



Grand River Conservation Authority



The Grand: A Canadian Heritage River

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Members of the City of Brantford emergency team, led by Ted Salisbury, general manger of community development services, discuss their strategy to deal with a flood threatening the community during a test of the emergency response system.



'Flood' tests Brantford emergency response

By Dave Schultz
GRCA Communications Co-ordinator

It was typical March weather - temperatures were above freezing and rain was pouring down.

The ice covering the Grand River was breaking up and huge chunks were floating down the swollen river.

In Brantford, the ice started to bunch up, forming an ice jam, backing up the water in the river.

Soon, it reached the top of the dikes protecting Brantford's Holmedale area, a long-established neighborhood of houses, shops and factories.

The water trickled over the dike, eroding the surface and slowly cutting a wedge into the dike.

Suddenly, the dike gave way and water crashed down Grand River Avenue, flooding side

streets, rushing past cars and pouring into basements.

Soon the City of Brantford had a major disaster on its hands. Hundreds of homes were surrounded by freezing water. Thousands of people had no way to get to safety. On top of the damage in Holmedale, the floodwaters raised threats that would soon affect the entire community.

How would the city cope?

That was the question confronting senior officials of the City of Brantford when they took part in a mock emergency exercise in June.

Flooding is a major concern in Brantford. The city has been flooded many times during its 200-year-history.

The most recent flood, in 1974, inundated several neighborhoods. A dike breach allowed flood

waters to enter the city's water treatment plant. The plant was shut down and the entire city was without a safe water supply for close to two days.

Following that flood, millions of dollars were spent to expand and improve the dike network, enclosing almost all of the inhabited parts of the city. The dikes provide protection from significant storms and have kept the city safe and dry ever since.

But as the residents of New Orleans learned in 2005, sometimes the forces of nature are just too great to be contained by any man-made structure, no matter how well built.

That's one reason why the decision was made to test the city's emergency response system with a flood scenario, said Gina Cliffe, Community Emergency Management Co-ordinator for the City of Brantford.

Even though the actual exercise only lasted about four hours, it took six months for a project team to put the scenario together and write the script.

The scenario had to be both realistic and challenging, she said.

Like the real flood in 1974, the mock disaster called for the city's water treatment plant to be knocked out of operation, which put the safety of the entire city at risk.

And, added Cliffe, the mock disaster was prepared in such a way as to deny the city access to some tools that would be important in dealing with a natural disaster. The Holmedale area is home to the Brantford Transit bus barns and Brantford Power's depot, which meant emergency transportation and heavy equipment would be out of reach.

The pace of the exercise was fast and furious, and put the city's emergency team to the test.

The city's Emergency Operations Advisory Group is made up of the heads of police service, the fire department, social services, the city engineering department, ambulance service and others with a role to play in a disaster.

They gathered in the Emergency



Terry Spier, director of environmental services (with back to camera) talks to Steve Collete, a senior foreman with Brantford Power in the mobile command trailer.

Operations Centre, a room on the second floor of the new main fire station in downtown Brantford. The room is well equipped with communications equipment and other gear.

Though they knew beforehand that they would be taking place in an emergency drill, they didn't know the details. Keeping the nature of the emergency a secret from the Operations Group would be the best way to test their skills and reactions.

Meanwhile, another group of people were gathered in a mobile command centre - a trailer equipped with communications equipment and other tools --



Gina Cliffe talks to Inspector Scott Easto of the Brantford Police

parked next to the river. These were senior officials from the same departments as the members of the emergency operations group.

The people in the trailer knew exactly what was going to unfold, because they were working from carefully prepared scripts that outlined the details of the impending disaster down to every minute.

At predetermined times, each team member in the trailer would send a message to the operations centre, providing some tidbit of information about the flooding and everything flowing from it.

As they rolled through the scenario, the scope of the disaster grew. Homes were surrounded by water, with residents stranded on upper floors. Large storage tanks were floating down the street, possibly leaking dangerous chemicals. A car was crushed by a floating chunk of ice.

But not all the action was taking place in the stricken area. The flood put the water treatment plant out of operation, forcing the emergency operations group to find enough water to meet the needs of an entire city. Some of their communication systems failed.

Problems cropped up in the most unexpected places: egg salad sandwiches given to evacuees were bad, causing food poisoning.

But as bad as it got on the ground, the atmosphere in the emergency centre remained calm and focused as the members of the operations group worked through the ever-growing list of problems.

Not that everything ran smoothly, noted Cliffe. The purpose of an exercise such as this is to find the weaknesses in the system so they can be repaired before the real thing. Immediately after the session, an informal gathering of participants showed that they were frustrated by the pace of communications, said Cliffe.

"Everyone is used to direct contact with telephones, e-mail and radio communications," she said. When some of these tools were wiped out during the disaster, it had a big impact on the ability of the emergency team members to communicate with each other, she said.

From that point of view, the exercise was a success, she said.

A six-page list of recommendations was developed in the weeks after the test. The suggestions addressed some major items - training, more robust communication systems - and some that were not as big, but still important - more power outlets in the trailer so people can recharge cell phones.

But apart from the specific goals of testing for weaknesses, exercises such as this have another purpose, noted Cliffe.

It helps to build a stronger team.

"This is a good way to get these people working together, using the resources they have to come up with creative solutions to the problems they're dealing with," said Cliffe.

Katie Silcox, a water resources project co-ordinator with the GRCA who observed the drill, said tests such as these "enable the emergency management team and the GRCA to understand one another's capabilities and limitations."

"They provide a link of communication and understanding between the GRCA and its municipal partners," she added.



Jamie Naylor (left) and Matt Naylor prepare the stream bed of the new course for Mill Creek.

Community effort sets Mill Creek on new course



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

By Chris Daponte
Wellington Advertiser

Residents of Puslinch Township are not the only locals trying to cool off this summer – and last month the aquatic wildlife in the area was granted a huge reprieve from increasing water temperatures.

On July 21, water ran for the first time through a newly constructed, 187-metre channel on Mill Creek.

The purpose of the channel, which is located just outside Aberfoyle on the McKinnon family property, is to narrow the stream to help lower the water temperature and improve the habitat for fish and other wildlife.

The new channel will effectively remove a large pool of water — known

as the McKinnon Pond — which was full of silt and caused the temperature of the creek to increase 3.5 to 4 degrees. Though most of the channel's construction took only two days, the project has been in the planning stage for some time.

It was expected to go ahead last summer, but was put off because of all the permits required and the scheduling conflicts for all the parties involved.

"It's one of those things that takes time to get momentum and develop, but now you can see the results," said Ron Van Ooteghem, site manager for Dufferin Aggregates, one of the companies involved in the construction.

He is also involved with Friends of Mill Creek (FOMC), which is comprised of residents, interest groups, and government and industry partners, and aims to improve the health of the Mill Creek watershed.

He said the channel project, which is

unique, was identified some time ago as a priority for the FOMC. "I've never been involved with anything like this before," he said, adding the project's value cannot be overstressed.

"You might say 200 metres is not very long, and dropping the temperature by three or four degrees is not a big deal, but from an environmental point of view, it is a big deal."

Van Ooteghem said the project would not have been possible without "the tremendous amount of teamwork" of 30 to 40 community partners. Some donated cash or in-kind labour or materials, and others offered technical support.

In addition to the FOMC — and the Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers, the flagship program of the FOMC — the list of those involved includes:

- Parish Geomorphoc (design of the channel);
- Capital Paving (construction of the channel);
- Dufferin Aggregates (stone and material);
- John Watson (the company that delivered the material);
- Wayne Tuffin (donated time and operated excavator);
- Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources (offered technical support); and
- Township of Puslinch, and countless others who donated time or money, or both, through the FOMC.

Van Ooteghem said special thanks should go to the Puslinch Optimist Club, one of the project's major partners.

This year, the MCSR received \$18,650 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (as part of a four-year, \$76,000 grant from 2003 to 2007), which would not have been possible were it not for the Optimist Club.

Puslinch Mayor Brad Whitcombe, who was on hand to witness the opening of the channel, was impressed with the water diversion. He said the FOMC has talked about improvements in the watershed since its formation in 1997, and



Members of the Mill Creek Rangers and the companies involved in the project take a moment to survey their work.

this project is a key part of that work, and a great achievement.

Robert Messier works for Wildlife Habitat Canada and is the technical adviser for the MCSR program. He said the new channel will go a long way towards "eliminating the impacts of the on-line pond," which he called a "big, black muckhole."

Messier said the new channel will be monitored for signs of erosion over the next few years, and trees will also be brought in and planted nearby.

But Mill Creek will show immediate signs of improvement, he said, noting that only 10 minutes after the waterway was opened, a frog was taking a dip.

The creek was diverted in front of the pond in the morning of July 21 and the bottom end of the pond was blocked off later, after it had a chance to partially drain.

MNR biologist Art Timmerman, an FOMC representative, played a key role in testing water temperatures along the creek to find out where exactly to build the channel.

"We decided that if we wanted to do some work, this would give us the biggest bang for our buck," Timmerman said.

He added that the channel will not only help provide the cold, pure water that brook trout and other fish need to flourish, but it will also provide a better food source than the existing pond.

"I think there will be fish going in there right off the bat," he said, adding the channel will improve with time.

Larry Wilson, vice president of Capital Paving, said his company was more than happy to help, especially considering it has been a member of the Puslinch community for so long, and because its property is located so close to the creek.

"We like to give back to the community, show good stewardship of the land, and be good corporate citizens," he said. "We're as excited about this as anybody."

This originally appeared in the Wellington Advertiser and is reprinted with permission.

Local industry supports greening of Brantford

Staff from two local Brantford pharmaceutical companies, ACIC and Apotex Pharmachem, joined forces in April to celebrate Earth Day by planting more than 300 native trees and shrubs along a stretch of creek behind ACIC's office building on Sinclair Boulevard.

The goal is to naturalize the area for wildlife and prevent erosion on the banks of the creek. ACIC and Apotex staff worked with staff from the City of Brantford and GRCA to carry out the planting. The trees and shrubs were locally grown at the GRCA's Burford Nursery.

For Apotex staff this work was old hat, having already planted over 230 trees in an unused portion of their property last year in order to create a small tree nursery. These trees will be maintained and left to grow for a number of years. They will then be transplanted to various schools and local parks in Brantford where large shade trees are lacking.

A GRCA study conducted in 2004 using satellite imagery, determined that all five major cities in the Grand River watershed were well below the target 40 per cent tree canopy cover required for a healthy urban forest.

Several local groups and community members in Brantford recognized that action is necessary to restore tree cover and ensure the long term health of the urban forest.

A group called the Brantford Tree Coalition has recently formed to take action toward this initiative. Partners in the group include the City of Brantford, Brantford Community Foundation, Grand River Conservation Authority, Brant Resource Stewardship Network and Apotex Pharmachem.

The group hopes that the ACIC tree planting is just the beginning of more successful projects to come, with

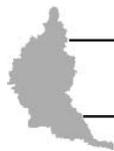
increasing support from local industry as one of the major goals.

ACIC has embraced the Brantford Tree Coalition goals and expects to con-

tinue their site project development with annual spring plantings and to lend assistance to other corporate neighbours in their own projects.



Cheryl Thompson (left) and her daughter Rebecca Kellman tried out the wheelchair-accessible fishing platform in Caledonia in July 2003, soon after it opened.



MILESTONES

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

Wheelchair-bound anglers make the most of fishing holes

By Cindy Matthews

Kitchener teen Harley Kaufmann-Sacrey happens to get around using a wheelchair. But it doesn't prevent him from maintaining a positive, engaged attitude. After spending a few minutes in his presence, his infectious vitality and zest for life shines through. He has interests in music and sports, including one of his favourite pastimes, fishing.

The only thing that limits Harley's exposure to fishing opportunities is his

mother's loathing of touching a fish.

Unfortunately, up until a few years ago, most natural lakes, creeks and rivers were inaccessible to wheelchairs due to the constraints of the landscape. The status of accessible fishing opportunities in this region is gradually changing. Both private and public facilities within a one-hour drive of Wilmot Township provide options for wheelchair-bound anglers

And since people with disabilities are not required to have a fishing license and many provincial parks give a discounted rate for vehicles with disabled parking permits, the sport is affordable.

When Kaufman-Sacrey goes fishing, a boat usually gives him the best advantage with a rod and reel. For example, Guelph Lake has an accessible dock and Harley is able to easily transfer from his chair to the boat. He and his father have gone fishing with great success using a zodiac-style boat.

Mitch Wilson with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources said Ontario tax dollars do go into accessibility projects. In most cases the ministry provides the funds and technical advice and a service-club partner provides the hands-on coordination to get the work done. Projects have been completed along the Grand River in the Fergus-Elora area, between Paris and Brantford and Caledonia. The Caledonia access is wheelchair accessible.

Guelph Lake Conservation Area is just northeast of Guelph, off Victoria Road, and has a lake which is 1,000 acres in size. Part of the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), it is extremely popular for events like dragon boat racing and triathlons. Northern pike, smallmouth and largemouth bass, black crappie, yellow perch, and carp will be safe from land-casting anglers who use wheelchairs, though, as the lake is only accessible to those with mobility issues if they have access to a boat. Area Superintendent for Guelph Lake, Gary MacMillan, has been in discussion with the MNR about installation of a board walk but these discussions are in the early stages.

Stephen Kerr, senior fisheries biologist with the MNR in Peterborough said the MNR has recently prepared detailed fishing access information for the Greater Toronto Area and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

When asked about statistics, he said no numbers for mobility disabled people who utilize provincial parks are available but the MNR and province in general have a mandate to improve accessibility.

One of the best fishing opportunities for wheelchair-bound anglers is within the Township of Wilmot. It is a pay-as-you-go trout fishing farm situated on Queen Street between Petersburg and New Dundee. Spring Valley Trout Farm boasts a one-acre pond featuring fresh rainbow trout. It is ideal for beginners and all fish caught must be purchased. While the site is fully accessible, wash-

room facilities are not wheelchair accessible. Anglers may choose to use their own tackle or rent from the facility. The admission is only \$3 per outing or \$15 for a season's pass. Fishing is available on weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and as an added bonus, no fishing licenses (for any anglers) are required to fish at this facility and staff will clean what you catch!

Shades Mills, another park which is part of the GRCA, is in Cambridge off Franklin Boulevard. Much of Shades Mills is accessible by wheelchair. The Toyota Trail and a fishing dock are fully accessible as is the washroom facility. Toyota provided funding for the Toyota Trail while the Ministry of Natural Resources providing some of the funding for the fully accessible dock area.

In fact, Brian Hunt, Area Superintendent at Shades Mills, said the GRCA is working diligently to provide greater access to their facilities. He also cited that "accessibility provides equal opportunity for all to enjoy the outdoors and activities."

Christie Lake, part of the Hamilton Conservation Authority, is on Highway 5 near Highway 8. Christie Lake has nine ponds, all stocked with trout, ready to catch from last weekend in April right into September. The trout are always hungry! Pond 8 is designed to be wheelchair accessible. If anglers forget bait, it is available at the gatehouse. Boats are also available for rental.

Byng Island, located at the Intersection of Regional Roads 20 and 3, in Dunnville, also falls under the GRCA umbrella. It is a fully accessible site which boasts camping, a swimming pool and fishing area (both lake and river fishing). Over the years, facilities at Byng Island have been gradually converted in order to accommodate accessibility needs.

The Grand River near Freeport Hospital has become more people-friendly with easier access to the river. The landscape permits people in wheelchairs, as well as the elderly with canes

and parents with strollers and wagons to be able to fish from the shore.

A company called Accessible Canadian Adventures specializes in creating an outdoor adventure (hunting and fishing) for people with disabilities. They will create a holiday anywhere in Canada and they have affiliations with contacts in Australia. Their website is <http://www.acadventures.ca/>.

Accessible fishing is alive and well. Go ahead and choose your bait. Here's to your successful, accessible casting!

Cindy Matthews is a vice-principal who works for the Waterloo Region District School Board. She and her husband, John, live with their three children in Wilmot Township.

This article originally appeared in the New Hamburg Independent and is reprinted with permission.

Grand River watershed attracts fly-fishing champs

By Steve May
Grand River Fisheries Plan
Implementation Co-ordinator

The Canadian Fly Fishing Championships were held in the Grand River Watershed from June 22-25. The event was hosted by Friends of the Grand River and Fly Fishing Canada. These two organizations, with the help of other partner groups including the Grand River Conservation Authority, Fergus/Elora Chamber of Commerce, and a team of over 30 volunteers, hosted eight teams of five anglers. These anglers were tested by the waters and fish of the Grand River tailwater and the Conestogo River tailwater. The goals of the event were to help raise awareness and money for conservation efforts and to help select team members to represent Canada at international fly-fishing events in the future.

Forty anglers from across the country fly-fished during five, three-hour competition sessions. During these outings they

landed more than 900 brown trout which were carefully measured and immediately released back into the river. This far exceeded the total number of fish caught at all of the previous championships combined. Even with this total number of fish caught, there were still many, many fish stories involving the ones that got away. The fish that were measured averaged about 24cm in length and the catch rates were higher in the Conestogo River than on Grand River. As an overall average, each angler landed about five or six fish during every three-hour fishing session.

In the end, an angler from the Northwest Territories, Terrence Courtoreille was the top rod. He was awarded the Doug Austin Memorial Trophy for this accomplishment. He landed 52 fish during the competitive sessions. Team Airflo was the winning team. This five-member team from the Hull-Ottawa area collected 139 fish.

The competitors and members of the public also took in a conservation symposium on Sunday afternoon. This symposium highlighted activities such as the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan, the Grand River Tailwater Fisheries Plan, the Exceptional Waters Program and developments in source water protection. Larry Halyk's inspiring talk at the closing banquet also helped let the anglers know about the link between agency and volunteer efforts and improved fishing in this area.

The comments from the anglers about the rivers that many partners have worked hard to develop into top notch fisheries were glowing. Past events have been held at exclusive fishing resorts in Kenauk, Quebec and Manitoba's Parkland. Last year the competition was held in Campbell River, British Columbia. This is the first time the event has come to Ontario. Here in the Grand River watershed the anglers enjoyed the scenery, the accommodations and local amenities. But, most of all they liked the numbers of fish that were rising to their flies.

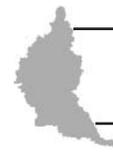


Jack Simpson of Fly Fishing Canada (left) presents the championship trophy to Terrence Courtoreille of Team Northwest Territories

Financially, the event raised some funds for future fisheries improvement projects. More than \$7,000 will be split between Fly Fishing Canada's national conservation initiatives and local Grand River projects. In addition, a team from Muscular Dystrophy Canada competed against local media members and raised more than \$14,000 through their "Casting for a Cure" pledges. Without volunteers' commitment this event would not have been possible. Friends of the Grand River volunteers logged in excess of 900 hours of service to make this event happen.

The spin off benefits from hosting this event and showing the river to people from around the country are difficult to measure at this time. But, when people from British Columbia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Nova Scotia all say that they will be back with friends and family because of the quality rivers, quality of environment and interesting activities available in the area it speaks volumes to the fact that the people working to improve the Grand River and its fishery are on the right track.

For more information about this event contact Steve May smay@grandriver.ca



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Environment minister to speak at Water Forum

Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten will be the keynote speaker at the Sixth Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum in Cambridge on Sept. 15.

The forum will be held at the Grand River Conservation Authority headquarters, 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge. The forum runs from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

This will be Broten's second appearance at the annual event. She also spoke at the 2005 forum. Leona Dombrowsky, Broten's predecessor as environment minister, addressed the forum in 2004.

Broten's appearance will come soon after the conclusion of public hearings on the proposed Clean Water Act, which are scheduled for late August. The bill is expected to pass in the fall session of the legislature.

The theme of this year's forum is "Building the Toolkit for Healthy Waters."

The goal of the forum is to provide government leaders, municipalities, businesses, farmers and others with knowledge about new technologies, innovations and community involvement needed to protect and improve our valuable water resources.

Tickets are still available. The cost is \$90 (\$45 for students) which includes a barbecue lunch.

More information on registration, exhibit space and sponsorships is available on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca under the heading Conferences: 2006 Water Forum.

Other speakers at the event are:
 ■ Herb Gray, co-chair of the International Joint Commission, the Canadian-U.S. body which monitors the Great Lakes.

■ Paul Emerson, chief administrative officer of the GRCA who will present an update on conditions in the Grand River watershed

■ Gord Miller, environmental commissioner for Ontario, who will provide an overview of the presentations made during the water forum and put them in the larger perspective of environmental concerns across the province.

■ Lorrie Minshall, program director for source water protection in the Lake Erie Watershed Region, who will provide an update on the program.

Two panels of experts will address innovations in water technology and watershed management:

Innovation in Technologies for Healthy Waters will include speakers on ecological goods and services, wastewater treatment, drain and wetland restoration, urban development and natural channel improvements.

Members of the panel are:

- Robert Bailey of Delta Waterfowl
- Jim Higgins of Jacques Whitford
- Dave Richards of the Ontario



Environment Minister Laurel Broten

Ministry of Natural Resources

- Andy Oding of Reid's Heritage Homes
- Bill Annable of the University of Waterloo

Innovations in Community Development will have speakers on community development, children's

water festivals, the Exceptional Waters program and the Rural Water Quality Program in the Grand River watershed.

Members of the panel are:

- Cecilia Ferreyra of the University of Guelph
- Peter Gray of Frontline Environmental Management
- Jack Imhof of Trout Unlimited Canada
- Tracey Ryan of Grand River Conservation Authority

In addition to the presentations and panels, there will be displays and exhibits highlighting innovative water technologies and services, as well as environmental programs of business, government agencies and environmental organizations.

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

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

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

Publications Mail

Agreement #144871



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Stream Rehabilitation Day, Critter Creek, RIM Park, Waterloo on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 9 a.m. to noon. — The Laurel Creek Citizen Committee will be holding a stream rehabilitation day on Critter Creek at RIM Park. This part of the stream is currently being assessed to determine the type of work needed. Due to the nature of the work, participation is limited. This day will include working in the stream. Waders will be provided. Contact: Denise McGoldrick, Environmental Project Manager, Water Resources, Tel: (519) 747-8642 or e-mail dmcgoldrick@city.waterloo.on.ca

Community Parks Week Tree Planting, Critter Creek, RIM Park on Saturday, Oct. 7 from 9 a.m. to noon — The Laurel Creek Citizens Committee will participate in Community Parks Week with a tree planting day on Critter Creek at RIM Park. To improve the health of the Critter Creek ecosystem, the LCCC will be planting native trees and shrubs along its banks at RIM Park. Park in the Grey Silo Golf Course parking lot nearest the trail kiosk and we will meet at the trail kiosk off of Woolwich and Park streets. Wear boots and clothing appropriate for the weather. Also, bring a pair of gloves to protect your hands.

Think Green!

Recycle your cell phones and print cartridges for outdoor education in the Grand River watershed!



ThinkGreen is a cost-free print cartridge and cell phone recycling program that provides **free collection materials and free shipping**. This easy to use program offers **cash rebates** in exchange for used print cartridges and cell phones.

When you recycle these items, you can **choose The Living Classroom, Campaign for Outdoor Education** to receive the funds that are generated by your recycling efforts. To date, **almost \$10,000 has been raised** in support of several GRCA projects! All you need to do is throw your empty print cartridges and cell phones in the ThinkGreen collection box instead of in the garbage.

Getting started is as easy as 1,2,3:

1. **Call to enroll** and choose the GRCF as recipient for the funds: 1.888.265.2895
2. **Collect empty print cartridges and cell phones** and deposit them in the provided ThinkGreen boxes.
3. **Call for a pick up**, order more supplies, and watch your funds help outdoor education in the Grand River watershed!

Thinking green makes a world of difference! Protect the environment and create tomorrow's environmental ambassadors ~ support



THE *Living Classroom*
CAMPAIGN FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

