Grand River watershed was chosen for the 2002 Canadian Heritage theme. A competition will develop a quilt collection to travel throughout the watershed from June 2002 to May 2003.
- Since the Grand River achieved status as a Canadian Heritage River seven years ago, heritage is emerging as an important element on which to base community economic development and “sense of place”. The workshop presentations and strong participation of a wide diversity of people shows that there is increasing public support for preserving and celebrating our rich past.

**Forest Plan Nears Completion**

With a series of public open houses completed, a Watershed Forest Plan for the Grand River is one step closer to becoming a valuable tool for those looking to improve the forest resources of our watershed. Public open houses were held between January 31st and February 13th in Caledonia, Cambridge, Drayton and Grand Valley, with approximately 30 people coming out to offer their input and suggestions.

The purpose of these open houses was to present the watershed community the draft version of the Watershed Forest Plan along with some of the associated maps. GRCA staff were also looking for public input into the plan on behalf of the community stakeholders groups and the authors who have worked on writing the various sections. Each section of the plan was summarized and reviewed with participants offering input and suggestions on each topic. All suggestions and comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the final version of the Watershed Forest Plan. The various sections of the draft plan can still be reviewed and commented on through the GRCA website at www.granderiver.ca

Now that the draft version is complete, some focus can be directed towards implementing action items and

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projects identified in the plan. Sections contain recommendations related to public education, hands-on community projects, field research and availability of technical expertise. Whether you are interested in how to incorporate agroforestry into your farming practices or want to help with seed collecting activities in the watershed, the Watershed Forest Plan will have information, maps and project suggestions that everyone can use. For more information on the Watershed Forest Plan, please visit our website at www.grandriver.ca or contact Martin Neumann, at (519) 621-276, ext. 258. Email: at mneumann@grandriver.ca

Groundwater Mapping

The Grand River Foundation has received a donation of $20,000 from the EJLB Foundation to be used towards the cost of publishing the Groundwater Mapping users’ manual and maps. The EJLB Foundation, based in Montreal, supports national environmental and community mental health work. The GRCA has completed a major watershed wide initiative designed to provide much needed maps and tools to municipal planners when making decisions that can impact groundwater resources.

As part of the Grand River Regional Groundwater Study, a mapping project was undertaken for the Grand River watershed to more fully describe the watershed’s groundwater setting. The project involved the consolidation of existing geological mapping, updating of the water well record database, and a mapping analysis to characterize the subsurface conditions across the watershed. Colour contour maps were produced that clearly display subsurface features within the watershed. The maps provide ideal decision support tools for integrated resource planning.

The GRCA began to assemble background geological and hydrogeological information in 1995. In 1996, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Ministry of the Environment to update the water well record database for the Grand River watershed. All well records that were not previously in the database were located using a GPS system. In total, the GRCA added over 7,000 additional wells to the water well database. The Region of Waterloo (within the Grand River watershed), undertaking a similar project, has added a further 1500 wells.

The maps include information on the watershed ground and bedrock surface, the overburden and sand and gravel thickness. Information is also provided on the water table, potential groundwater discharge areas, aquifers and areas vulnerable to contamination. Methods of publishing are currently being investigated. More information will be posted on the availability of the maps after publication.

WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Late Winter Tree Pruning
by Michael Bradley, GRCA

A good cure for spring fever is to get outside and prune some of your trees and shrubs. You will enjoy the fresh air, and your trees and shrubs will appreciate the attention.

There are several shade trees that tolerate late-winter or early spring
pruning. Ash, honeylocust, oak, fruit trees and linden will all benefit from the following pruning steps. Starting at the base of the tree trunk, remove the suckers (thin, upright branches). Next, remove any low branches that interfere with traffic or could cause personal injury. Moving upwards, prune out all of the dead branches, as well as branches that have wounds or tears. Prune out as many of the upright suckers as possible. If two branches are crossing one another, one should be pruned out. During this process, step back frequently and see how your work is changing the appearance of the tree, and alter your pruning approach accordingly. Remember not to prune out more than 1/3 of the branches of any tree at any one time. Maples, beech and birch, as well as most spring flowering plants, should not be pruned at this time of the year.

Pruning your trees and shrubs is a great way to get out into the garden before the growing season begins. Giving your trees and shrubs some care now will give you more time to sit back and enjoy them when the warmer days of spring arrive.

LOOK WHO’S TAKING ACTION

Heritage Cambridge

Heritage Cambridge is a branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO). The ACO has worked for 60 years to find economically viable uses for Ontario’s historical assets, ensuring the distinctive buildings of our past do not become parking lots or building sites for new development. Each of the ACO’s five branches in Ontario develop their own programs for their own community. Since 1971, the members of Heritage Cambridge have worked to preserve the heritage of the City of Cambridge through research and designation of homes, properties of architectural and historic significance.

Over the past few years, its 150 members have undertaken several projects including the restoration of the 1876 Sheave Tower in the village of Blair; supporting the sale of Cruikston Park lands to a purchaser who would preserve the environmental features; and participating in the Dickson Hill Heritage Conservation District Study to designate the oldest settled area in Galt.

For more information about Heritage Cambridge, contact Laurie Thatcher at (519) 622-3218.

Dufferin Aggregates

Dufferin Aggregates, a division of St. Lawrence Cement Inc., works hard at being a good neighbour at its Aberfoyle properties. Although the main office is located at Concord, Ontario, the company operates three licensed gravel extraction sites in the Township of Puslinch. The Mill Creek property is used as a partnership with the University of Guelph as the landowner.

The company tries to manage all three sites (approximately 303 ha) in an environmentally sound manner and believes in strong community relations. Because of its efforts in that direction, Dufferin Aggregates received the Aggregate Industry Award for Community Relations.

Each year, the company holds Earth Week celebrations with Brock Public School students working together to plant hundreds of native tree seedlings as part of reforestation and rehabilitation plans for the Mill Creek area.

Wetlands, lakes, trees and shrubs will eventually replace the extraction scars on the landscape, and continual rehabilitation work is done towards this goal. The work includes creating new landforms, replacing soils and establishing native aquatic and terrestrial vegetation. The company carries out continual monitoring of the ground and surface water at, and adjacent to, the operation sites. The monitoring program also includes fish and plant inventories.

The company plans to continue its environmental stewardship efforts and maintain its strong links with the community.

NOW AVAILABLE

Broken Shackles

Broken Shackles—Old Man Henson From Slavery to Freedom is a new edition of an 1889 publication of the recollections of Old Man Henson, a resident of Owen Sound. Henson’s stories tell of his early slavery in Maryland and his ultimate freedom in Canada. Peter Meyler, the editor, is a native of Fergus and a member of the Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group. The book is $22.95 plus handling and shipping, and available from bookstores or from Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., Toronto. Phone: 1-800-725-9982. Email: natherbooks@idirect.com
DID YOU KNOW?

- In Ontario, early aboriginal people valued trees as sources of shelter, fuel, food, medicine and tools. White ash was used for fish spears and canoe and snowshoe building. Black ash was used in basket making and its bark was used in an infusion for sores and itching. The seeds of white ash were said to prevent obesity.
- Bur oak acorns were gathered by natives, and boiled like vegetables, roasted in the fire ashes or boiled, mashed and eaten with grease. They were said to be especially good with duck broth.
- In 1633, John Gerarde wrote “The water that is found in the hollownesse of Beeches eureth the naughty scurfe, tetters, and scabs of men, horses, kine and sheepe, if they be washed therewith”.
- In 1817, Absalom Shade built a mill at the site of his first settle-
ment near an older, abandoned mill where Mill Creek and the Grand River meet. It would later be recognized as Shade’s Mills in present day Cambridge.
- In 1836, a settler could travel from Scotland through Quebec to southwestern Ontario by ship, coach and lake steamer for a total outlay of 24 English pounds and ten shillings. This included a 33-day Atlantic crossing and two days from Montreal to Toronto. It cost twice as much traveling via New York City.
- European newspaper reports about immigration and life in early Canada were truly dismal. In 1849, the London Times described immigration ships as “floating pest holes”. Disease raged rampant on the crowded ships, especially cholera, and “…the quay at Toronto was crowded with a throng of dying and diseased objects...”.
- In 1867, standing orders for the Haldimand Militia gave foot care instructions to its soldiers. Men were instructed, “Should the feet grow tender, hot tallow dropped into whiskey and applied to the feet...will much relieve them.”
- In the mid-1800s black settlers in southwestern Ontario, often fleeing slavery, still faced rampant racism and were often refused employment. In many areas black children were barred from school. Many black families banded together for mutual support in their churches, and a Coloured Methodist congregation held services in Dunnville’s Orange Hall as early at 1851.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is produced as a communications tool by the Grand River Conservation Authority on behalf of the partners in The Grand Strategy.

This newsletter can be seen on the Internet at www.granderiver.ca

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For newsletter submissions
Contact the Editor, Liz Leadham, c/o Barbara Veale at the above address. Newsletter submissions must be made by the 15th of the month prior to publication, and may be subject to editorial change. Tax deductible donations and sponsorships toward the cost of producing this newsletter are always welcome.

Publications Mail
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THE GRAND STRATEGY CALENDAR

March 16 and 17, 2001, Sixth Annual Waterwalker Film Festival. Starting at 7 p.m., both nights, at the Princess Theatre, Waterloo. Tickets $9 from the cinema box office or from Adventure Guide of Waterloo. Phone: (519) 885-2950 for more information.

Saturday, March 24, 2001, TV Ontario presentation at 3:00 p.m. “An Artist of the Grand: Journey through Festival Country”.

March 24 and 25, 2001, MapleFest Weekend, Apps’ Mill Nature Centre, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Robinson Road (off Rest Acres Road), Brantford. Admission free. See how maple syrup is made; bush tours; site demonstrations; refreshments and products for sale. For information, call (519) 752-0655.

Monday, March 26, 2001, Great Canadian Rivers at 9.30 p.m., on the Discovery Channel, 13-part TV series features the Grand River.

Saturday, April 28, 2000, GRCA Parks with camping facilities open.