



Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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Cover photo

Bob Wall (front) leads seniors on a walk each Tuesday no matter what the weather. They clean the trails, pay for new benches and have donated to several watershed organizations.



Greener, grander watershed thanks to award winners

Each year for 30 years, the GRCA has recognized individuals and groups by presenting awards for outstanding examples of conservation and environmental work.

For 2006, the winner of the Honour Roll Award is Archie MacRobbie of Puslinch. The winners of the Watershed Awards are: Trees for Peel, Mapleton; The Reuter Walkers, Cambridge; Tom and Barb Parker, Nassagaweya; three retiring Foundation presidents (Robert Murray, John Harris and Marilyn Murray); David Morris, Brantford; the four Cambridge Rotary Clubs; and Walt Crawford, Elora.

Winners are honoured at a special ceremony during the GRCA's annual meeting in February. As part of the event, a slide show detailing the accomplishments of each winner has been created by Janet Baine. This article, adapted from the script for the show, highlights three winners. A story about each of the other winners will be fea-

tured in future issues of Grand Actions.

Honour Roll Award Archie MacRobbie

Archie MacRobbie's long political career began in 1973, when he was elected as councillor for Puslinch Township. He later served as deputy-reeve, reeve and then county councillor. He was the warden in 1980 — Wellington County's highest ranking municipal politician.

Unfortunately, MacRobbie passed away in July 2006, but he served on the GRCA board right up until the end of his life and did many things to support conservation.

MacRobbie had a 50-acre hobby farm and was active in the Wellington County Plowmen's Association. He enjoyed horses and he brought them to municipal events and the GRCA's winter celebration.

Many public works projects came into being as a result of his efforts to rally support. He and others ensured that the Wellington County Administration Centre in Guelph — originally built in 1832 — was saved from demolition and



Archie MacRobbie

restored to be used as the county offices.

In 2005, the county bought the old post office on Guelph's main street to keep it as a public building after the city passed it up. The building is currently being restored.

MacRobbie was first appointed to the GRCA board in 1981. He served as the representative of the Town of Erin and the townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch. He was the GRCA's second chairman (1990 to 1997) and also served two stints as vice-chair from 1984 to 1990 and again from 1998 to 1999.

(The GRCA's award policy excludes current board members from receiving an award, so MacRobbie could not receive this award while he was still on the board.)

He led the organization through some of its most historic and challenging times, says Peter Krause, who succeeded

MacRobbie as chair of the board in 1998.

His enthusiasm and support helped lead to the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River in 1994.

"He was very proud of the designation," Krause says.

It was also during MacRobbie's tenure that the GRCA went through a significant period of change. Cutbacks in provincial grants in the mid-1990s resulted in a major restructuring of the entire organization as well as the board structure.

For several years, Krause and MacRobbie worked "hand in glove." Krause served as vice-chair when MacRobbie was chair, and later the two reversed their positions.

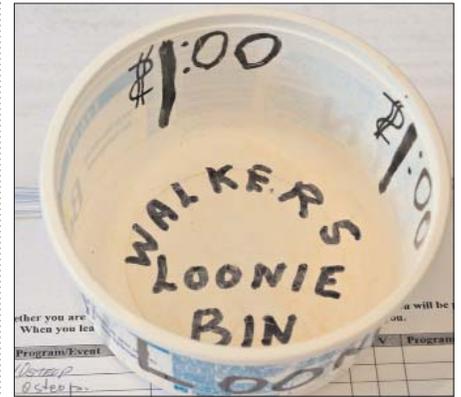
"He was extremely loyal as a friend," says Krause. "He was a good mentor."

MacRobbie was an effective politician and a fun-loving man whose achievements on many fronts improved the watershed.

Watershed awards Reuter Walkers

Why do the Reuter Walkers walk? To quote a favourite poem of theirs, "T'aint no mystery — they wanna good medical history."

These seniors know walking is good



By collecting a loonie (it started as 25 cents), the Reuter walkers have been able to install 12 benches and make contributions to several organizations.

for their health and they walk every Tuesday — rain, snow, or sleet. Since 1993 they have gathered weekly at the Allen Reuter Centre in Cambridge and carpooled to a trail for a hike.

Each walker pays a loonie for these walks. They are led by Bob Wall and organized by Marjorie Elliott. The walkers carry plastic bags and pick up litter along the way. They leave the trails litter-free when they have finished their walks. When they find a good spot for a bench along the way, they use the loonies they have gathered to put one there. Each bench bears the name of the Reuter Walkers and it is also dedicated to the memory of a member of their group who has passed away.

So far, they have purchased a dozen benches and three are along GRCA trails. Each spring and fall, they clean up Shade's Mills and Pinehurst conservation areas.

The Reuter Walkers have also donated money to organizations like the TransCanada Trail, Cambridge Trails, rare (an environmental group) and to the City of Cambridge for trail improvement.

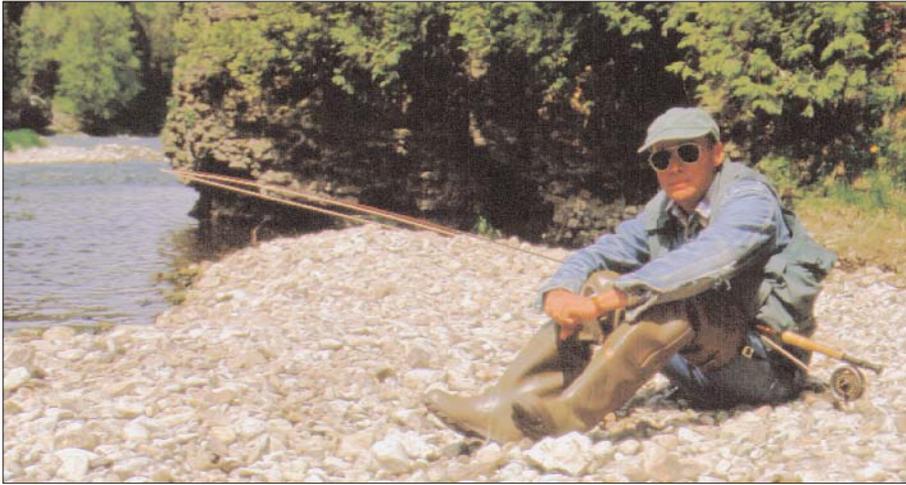
The Reuter Walkers look after their own health, the health of our watershed and are helping to upgrade the trails for further generations.

Walt Crawford

Walt Crawford was an avid fisherman and a passionate and fierce defender of



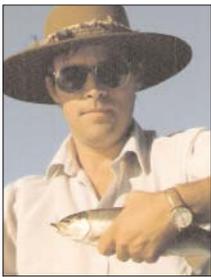
Archie MacRobbie brought his team of horses to municipal events, such as parades, as well as the GRCA's winter celebration.



A fish was like a canary in the coal mine to Walt Crawford, and flourishing brown trout meant that things were right in the Grand River.

the Grand River who passed away in September 2005.

He grew up in Penetanguishene and developed a respect for land and water in his early years. While living in



On the Bow River

Alberta, he helped start the Bow River Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Then in the mid-80s, he and his family moved to Elora. He found the Grand River, with its steep

gorge, rushing water and intimate setting a comfortable place, but he wanted better fishing. Through his dogged determination, Crawford helped create the world-class brown trout fishery between Shand Dam and West Montrose.

To him, a fish was like a canary in a coal mine. Flourishing brown trout meant that things were right in the river.

Trout were his indicator of environmental health and the river's value to the community.

Walt always had the best interests of the river at heart.

He strongly supported the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan, and he strongly advocated engaging the public.

As he said, "the river is the public's resource" and "the public needs to take responsibility for it."

He was an independent thinker who wasn't afraid to tackle issues.

He was a good friend of the GRCA and many other partners and knocked on many doors at Queen's Park in support of the river.

Through unconventional thinking, he opened a lot of people's eyes to the possibilities. Walt Crawford led by example and his passion and commitment were always clear.

The Grand River brown trout program has received many accolades. Today people come from all over the world to enjoy the fishing on the Grand. (An article about Walt Crawford appeared in Grand Actions in May/June 2006.)

Lifelong impact for GRCA nature centres

By Dan Schneider
Nature Centre Interpreter

The impact is immediate and obvious when kids and animals meet eye-to-eye at the GRCA nature centres.

Their faces reflect curiosity, wonder, respect and reverence for our natural world. This tangible connection with our environment sparks an interest in conservation that lasts into adulthood.

The learning is hands-on and experiential. In fact, studies have shown that students learn all subjects better when

they are taught outside. As an excited group of children wade knee-deep in a river, they are oblivious to the fact that they are learning math by measuring water flow, language arts by describing the riverbank, and science by identifying the water animals that they catch and release.

Some students who don't do well in school are stars when they learn actively in the nature centres' living classroom. Each program complements studies back at school, and is directly linked to the education curriculum.

The nature centre visits continue even when schools aren't in session. On week-ends and evenings, Scouts, Guides and affiliated groups earn conservation-related badges while they explore the outdoors. These groups have a price break, thanks to an anonymous donation.

Environmental birthday parties are a healthy, popular option, while March break and summer camps keep the nature centres hopping with energetic campers. Public programs are posted on the GRCA website in the Calendar section. They range from dam tours to owl prowls to tree planting, keeping the nature centres busy throughout the year.

For each program, nature centre instructors are armed with the expertise of a world-class resource management agency. For every study unit they conduct, centre staff has support from GRCA biologists, foresters, water engineers and other professionals. Cutting-edge information is passed on in an age-appropriate manner that is relevant to what is currently happening in the Grand



A face-to-face encounter with a bull frog.

River watershed.

With this knowledge and a kindled enthusiasm for protecting the natural environment, some of the young visitors have gone on to become the next generation of resource managers.

To be accessible to all watershed residents, the nature centres and programs are widely distributed: Laurel Creek (Waterloo), Shade's Mills (Cambridge), Apps' Mill (near Brantford) and Guelph Lake serve the central areas, while Taquanyah (near Cayuga) and Luther Marsh (near Grand Valley) are at the far ends of our watershed. Seasonal programs also take place at Belwood Lake and Rockwood conservation areas.

The nature centres reflect the tremendous natural diversity of the Grand River watershed, since students at Apps' Mill may study the southern Carolinian forest, while at Luther Marsh they may encounter northern snowshoe hare tracks as they visit the huge wetland complex.

The GRCA was a pioneer in bringing a conservation message to watershed residents through nature centres, and the program has expanded since it began in 1970 at Belwood Lake. Well over a million school children and many other participants have benefited by taking part in nature centre activities.

Many parents who attended these programs as children are now great supporters, since they want their children to have the same opportunity for environmental learning and connection to the natural world. With rapid growth in our watershed and cutbacks in school funding, outdoor education opportunities are becoming more difficult to find.

Nature centres play a key role in fulfilling the GRCA's vision of a healthy watershed.

For more information or to pre-register, visit www.grandriver.ca or call:

Guelph Lake (519) 836-7860

Apps' Mill (519) 752-0655

Laurel Creek (519) 885-1358

Shade's Mills (519) 623-5573

A day at a GRCA environmental day camp

By Tamara Anderson and Ann Schletz
Assistant Nature Interpreters

On a typical day at environmental day camp, children eagerly arrive to be welcomed by experienced staff and some "creepy creatures" that live at the nature centres. While they may look scary, the children learn the creatures are really lovable.

The campers break off into groups with unique names such as the "Snowboarding Snakes." They may head to the river or creek to discover what lives under the water and then learn amazing facts about each of the aquatic creatures that have been caught and temporarily placed in the camper's care.

"Watch how the diving beetle carries a pocket of air with it underwater, kind of like a scuba tank," the children may be told.

In the afternoon, they anticipate the "Great Garbage Audit," a conservation activity in which campers collect their snack and lunchtime garbage, weigh it and win a prize for the smallest amount.

Other activities include squeezing into caves, bug hunts, touring dams, snowshoeing (March Break), netting fish, canoeing, an overnight camp in Rockwood, rafting, edible wild programs and creepy creature shows.

A brave group of young naturalists-in-training or NITs, ages 13-16 help plan and set up nature-based activities. This volunteer time can count towards the high school community service hours and they can also gain Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association accreditation and first aid qualifications.

In 2006, more than 700 kids participated in the GRCA day camps. This year they take place March 12 to 16 at Guelph Lake and Laurel Creek nature centres, while the summer camps also take place at Apps' Mill. The week-long camps are designed to make nature accessible and hands-on, establishing a life-long connection between the next generation and our precious environment. These camps promote the idea that experiences are worth more than words.



Kids at Guelph Lake environmental day camp discover the fun of cooking hot dogs over an open fire in the great outdoors.



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

Tree planters carry on legacy

By Mike Nagy
Guelph Eramosa Tree Planters

A chance meeting outside a Rockwood grocery store six years ago resulted in the creation of Guelph Eramosa Tree Planters (GET Planters) to continue the roadside tree plantings started by retired Eramosa roads superintendent Bob Hamilton.

John Benham and Rick Hughes found they were both concerned because, since Hamilton's retirement in 1993, trees were not being planted along township roads. Hamilton's strong commitment to tree planting resulted in 24,200 trees being planted between 1978 and 1993. He received a watershed award from the GRCA in 1987 for leaving this green legacy.

Benham and Hughes got others involved (Carol Hughes, Lou Bozzelli, Phil Sweet, Clint Martin, John Shultis and Mike Nagy) and these founding members of GET Planters are supported by other volunteers. They have planted well over 1,000 native hardwood trees, primarily along roads, but also in parks and on private land, with the goal of increasing the tree canopy. They also want to motivate Guelph/Eramosa Township to commit to planting at least three new trees for every tree removed. The township has been supportive and has helped with administration, donations and planning. GET Planters and the township council are working together to produce a vision and long-term plan.

In early spring and late fall each year the volunteers plant numerous oak species, maples, Kentucky coffee trees, ash and elm that they purchase from the GRCA and private nurseries. They prefer planting trees that are at least four



GET Planters from left: Phil Sweet, John Shultis, Rick Hughes, Anatoly Moldovan, Ken Cornelisse, Victor Bissonette, John Benham, Lou Bozzelli, Mike Nagy and Clint Martin.

feet tall, and like to vary the species they plant to prevent monoculture, increase disease resistance and for improved aesthetics. In past years, drought, gypsy moths, farm and salt spray have resulted in 20 to 60 per cent loss of the trees they plant, and the group replants when necessary if the trees have not survived. They also try to water new trees at least once during droughts.

Support for the group from volunteers, donors and landowners has been very good, with some property owners retiring strips of land for planting. For example, Gencor set aside land for two one-kilometre rows of trees to help ensure the longevity of the planting and reduce wind onto the fields as the trees reach maturity.

Last spring the GET Planters were invited by the GRCA to help expand a wildlife corridor and memorial forest near the Guelph Lake Nature Centre. They planted more than 100 hardwoods and some larger memorial trees that had been donated. Establishing wildlife corridors and greenways has always been a main priority of GET Planters and the group hopes to establish more, so it welcomes calls for assistance from

landowners.

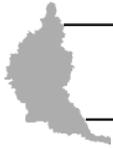
In addition, the group helps to educate students on field trips by teaching them to plant trees and Peter Degroot has volunteered his land and time for these outings. Education is a main goal, because it encourages people to enhance their environment.

The group is hopeful that Guelph/Eramosa Township will increase its commitment to planting trees. They met with council in October to discuss an improved tree planting and cutting bylaw, as well as holding community round table discussions to solicit public input on the issue.

The group is self-funded and accepts donations, with all money going to buy trees, including memorial trees. Tax receipts will be issued for cheques made out to Guelph/Eramosa Township that are earmarked for GET Planters.

They also want to hear from anyone who wishes to commit land beside the road for long-term tree stewardship and from people who want trees planted in areas where greenway links can be established.

Contact the group by calling Mike (519) 856-2073 or Rick (519) 856-4452.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Securities a better way to give to GRCA

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Thomas Pick is an investment counsellor who knows something many people don't — donating appreciated securities is a tax-smart way to give to the Grand River Conservation Foundation.



Thomas Pick

“From the perspective of the donor, it is by far the best way to give,” says Pick, who is also the Foundation’s past president. He values the work that it is

doing to raise funds for important environmental projects. In 2002 he pledged to support the Living Classroom — Campaign for Outdoor Education by donating securities each year during the five-year campaign.

Pick had no idea then that in May 2006, a federal tax change would make this form of giving even better from the perspective of a donor. This is because donors are no longer taxed on capital gains when the securities are given directly to a charity. As with other donations, a charitable donation receipt for the full value of the shares is provided.

When most people think of making a large donation, however, they think they must first sell securities and then give the money to the charity. But if they do this, they will have to pay capital gains.

“By giving securities directly, this tax is eliminated,” Pick says.

Like many Canadians, he benefited from the Canadian stock market boom over the past few years and he is passing those gains on to the foundation. The

Living Classroom program ensures that every child participates in outdoor education programs a minimum of three times during their elementary school career.

“One of the key things that is important is that the recipient of the donation has to have a smooth-running system to receive and sell shares. The foundation has that capacity, but a lot of charities don’t,” Pick says.

This tax change is a great incentive to giving for both the GRCA and the charitable community generally.

“Donors are becoming more sophisticated about giving this way,” says Sara Wilbur, director of the foundation.

“They are aware of the benefits. In recent months we’ve had people make a gift specifically because of the tax change last May.”

For more information on giving securities or on the foundation, contact Sara Wilbur at swilbur@grandriver.ca or (877) 29-GRAND.

Alan Dale elected new GRCA chair

Alan Dale, a farmer from the Township of Norwich, has been elected chair of the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Dale, who represents Oxford County on the 26-member board, was elected to a one-year term as chair at a GRCA board meeting on Friday, Jan. 12. He moves up to the chairmanship after serving as first vice-chair for the past year.

Dale has been a member of the GRCA board since 2000. He is a former member of Norwich Township Council and has served on several township and Oxford County committees. Dale serves as treasurer of Curries United Church and is treasurer of Oxford Centre Pastoral Charge.

Dale succeeds Peter Krause, who had been chair from 1998 until December 2006. Krause was not reappointed to the board by the Region of Waterloo, which he had represented since 1986.

Dale paid credit to Krause who, he says, left some “big shoes to fill” and played a key role representing Ontario conservation authorities on the provincial scene as they addressed issues such as growth, clean water and government funding.

Dale says it is critical that the GRCA play a leading role in “ensuring a healthy watershed for current residents and future generations.



Alan Dale

“Environmental issues are on the top of people’s minds,” he says. “It’s a good time to get their attention.”

He says it is important for the GRCA to continue working with its municipal partners, as well as the provincial and federal governments, on providing the resources necessary to protect the environment in the Grand River watershed.

Watershed communities face significant challenges in coping with anticipated high population growth in coming decades, Dale says.

Two vice-chairs were also elected at the board meeting.

Jane Mitchell, a member of Waterloo Regional Council from the City of Waterloo, was elected first vice-chair. She has been a GRCA board member since 2003 and a regional councillor since 2000. Prior to that she was a trustee on the Waterloo Region District School Board. She is president of Arachne Web Consulting and Design.

Vic Prendergast, a representative of the City of Brantford, was acclaimed to another term as second vice-chair. Prendergast, a GRCA board member for eight years, has been second vice-chair for six years. He is a management consultant in Brantford and has been involved with many community organizations including Brantford General Hospital, the Alzheimer Society of Brant and the Brantford Airport Commission.

Waterloo campaign for active living

The new program, *Eat Healthy. Live Active.*, a public education campaign to reduce childhood obesity, has been launched in Waterloo Region in response to a recent study that found one in four children are overweight or obese in Ontario.

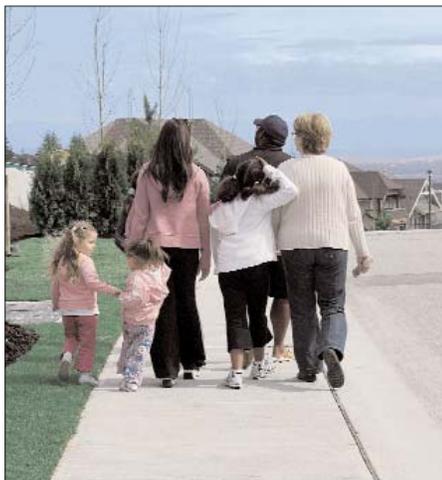
These children face an increased risk of developing serious illnesses such as type two diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

"It is important to take steps now to improve the eating habits and physical activity levels of our children," says Melanie Garbarz, obesity prevention strategy co-ordinator with the Region of Waterloo, which launched the campaign.

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in dealing with childhood obesity, as studies show that kids are more active when they see their parents lead an active lifestyle. Children need daily activity — a good starting point is 30 minutes less time in front of a computer or TV and 30 minutes more of outdoor activity (e.g. biking, hiking or walking).

The program, *Eat Healthy. Live Active.*, is one part of the obesity prevention strategy of Region of Waterloo Public Health. Another part of the strategy focuses on designing neighbourhoods in a way that encourage people to walk.

The GRCA offers many outdoor



Taking a walk as a family is excellent exercise for everyone.

recreational opportunities that everyone can enjoy to increase exercise: there are four rail trails, several conservation areas and parks. As well, the outdoor education centres offer active camps and special programs for children.

"When you lead an active lifestyle, your children will too. Take the time to have fun and be active together," says Garbarz.

Visit www.healthywaterlooregion.ca to learn more about physical activity and nutrition tips and visit www.grandriver.ca to find out about the GRCA's recreational opportunities.



NOW AVAILABLE

BOOMer Rules

Frank Glew's newest children's book, *BOOMer Rules*, is about a frog named Boomer who lives in the Grand River.

Boomer encourages everyone to keep his river clean and ensures the city residents have clean drinking water. In fact, he earns the Nobel Frog Peace Prize and his song becomes famous all over the world as he learns that one frog can make a difference.

"The idea for this book came from hearing years of foreboding and unheeded warnings about potential global issues," says Glew. "Many altruistic people who dedicated their lives to teaching why and how we should look after our precious habitat were never taken seriously. Now as global warming becomes a frightening household word, will we and our governments listen to these warnings and react in time to change our path of habitat destruction?"

Glew hopes this book will lead people to appreciate their sense of place along the Grand River. It addresses global warming with the people who will be affected the most — the children.

Glew is a retired teacher who lives in Kitchener and this is the sixth book in a



series that he has written for children. He has a doctorate in environmental science and has received 10 environmental awards for his books, including a Grand River Watershed Award in 1991, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, 2002 and the Ontario Nature Richards Education Award in 2006.

The books are illustrated by twin sisters Marlene and Myrna McBrien, who live in the Muskokas.

The book sells for \$10 and Glew matches this by donating a book to a school for each book that he sells. So far, \$45,000 worth of books has been donated by the author.

Please e-mail or phone for purchase fsglew@kw.igs.net or (519) 742-6617.

Pilkington Township history

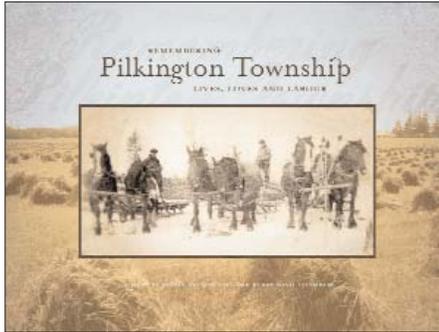
In *Remembering Pilkington Township: Lives, Loves and Labour*, editors Elysia DeLaurentis and Debra Nash-Chambers share the documented stories and collective memories of the many generations who have lived in this agricultural region of south-western Ontario.

The book tells the stories of the farm families, rural residents and social organizations that established roots and supported the economic development, institutions and sporting life of Pilkington for over 150 years.

This social history provides not only an intimate glimpse into the patterns of rural life in Pilkington Township and Wellington County, but also offers insights relevant to an appreciation of 19th and 20th century rural townships

across Ontario.

The 310-page book sells for \$55 and was published by the Wellington County Historical Society. It is for sale at the Wellington County Museum gift shop, Reflections Bookstore in Fergus, The General Store, Elora, the Bookshelf in Guelph and the University of Guelph Bookstore.



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

For information on The Grand Strategy contact:

Barbara Veale, GRCA
400 Clyde Road, Box 729
Cambridge, ON, N1R 5W6
Phone (519) 621-2763 Ext. 274
Fax: (519) 621-4844
E-mail: bveale@grandriver.ca
Web site: www.grandriver.ca

For newsletter submissions contact:

Janet Baine, GRCA
Phone: (519) 621-2763 Ext. 302
Fax: (519) 621-4844
E-mail: jbaine@grandriver.ca
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.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Over the past 30 years, 46 honour roll awards and 198 watershed awards have been given out by the GRCA.
- The first awards ceremony took place at the opening of Guelph Lake Dam in 1976.
- At that time, the GRCA was 10 years old, but many conservationists had contributed to the two organizations that preceded it decades earlier, the Grand River Conservation Commission and the

Grand Valley Conservation Authority. The GRCA wanted to recognize these individuals with awards and that first year, 18 people received Honour Roll awards.

- Watershed Awards have been presented annually since 1983, originally as Certificates of Appreciation, to recognize individuals, agencies, groups and businesses who have undertaken one or more major projects to forward conservation work in the Grand River Watershed.

- The nomination deadline for the next awards is July 31, 2007.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Tenth Annual Heritage Day Workshop, Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex, 101 Father David Bauer Drive, Monday, Feb. 19 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Register online at www.city.waterloo.on.ca/HeritageDayWorkshop or contact Peggie Bednarek by e-mail at pbednarek@city.waterloo.on.ca, by fax at (519) 886-5788, or by phone at (519) 747-8643.

Growing Seedlings Indoors Workshop, Saturday March 3, 9 a.m. to noon at Doon Heritage Crossroads, Kitchener. Includes a tour of the indoor plant growing facility where more than 4,000 heritage seedlings are started each year. Learn about seed germination, seed storage, soil, watering, lighting and tricks. Participants will take home a tray of heritage seeds/seedlings for their own garden. **Pruning Trees and Shrubs Workshop, Saturday, April 14, 9 a.m. to noon at Doon Heritage Crossroads, Kitchener.** Each of these two workshops will cost \$10 per person plus GST, with a discount for members. Capacity is limited and pre-registration is required at (519) 748-1914.

Papers accepted until April 30 for "History on the Grand," a one-day local history, public history and heritage symposium at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, downtown Cambridge. The symposium takes place Oct. 20 and is a forum to share research and discuss issues arising from the study of local history and making history public. Please submit a 500 word paper abstract and a brief C.V. Papers may be on a wide range of themes including local history, architectural history, natural heritage and community histories. Presenters will be notified by June 15. For more information and to submit papers, contact Jim Quantrell at the City of Cambridge Archives, P.O. Box 669 Cambridge ON N1R 5W8, or by e-mail at quantrellj@city.cambridge.on.ca.

Environment and Business Conference, Tuesday March 27th, University of Waterloo. Exchange ideas with professionals, faculty and students concerning environmental issues that are becoming an integral part of business operations. Bob Willard author of *The Sustainability Advantage* and *The Next Sustainability Wave* is the keynote speaker. For information and to register, visit www.ebconference.ca or e-mail EBconference2007@gmail.com.