

# GRAND ACTIONS

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

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Grand River  
Conservation  
Authority



The Grand:  
A Canadian  
Heritage River

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Cover photo: Members of the Grand Valley Conservation Authority and reporters examine a site for a bridge to be built across the Grand when the Elora Gorge Conservation Area was created.



## Opening of Elora Gorge park in 1954 was a landmark event

By Steve Thorning

Of the various events being commemorated this year in the village of Elora, none is as important as the opening of the Elora Gorge Park in 1954. That facility had, and continues to have, a major impact on the economy of Elora. More important, the park opening signified a change in direction for the Grand River Conservation Authority, with recreation joining conservation and flood control as a major activity.

The Grand Valley Conservation Authority (a predecessor of today's GRCA) was formed in 1948 to focus on reforestation, land use, wildlife and recreation. (The older Grand Valley Conservation Commission was responsible for dam construction and operation. Eventually, the

two organizations merged in 1966.)

The GVCA took a couple of years to gain its feet, but by 1952 it began serious planning for new major projects.

Once they made the decision, the GVCA moved quickly to establish the Elora park. Barely 16 months elapsed from approval of the concept to official opening. But like all big projects, this one had a history.

The idea of a public park, encompassing the gorge below the village of Elora, first received serious consideration 75 years earlier. The proposal resurfaced often.

The initial ideas came from members of an informal river improvement group in the 1870s. Using scrounged materials and donations, the volunteers built steps into the gorge and conduct-

ed a general cleanup. In February 1877 came the first of a series of public meetings to advance those initiatives, but in the end nothing came of it. Elora's famous teacher, David Boyle, later the provincial archaeologist, was part of that first group.

One reason the idea of a large park received lukewarm enthusiasm was that few businessmen could see a real advantage to an expensive investment in park improvements. Elora's gorge, of course, brought people to the village, but it was very much a seasonal traffic, and most visitors brought their own lunch.

The park concept resurfaced many times. After he left Elora, Boyle still pushed the idea, writing letters to the Elora Express and to Elora council. The publication of Picturesque Canada, which included many illustrations of Elora scenes, kindled interest in the gorge in the late 1880s.

The tourism potential of the gorge drove the 19th century ideas for a park. After 1900, the fledgling conservation movement took up the cause. When automobiles became common, the Ontario Motor League supported the idea of an Elora park. Its location would be a convenient destination for much of Ontario's population.

In the 1920s, the Ontario government got into the act. A proposal for a provincial park at Elora circulated at Queen's Park for a couple of years. Senior officials considered it a potential attraction for the new Highway 9, which originally was to run from Teviotdale to Guelph, along what is now County Road 7.

In July 1926, a lengthy illustrated article in Saturday Night, then a major national publication, described the gorge in detail, and urged the province to act to create a park before the area was lost. But in the end, Highway 9 turned east at Teviotdale, running to Arthur. The Elora park dropped from the list of provincial priorities.

Locally, Fergus editor Hugh Templin pushed the idea during the 1930s and 1940s, proposing the creation of a park



*Kay Marston, newspaper editor and conservation authority board member, pushed for the creation of the Elora Gorge park.*

in editorials in 1938 and 1944. He had visited the area frequently with his pal Bob Kerr, the pioneering Fergus conservationist. Gradually, Templin could see the Elora park as part of a larger program of conservation, recreation and flood control on the Grand. By 1940 he was the most tenacious proponent of a park at Elora.

One by one, Templin found converts, in Wellington County, on the Grand Valley Conservation Authority, of which he was a member, and across the province. One of them, Rev. C.J. Loat of Elora, arranged for several cabinet ministers to visit the Elora Gorge, to consider establishing a provincial park. They went back to Toronto impressed, but nothing happened.

## Special events at Elora

The GRCA, in conjunction with the Elora Festival, is presenting a series of concerts to celebrate the park's 50th anniversary.

See the "What's Happening" section on Page 7 for more information.

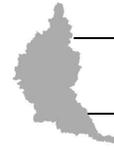
The most significant of Templin's converts was Kay Marston who, as a 43-year-old widow with four children, took the helm of the Elora Express in 1943. By 1950, Marston sat as a board member of the Conservation Authority. As well, she pushed the idea with the Elora Chamber of Commerce. With the general mood of postwar optimism, that group was anxious to boost Elora in every possible way.

Early in 1942, the Elora Chamber began a serious lobbying effort for a provincial park. Chambers in Fergus and Guelph enthusiastically endorsed the idea, and additional support came from up and down the river.

Marston took the idea to the annual meeting of the Conservation Authority in March 1952. She pointed out that recreation was part of the expanded mandate for the authority, but so far nothing had been done. She believed that rather than setting up a provincial park, the authority itself should establish the Elora park, as part of a string of recreational facilities along the river. Her remarks resulted in the creation of a special committee on recreation and tourism, with Marston as a member.

The Elora Chamber of Commerce and its progressive president, hardware merchant Lloyd Israel, continued to push the park, run either by the conservation authority or by the province. Marston, with her press contacts around the province, aroused considerable interest, and particularly in the Toronto dailies.

Both Marston and Israel gave many interviews during 1952. Israel, with his pleasant, outgoing manner, proved an excellent salesman for the idea. He pointed out that the land on both sides of the river was easily accessible and ideal for a park. As farmland it was mostly substandard; indeed, woodland and a scrub bush covered over half the land. With a growing population in the area, and a need for new recreational areas, he saw the proposed park area as vulnerable to housing developments and private exploitation of its attractions.



## MILESTONES

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

### Report shows changes in Grand River system

In 1994 the Grand River and its tributaries were designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers, based on their outstanding river-related human heritage and recreational values of national significance. The management plan tabled with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board as part of the requirement for designation was called *The Grand Strategy*.

To maintain the Canadian Heritage River status, a ten-year monitoring report was completed and tabled with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board on May 11. The report, entitled *A Decade in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System: A Review of The Grand Strategy*, details dozens of improvements to human heritage and recreational values that have taken place since 1994.

For example:

- Many watershed landmarks have been preserved, cleaned up or restored including the Caledonia Mill, the Welland Canal Lock 27 at Port Maitland, the West Montrose Covered Bridge, the Freeport bowstring Bridge in Kitchener, the Guelph Boat House, and the former Riverside Silk Mills in Cambridge which will become the new home of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture.

- Nine national historic sites, events or persons were either designated and/or plaqued.

- Recreational opportunities have been enhanced, with the development of dozens of kilometres of new riverside trails, construction of new river access points and portages and the opening of the Elora Gorge to tubing.

- Fishing and hunting opportunities



*The traffic bridge across the Elora Gorge.*

During the summer of 1952, the conservation authority hired William Baker to conduct a survey of the proposed parkland. Israel and the chamber of commerce organized a meeting in August, inviting Conservation Authority members and provincial officials.

At that point, most of the authority's board members were leery about getting into the park business, and preferred the province to proceed. They had no experience with it. Costs and potential revenues were both unknowns, and could potentially wreck their annual budget, then a minuscule \$99,000 per year.

William E. Hamilton of Guelph, the provincial MPP and a minister in the Conservative Frost cabinet, urged the authority to take the lead. He promised provincial assistance, both technical and financial.

O.J. Wright of Conestogo thought that the authority needed a lot more information before proceeding. Those present agreed that Baker should continue his work, and prepare a full report with cost estimates and potential revenues as quickly as possible.

That joint meeting in Elora was a key step in advancing the project, and in bringing the various interested parties to the same table. Marston was pleasantly surprised to see general support for the proposed park come from all areas of the Grand watershed. Garfield Disher, representing Dunnville, near the mouth of the river, offered unqualified support. The only negatives came from the Brantford area representatives, who didn't want to pay for anything outside their immediate realm.

Baker soon had his report ready. Marston, meanwhile, kept her publicity campaign active for the rest of the year and into 1953. The proposed Elora park, and by extension, the widening of conservation authority activities to embrace recreational activities, based on Baker's report, was the main item on the agenda for the authority's annual meeting in March 1953.

#### Next month:

#### **Building a park in 16 months**

*This article is reprinted from the Wellington Advertiser.*

have been expanded. Brown trout are stocked in the Grand River near Fergus and the Conestogo River. A management plan has been developed for the Dunnville Marsh.

- New festivals promote the river system and its heritage, including Cayuga Fest, the Paris Cobblestone Festival, the Waterloo-Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival, the Dandelion Festival and the Grand Opportunities Fly-Fishing Forum at Belwood Lake Conservation Area.

The report also notes some losses since 1994, including the demolition of the Eden Mills Bow String Bridge and the closing of the Seagram Museum in Waterloo.

In addition to providing an assessment of the values for which the Grand River was declared a Canadian Heritage River, the report builds on The Grand Strategy, which embodied a new approach for managing watershed resources based on community involvement, co-operation, consensus and commitment. Conceived as a dynamic process, The Grand Strategy was founded on beliefs, values and principles that provide a framework for on-going actions that strengthen the knowledge, stewardship and enjoyment of the watershed's resources.

A Decade in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System: Review of The Grand Strategy not only summarizes the actions which have been undertaken over the past ten years, it embodies the on-going collaborative management approach that has resulted in so many accomplishments and successes. It has caused partners to collectively reflect on the past, to assess their actions and activities relative to the vision, values, goals and objectives contained in The Grand Strategy and to ponder the future. To set the context for this review, the vision for the Grand River watershed written in 1994 as a "State of the Watershed" address was revised.

While great strides have been taken to conserve and interpret the watershed's



*The Caledonia Mill is one of the notable heritage buildings along the Grand River.*

important river-related human heritage and to increase recreational opportunities, much remains to be done. New and on-going threats and challenges exist. A revised set of primary actions has been developed by participants to provide a relevant framework within which collective or individual actions can be taken. The following primary actions build on those identified in 1994 but reflect the realities of 2004:

- Develop community-based watershed-wide strategies for shared research, planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring of important human heritage and recreational values associated with the Heritage River designation. Explore innovative and effective techniques for public involvement (including youth and seniors).
- Encourage, recognize and support private and public stewardship in conserving and interpreting the watershed's natural and human heritage.

- Raise awareness about and celebration of the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River through existing and new community events.

- Examine and evaluate the effectiveness of existing heritage and recreational resource management arrangements. Document success and failure, share findings and identify best management practices.

- Encourage the incorporation and integration of strong heritage policies and appropriate recreation and tourism development policies in pertinent policy and planning documents.

- Encourage research which can clearly demonstrate the economic and social benefits of our natural and human heritage resources.

- Encourage municipalities to develop special policies

and plans to guide riverfront development. These policies and plans should be designed to resolve conflicting resource issues, to maintain or improve the quality of the experience, and to provide for infrastructure to accommodate increasing interest.

- Continue efforts to improve water quality and address new and emerging water quality issues.

- Emphasize the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River in funding submissions to governments, foundations and organizations and in newspapers, magazines and research publications, wherever possible.

- Develop a code of ethics for recreational use in the Grand River watershed.

- Implement the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan.

- Explore the opportunity for promoting the Grand River as a "water trail".

- Celebrate and build on successes.



## LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

### Signs identify groundwater areas

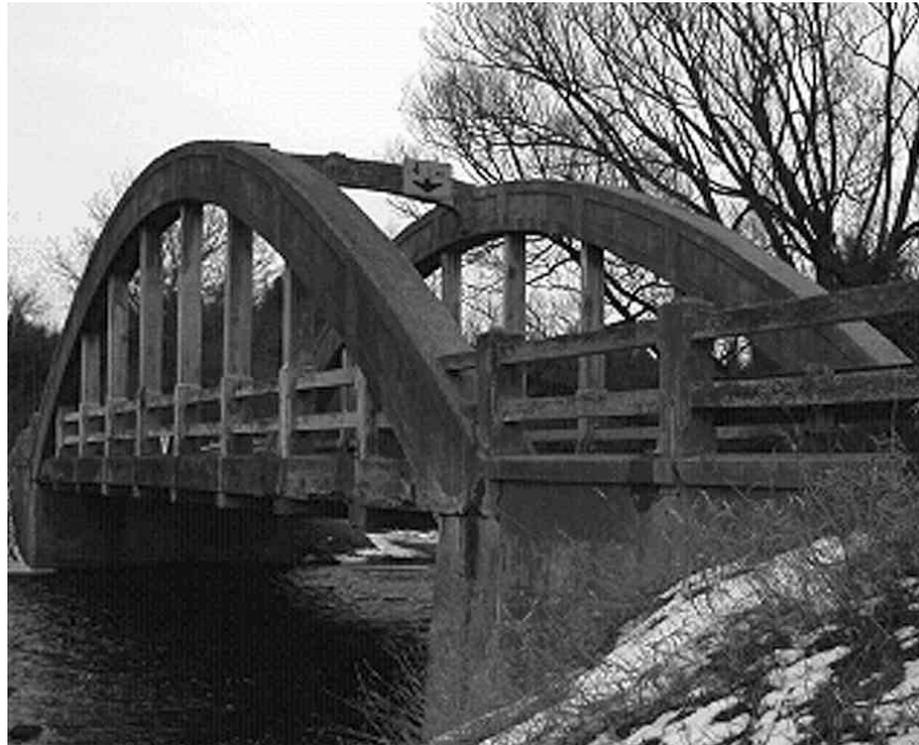
The Region of Waterloo is highlighting the importance of protecting water quality by posting signs in important groundwater areas that read "Ours to Protect."

The signs are part of a regional effort to draw attention to the fact that 80 per cent of the water used by regional residents comes from groundwater. The other 20 per cent comes from the Grand River.

About 125 of the signs have been installed along regional roads, primarily in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Elmira.

They tell drivers that they are entering a "drinking water protection zone" and the distance across the zone.

The zones surround the region's 110



*The Stone Road Bridge is listed in the Ontario Heritage Bridge Program and was designated in 2003 as a heritage structure under the Ontario Heritage Act. Built in 1916 as McQuillan's Bridge, the Stone Road Bridge is an early and excellent example of concrete bowstring bridge construction.*

### Grand old bridges

In April 2004, an important new information source for built heritage was received by the GRCA from Stephen Robinson and Tracie Seedhouse of Robinson Heritage Consulting – the Grand River Watershed Bridge Inventory.

The inventory is a database of text and images documenting bridges from across the Grand River watershed which have significant heritage value and contribute to the Heritage River designation of the Grand, Speed, Eramosa, Conestogo and Nith Rivers.

The GRCA has included a selection of 68 bridges that scored over 50 points in the evaluation process in the ten-year monitoring report to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. Two important models for the development of evaluation and rating criteria were the Province of Ontario's Heritage Bridge Program (1991) and the recent Region of

Waterloo bridge inventory *Spanning the Generations: A Study of Old Bridges in Waterloo Region* (2003).

The collection of information about significant built heritage in the watershed is an ongoing process and requires continuing research.

Therefore, this list of significant bridges will change as further information becomes available. It is also important to note that individual rating scores may increase when new information is added to existing bridge inventory records.

Using the inventory enables municipalities to view bridges throughout the watershed and make decisions that include the relationship of their structures not only to those in their own geographic area but those of the watershed as a whole.

Viewing bridges in the context of their heritage value adds another important vantage point in the municipal decision making process.



*A groundwater protection sign posted in a residential area in Cambridge.*

municipal wells. The size of each zone was determined by studying the amount of time it takes water to reach the wells. The signs have been posted at the 10-year time-of-travel boundary. In other words, water within these areas will take 10 years or less to move to the supply wells.

The region is urging residents, businesses and others within the zone to take extra precautions in handling chemicals and other materials.

They can help in several ways, says the region:

- reduce use of road salt applied to driveways, sidewalks and parking lots
- limit applications of fertilizers. Be sure to follow directions if they must be used.
- Take unused household chemicals to the Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Facility. Don't dump them on the ground or down drains. (Contact the Erb Street Landfill at 883-5150.
- Report spills to the Ministry of Environment Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060.

The Region of Waterloo is also taking action to protect groundwater supplies. In 1994 it implemented a Water Resources Protection Strategy to minimize the impacts from historic, existing and future land uses on municipal water supplies.

The region monitors water level and water quality in supply wells as well as specially-designed monitoring wells.

Two programs help farmers and businesses protect water quality. The Rural Water Quality Program, which is run in conjunction with the GRCA, provides financial assistance to farmers for implementation of best management practices on the farm. The Business Water Quality Program helps businesses introduce spill prevention and management programs.

The region is also working to reduce the amount of road salt it applies by 25 per cent.

For more information on the program visit the Region of Waterloo website at [www.region.waterloo.on.ca](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca)



Allan Holmes (left), chair of the Guelph-Wellington committee of The Living Classroom-Campaign for Outdoor Education presents a cheque to Marino Gazzola, chair of the Wellington Catholic District School Board. The cheque was the second given to the board by the foundation, which has pledged to support outdoor education programs for five years.

## Conservation Foundation continues its support for outdoor education

In late May, the Grand River Conservation Foundation hosted a series of three Donor Appreciation events, to bring supporters up to date on progress of the successful Living Classroom - Campaign for Outdoor Education.

The informal events were held at the Apps' Mill, Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek nature centres for donors from the Brant-Brantford, Guelph-Wellington and Waterloo Region areas.

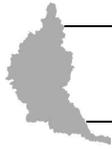
Campaign Chair Marilyn Murray reported that since the campaign's formal launch last April, more than \$1.7 million has been received in cash and pledges toward the Foundation's \$2.2 million objective.

Most importantly, The Living Classroom-Campaign for Outdoor

THE *Living Classroom*  
CAMPAIGN FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Education funded 30,000 student visits to formal outdoor education programs in its first year, and school boards are being presented with funds again this year to support continuation and expansion of the programs. Additional funds have also been used to purchase specialized outdoor teaching equipment, and upgrade GRCA nature centre facilities, lands and interpretive trails.

Current information about contributing to this and other important Foundation initiatives can be found on the GRCA website at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca)



## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

### LakeAlive draws top performers

The organizers of the LakeAlive Festival have enlisted some of Canada's best-known musicians in the effort to revitalize Puslinch Lake.



The second LakeAlive Festival, which runs from June 18 to June 20 will be headlined by Sam Roberts, the country's newest rock star, and Randy Bachman, a founding member of the Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive.

Roberts, from Montreal, was signed by the festival before grabbing national attention with his domination of the Juno Awards.

Local bands will also get a chance to show off their stuff during a special "indie day" during which they will compete for a cash prize.

The LakeAlive festival is a major fundraising event for the Puslinch Lake Conservation Association. The association represents landowners and others with an interest in revitalizing the lake, just east of Cambridge.

Puslinch Lake is the continent's largest kettle lake, but has suffered in recent years because of a buildup of silt on the lake bottom.

The PLCA has worked with the GRCA and the province to develop a plan to dredge and clean the lake, in an attempt to return it to its natural state.

The association was recognized for its innovative efforts in 2003 when it was presented with a Watershed Award by the GRCA.

In addition to the music, the festival features a lot of other art and water-related events. Special musical acts for



Sam Roberts headlines the LakeAlive Festival at Puslinch Lake.

youngsters will be presented on the children's stage. Boat tours and hot air balloon lifts will give visitors a chance to see the lake from several different angles. There will also be artisans and an auction sale for those who want some cash to spend.

This year the festival organizers and the GRCA have collaborated to set up a camping area on the festival grounds.

For more information on the festival, including ticket prices and schedules, visit the website at [www.lakealive.ca](http://www.lakealive.ca).

### Music comes to Elora Gorge

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Elora Gorge Conservation Area, the GRCA and the Elora Festival are sponsoring a series of concerts.

• Wednesday, July 21 Randy Bachman, a founding member of the Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, will play in the park.



• Thursday, July 22 will feature a concert in the park by Celtic folk-pop band Spirit of the West.

• Friday, July 22, the percussion ensemble Nexus will play in the Gambrel Barn in a concert sponsored by the Elora Gorge Conservation Area.

Concert tickets can be purchased through the Elora Festival. For more information visit the festival web site at [www.elorafestival.com](http://www.elorafestival.com).

### Water Forum set for Sept. 17

The fourth annual Grand River Watershed Water forum will address the question "Whose water is it anyway?"

The forum is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 17 at the GRCA headquarters in Cambridge.

Among the speakers confirmed for the one-day conference are Dr. Judy Isaac-Renton, a B.C.-based expert on the relationship between water quality and the spread of disease.

Other speakers are Jack Imhof of Trout Unlimited Canada, Mike Murray of the Region of Waterloo, Ron Donaldson of Water and Earth Science Associates, and Paul Emerson of the GRCA.

For information on the event visit the GRCA website at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca)



## NOW AVAILABLE

### Where's Waldau? New website has the answer

Many of us have searched for Waldo in the beautifully illustrated children's books, where the pages contain hundreds of little men dressed all alike, and you have to find Waldo, dressed in red and white stripes and wearing a ski toque. But where's Waldau?

Waldau was a short-lived crossroads settlement at or near the Wilmot and Waterloo Township Line. Like much of that part of Wilmot Township, the area was settled by Germans. David B. Schneider recalled that in his youth, timber and stones from the area around Waldau were hauled to Berlin to build the Waterloo County Gaol.

In 2003, Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener began an ambitious historical research project to further document the

historical place names of Waterloo County from the early 19th century through 1973 when the Region of Waterloo was created.

The idea for the project originated from a conversation between museum staff and Regional Councilor Jean Haalboom, during discussions of ways to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Waterloo County in 2003. In the course of that conversation, it was noted the number of historic places which have vanished from the landscape.

Starting with a historic place names map created by the Region of Waterloo in 1979, the museum began to gather

published information on each place. Doon Heritage Crossroad's goal, in its role as the regional history museum, is to broadcast historical information about these historic places, as widely as possible via the Internet, to assist researchers, students and genealogists.

Information from many published historical accounts furnishes much of the data, along with images from Doon Heritage Crossroads' collection.

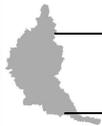
The project was launched on the Internet at [www.region.waterloo.on.ca](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca). Find the History link under the Government section.

Many well established communities, such as Ayr, Elmira, Hespler, Linwood

and Roseville, will be familiar to local residents, while many other place names will be as foreign to current generations as Waldau. There are over 100 place names, some familiar while others have been lost to time, such as Berlett's Corner, Centerville, Josephsburg, Kingwood, New Aberdeen, Pinehill, Shantz Station, and Weissenburg.

Through a series of interactive maps, you can explore each township, and locate each of the historic place names. Links will take you to an historical summary of each township and each historic place.

On the website, you will also find a brief overview of Waterloo County history and a history of Waterloo County government.



## The Grand Strategy Calendar

**The History of the Grand River. Saturday, July 10. 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**Doon Heritage Crossroads, 10 Huron Rd., Kitchener.** Join the Waterloo Historical Society and Doon Heritage Crossroads as they feature the history of the Grand River, celebrating its tenth anniversary as a Canadian Heritage River. The day will include informal talks, discussions about river lore and even songs about the mighty Grand. Admission: \$6 adults, \$4 seniors and students, \$3 children, \$15 family

**The Grand Wetland Enhancement Workshop, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**Amaranth Municipal Office, 6th Line and 10th Sideroad, Amaranth.** A workshop on protecting and enhancing wetlands, presented by Healthy Wetlands for the Upper Grand. Free. Lunch included. To register or for more information contact Mike Williams at 1-888-402-4444, ext. 247

**Laurel Creek Citizens Committee Workday. June 12. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**  
Silver Lake at the the CN Bridge in Waterloo Park. Take part in an exercise to monitor and measure the success of in-stream Aquamats. Facilitated by Limnoterra Ltd. For more information contact the City of Waterloo at 747-8643, e-mail; [partnersinparks@city.waterloo.on.ca](mailto:partnersinparks@city.waterloo.on.ca)

**Laurel Creek Citizens Committee Workday. July 10. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**  
Help remove in-stream debris from Laurel Creek. Park at the plaza at Weber Street and Bridgeport Road, meet at Laurel Creek north of Bridgeport Road. For more information contact the City of Waterloo at 747-8643, e-mail: [partnersinparks@city.waterloo.on.ca](mailto:partnersinparks@city.waterloo.on.ca)

**Grand River Watershed Water forum. Sept. 17. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**GRCA Headquarters, 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge.** Theme: "Whose water is it anyway?" Among the speakers: Dr. Judy Isaac-Renton, a B.C.-based expert on the relationship between water quality and the spread of disease; Jack Imhof of Trout Unlimited Canada; Mike Murray of the Region of Waterloo; Ron Donaldson of Water and Earth Science Associates; and Paul Emerson of the GRCA. Visit the GRCA website at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca)

## About this newsletter

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly as a communications tool by the Grand River Conservation Authority on behalf of the partners in *The Grand Strategy*. This newsletter can be seen at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca)

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Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of January, March, May, July, September and November. Submissions be edited for length or style.

Tax deductible donations and sponsorships toward the cost of producing this newsletter are always welcome.

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