The Grand Valley Trails Association prepares to celebrate 40 years since the first section of trail was broken, it is receiving the GRCA’s top conservation award for its work and is also hosting the Hike Ontario Summit in Kitchener.

The organization has more than 300 members who developed and maintain the 275-km Grand Valley Trail. They also provide more than 100 hiking opportunities each year, both along the trail and to many other locations.

Each year since 1976, the GRCA has presented Conservation Awards to individuals, families, organizations and businesses that have taken action to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Grand River watershed. The Honour Roll Award that will be given to the GVTA in October is for a sustained record of achievement over many years. Honour Roll awards are not given out every year.

Hiking is among the healthiest physical activities, open to all age, income and ability levels,” said Ralph Beaumont, who nominated it for the award. “Most importantly, each year, the trail introduces hundreds of residents and visitors to appreciation of the scenic landscapes of the Grand River watershed.”

The Grand Valley Trail was the brainchild of Betty Schneider, who was also the founding chair of the Grand River Conservation Foundation. After seeing the Grand River from an airplane she had the idea that it would be a good idea to develop a trail along the river.

She called a public meeting in Kitchener in January 1972 to establish trails around Waterloo County. The first section of trail was from Doon to Conestogo. Schneider received an Honour Roll Award from the GRCA in 2007, the 35th anniversary of the club.

In Brantford a group of volunteers organized and in 1974 they began working on the section of the trail in their area.
trail between Brantford and Paris. The next year, work began on the trail between Paris and Kitchener, which opened on the first Ontario Hiking Day.

Four sections

The trail is divided into four sections: the Towpath (Haldimand County), the Carolinian Crest (Brant County), the Black Walnut (Waterloo Region) and the Pinnacle (Wellington and Dufferin counties and Peel Region). The plan is to eventually have a club for each of these sections of trail that are part of the association.

"Personally I admire the foresight of the people who originally created the first 48 kilometres. Even for them to plan the trail so that people like me can benefit from it," said Georgia Mulholland, the past president of the club.

The trail runs along the Grand River from its mouth at Lake Erie up through Brantford, Waterloo, and Fergus all the way to Alton near Orangeville. There it connects to the Bruce Trail.

All the work of maintaining the trails, training hike leaders, organizing more than 100 events each year and keeping a community presence is carried out by volunteers from the club. There are no staff members. They work in a similar way to the Bruce Trail Association and are members of Hike Ontario, a provincial organization.

They have written and published a guide book with 16 fold out maps and a description of each section of trail. It costs $25 for GVTA members and $30 for non-members.

The continued existence of the footpath depends on the goodwill of landowners who have given their permission to association members to walk over their properties. No sections of the trail are owned directly by the volunteer association.

The association membership is very active with many people pitching in to keep it running. They offer shorter hikes and family hikes.

The GVTA will celebrate their anniversary with special events the weekend of November 2-4. On Saturday Nov. 3 they will host the Hike Ontario Summit, a gathering of 29 trail associations from across the province who belong to the umbrella group, Hike Ontario. Following that there will be a celebration dinner with guest speaker, Kevin Callan, known as The Happy Camper.

On Sunday Nov. 4, there will be guided hikes on the trail.

The public is invited to participate in the anniversary celebrations. Details and registration are posted online at www.gvta.on.ca/40

GVTA trail users code

- Hike along marked trails only.
- Use stiles, do not climb fences.
- Walk around the edge of fields, not across them.
- Leave the trail cleaner than you found it; carry out all litter.
- No camping or fires are permitted.
- Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
- Do not damage live trees or strip off bark.
- Protect and do not disturb wildlife and farm animals.
- Leave nothing but thanks and take nothing but photographs.
- Do not use motorized vehicles or bicycles, except where explicitly permitted by signposting.
- Keep dogs leashed.
- Use the trail at your own risk.

A hiking addiction

Beware — hiking can be addictive.

Georgia Mulholland joined the Grand Valley Trails Association to hike the 275 km trail many years ago. It turns out she has now hiked it three times. She’s also done many other trails and is hiking the 600-km Bruce Trail for the second time.

But hiking is an addiction with multiple health, social and environmental benefits.

“If you like walking, you’ll like hiking,” Mulholland said. The hikes are graded according to difficulty so that newcomers can give it a try first before they take on more than they would like.

Mulholland has lived in the area for 18 years and hiking the Grand Valley Trail and other areas has increased her appreciation of the Grand River and the history of the area.

“It has increased my appreciation to be by the river and in nature and the landowners who give us access,” she said. About 15 landowners allow the trail to pass through their land.
Rest Acres Creek restoration

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

There will be a better chance of more “hot dates” among the spawning trout beneath the cold waters of Rest Acres Creek each fall thanks to the restoration of the stream banks.

Rest Acres Creek is a small coldwater stream flowing through the Apps’ Mill Nature Centre property into Whitemans Creek near Brantford. The creek provides a place for trout to swim upstream and spawn in the fall.

In fact, Whitemans Creek is a top trout fishing spot in Ontario. It is in small creeks like this that trout lay eggs in the fall. Water levels may be low this fall so the trout may have difficulty accessing the creek, however those that make it up the creek will find better conditions for spawning.

Retaining walls that were on the slopes of Rest Acres Creek were removed and the slopes were naturalized. Not only is this better habitat for trout, but it is good for the many species of fish, bugs and other aquatic critters that also make their home in Rest Acres Creek.

Last fall 40 native shrubs were planted to naturalize the stream banks — these shrubs included redosier dogwood, alternate dogwood and silky dogwood. This spring school children who were visiting Apps Mill Nature Centre helped to plant ferns, asters, goldenrod and sedges. These plantings mimic the natural area on the other side of the creek.

“I think it is a fabulous project, because we got the funding to restore the stream banks,” said Lindsay Campbell, restoration specialist with the GRCA who worked on the project.

As part of the approval process to remove the retaining walls and restore the stream banks, the GRCA had to obtain a permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) from the Ministry of Natural Resources. As a condition of the ESA permit, several flat stones were incorporated into the final design as these provide queen snakes with a sunny place to bask and crayfish a place to hide. Queensnakes are a threatened species provincially and nationally and they have been found at Apps’ Mill recently. The queensnake’s primary food is crayfish and so this snake is found near rivers and streams.

In fact, Campbell goes back regularly to check up on the snakes and see if they are using these shelves. In September she not only found queen snakes, but was very impressed with how well the plants are doing on the streambanks.

This project took place thanks to a generous donation from S.C. Johnson and Son Ltd., which came through the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

“Apps’ Mill Nature Centre is a valuable asset within our community. Many of our employees have participated or have enrolled their children in the programs offered at Apps Mill Nature Centre. S.C. Johnson is a proud supporter of the GRCF and Apps Mill in particular,” said Kathy Makela of S.C. Johnson. As the restored site begins to naturalize, GRCA staff will review the needs of the nature centre and its programs. Whitemans Creek is used for stream studies and safe student access points will be added if necessary. New interpretive signage will also go up within the next year.

From left, Elizabeth Milne and Lindsay Campbell measure a rare juvenile queensnake found along Whitemans Creek outside of Brantford in September. Milne, an intern with the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s Herpetofauna Project, travels the province in search of the species. The team spent a few days in the Grand River watershed. Campbell is doing some snake monitoring on behalf of the GRCA.
Celebrate Guelph Lake Nature Centre

Guelph Lake Nature Centre is holding a reunion and open house on Sunday, Oct. 14, from noon to 4 p.m. with lots of free activities and a chance to learn about the new nature centre that is planned for the site.

Everyone in the community can visit the nature centre for an afternoon of activities, hikes and learning. Past students and their families are also invited.

Over the past year, nearly $360,000 has been raised for a new Guelph Lake Nature Centre on the shores of Guelph Lake. The new nature centre will replace the current 33-year-old converted house which is no longer big or durable enough to meet the needs of 22,000 visitors and students each year. As maintenance costs have continued to rise, the time has come for a purpose-built nature centre. It will cost about $3 million to construct.

Fundraising

The Grand River Conservation Foundation spoke to community leaders about this project and found that many people understand that young kids, and even the community at large, are not as connected to nature as were past generations. Through active learning such as nature hikes, tree identification and educational games in the outdoors, a fire can be lit in students to seek experiences in nature.

Donors like George and Wendy Cuthbert are choosing to support the new Guelph Lake Nature Centre because they believe in educating young people to encourage passion and respect for the environment.

The Rotary Club of Guelph Charitable Foundation contributed $50,000 and another five figure gift came from Thomasfield Homes. Ken and Marilyn Murray, Bill and Mimi Hamilton and Dr. and Mrs. Russell Willoughby have also taken their life-long support of the environment and education to donate to the new centre.

Future Success

The GRFC and its dedicated core of volunteers are always looking for other community members to join in the effort to make the new Guelph Lake Nature Centre a reality. The project will break ground when 75 per cent of the funds have been raised or pledged. This is currently projected to be the end of 2013. Volunteer commitment and donations are the cornerstones to success of a project of this scale.

If you would like to join the volunteer group or make a donation, please contact Logan Walsh at the GRFC: lwalsh@grandriver.ca or (519) 621-2763 ext. 2371

Visit www.grcf.ca/GLNC for more information.

Chimney swifts

The new Guelph Lake Nature Centre plans include two chimneys specifically designed for these birds. The research for these chimneys has been provided by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Each chimney is designed to come down into the core of the building with the intent to stabilize the temperature of the chimney. To enhance the educational value of this building feature, observation equipment will be built into each chimney so that visitors will be able to see this fascinating bird in action.
An innovative partnership with the Grand River Conservation Foundation and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association will help a new hydro facility planned at the Parkhill Dam in Galt.

The project is in the planning phase. The Parkhill Dam project is expected to cost between $7 and $8 million to build. It will double the GRCA’s hydro production capacity.

The Grand River Conservation Authority already operates three hydro generating facilities — at Shand Dam, Conestogo Dam and Guelph Dam. During the summer when water flows are low, the new Parkhill hydro facility will produce about 600 kwh of power, about the same as the existing Shand Dam site. But in the spring when there is far more water passing by the dam, it will produce about 1.2 megawatts of power. This is enough electricity for about 575 homes.

The GRCA began investigating this project a few years ago. Although it is costly, the hydro project is being propelled forward thanks to support from the Grand River Conservation Foundation, which has solicited the support of the aggregate industry. The GRCA is also applying for a 40 year power purchase agreement from the Ontario Power Authorities Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) program. Funding of $200,000 may also be available through the Community Energy Partnership Program for a portion of the Environmental Assessment study costs.

**$200,000 raised**

So far the Ontario Sand Stone and Gravel Association (OSSGA) and its member companies have raised more than $200,000 during the first months of their five-year commitment to this project. The OSSGA agreed to match the first $20,000 raised each year. Member companies of the association have already contributed $185,000, so the total is $205,000. In addition, they are holding a fundraising Gala dinner at the Cambridge Mill restaurant on Oct. 18, with funds going to this project. This is the first of a series of fundraising events that they have planned.

“We think it is fabulous that an entire industry has come to the table so generously to support this project,” said Sara Wilbur, director of the Grand River Conservation Foundation. The foundation is the GRCA’s charitable partner, supporting projects which have few or no other sources of public funding. “Members of the OSSGA have been generous supporters of GRCF for years, and this new project will be a model for other projects of this kind throughout the province. The project is also going to be a showpiece for everyone in Cambridge to see.”

**About the dam**

The Parkhill Dam is located in downtown Cambridge (Galt). It is one of 31 operating dams owned by GRCA. Originally built in 1837 to create a mill pond, the Parkhill Dam is a “run of the river” dam, where water flows across its surface. It was identified as a strong candidate for the installation of a hydro generating station at the west end of the dam. It has the potential to generate an estimated $920,000 annually in revenue.

Once the loan to construct the dam has been paid off, the funds from hydro generation will go towards a range of conservation projects, such as tree planting, outdoor education, land acquisition and habitat restoration.

**Oct. 18 Best Dam Gala**

The Best Dam Gala will take place at the Cambridge Mill restaurant in downtown Galt at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 18. Funds raised through this event will go to support this new hydro project at the Parkhill Dam. The restaurant has a beautiful view overlooking the dam site and the evening includes entertainment. This is one of several events planned by OSSGA to support this project. Tickets are available for online purchase at www.ossga.com under “Events” or contact Sara Wilbur at swilbur@grandriver.ca or (519) 621-2763 x 2272 for ticket information.

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**Focus on nature photography**

Brendan Embrey, a teacher at Rockwood Centennial Public School, has a class of talented nature photographers on his hands.

The school is beside Rockwood Conservation Area and he is keen to get his Grade 6 class outside in nature two or three times a week. When he heard about Focus on Nature, a Guelph-based program that uses volunteer photographers to teach kids about composition of nature photography, he signed the class up for a day in April.

Five volunteers came with 12 cameras and six laptops. They explained the elements of design and shape, had a close look at the
cameras and introduced the art of photography. Then everyone went for a walk for an hour and a half at Rockwood Conservation Area. Each student came back with 50 photos, which they then edited and created their top ten.

Since then, Embrey said the kids look at things differently on their walks through the forest.

“The way their perception of the woods changed that day is they are paying more attention to the little things. I thought that was really neat,” Embrey said. “The comments from the kids are that I never thought that I could take pictures this good.”

He put up 50 photos in the school and the comments were very positive. This is just one of the classes using digital photography to bring kids in touch with nature.

Learn more about Focus on Nature at www.focusonnature.ca.

GRCA nature centres also have photography programs for students and campers.

Source Protection Plans for comment

A plan to protect the sources of water for municipal drinking water systems in the Grand River watershed is available for public comment until Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2012.

The draft Source Protection Plan outlines the policies and programs needed to protect municipal wells and surface water intakes from contamination. It is available online at www.sourcewater.ca and at municipal and First Nation offices throughout the Grand River watershed.

A series of evening public meetings were held Sept. 17 to 24 throughout the watershed to give residents an opportunity to learn more about the plan and to comment on it. The meetings were in Grand Valley, Guelph, Fergus, Paris, Brantford, Cambridge and Waterloo.

The publication of the plans is the result of more than five years of work done under the Clean Water Act. The Act was passed in 2006 in response to the Walkerton tainted water tragedy.

This is the first of two rounds of public consultation on the plan. A second round will be held later this year. After that, the plan will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment for approval.

For more information, check www.sourcewater.ca.

Providing students with summer jobs

The GRCA employed 227 students during the summer of 2012.

The authority provides quality environmental opportunities for young people, many who use the experience to help find their future field of work. An overwhelming majority of the students worked in the GRCA’s 11 parks which are very busy during the summer months. From there, some go into recreation, law enforcement and teaching. Students are essential to park operation. A total of 201 students worked in the conservation areas which are spread throughout the watershed.

In addition, 12 students worked in other areas during the summer and there were 14 students working at the GRCA’s head office in Cambridge.

Student jobs are posted in the careers section of www.grandriver.ca each January.
Heritage Day workshop Feb. 15

Participants in the 16th Annual Heritage Day Workshop Feb. 15 will have an opportunity to learn more about the War of 1812-1814, particularly in the southern Grand where much of the activity took place.

The theme for 2013 is Crossroads of Conflict, Pathways to Peace: The Haldimand Experience. This workshop builds on the theme from 2012 Divided Loyalties. It is the second year that the focus has been on the influence of the war on the people, places and events in the Grand River watershed. The event is hosted by Haldimand County, the Grand River Conservation Authority and The Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group.

The program features prominent local historians and performers, as well as the launch of a video production about the War of 1812 by Lock3 Media. Ian Bell, a well-renowned traditional musician, will also be performing.

Registration is free, but donations to help defray costs will be gratefully received and can be made online at www.grandriver.ca or at the event. Space is limited so register early at www.haldimandcounty.on.ca.

Follow the Leisure Link and enter barcode 25726 or contact Karen Richardson at krichardson@haldimandcounty.on.ca or 905-772-5880.

Heritage River Surveys

The year 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Grand River and its major tributaries (Speed, Eramosa, Nith and Conestogo) as Canadian Heritage Rivers.

In order to keep this special heritage river status, the GRCA, on behalf of watershed municipalities and residents, will submit a 20-Year Monitoring Report to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. This report will note changes, additions and losses to the human heritage and recreation features and values which support the designation since the last monitoring report was submitted in 2004.

“As a result of the Heritage River designation, people have taken more interest and pride in the Grand River – in the rich cultural heritage it embodies and the recreational and tourism opportunities it provides,” said Barbara Veale, coordinator of policy, planning and partnerships for the GRCA.

Surveys due Dec. 31

Veale urges all individuals and groups who have an interest in and specific knowledge about these topics to share their insights and knowledge by completing one or more of the surveys. This input will be used to develop the 20-Year Monitoring Report during 2013-2014. The surveys are posted at www.grandriver.ca. Completed surveys are due by December 31, 2012.

A listing and description of the human heritage features and values that are currently part of the Heritage River Inventory can be found at www.grandriver.ca/heritagesurvey.

Information on features and values that should be added to the Heritage River Inventory or changes to the existing descriptions found on the website are also welcome so that the inventory can be updated.

These comments can be submitted to Barbara Veale, Coordinator of Policy Planning and Partnerships. Also, if you have any questions, or would like more information contact Barbara at bveale@grandriver.ca or 519-621-2763 ext. 2274. The toll free number is 1-866-900-4722.
About Grand Actions:

The GRCA tent at the International Plowing Match in Roseville was a great opportunity to share information about the watershed and the many ways to keep the natural environment healthy. The tent included a river, a dam, fish, wetlands and a lighthouse, making it a favourite stop.

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T H E G R A N D C A L E N D A R

**Reunion and open house. Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Sunday, Oct. 14, noon to 4 p.m.**

Connect with nature at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre Reunion and Open House. Bring the family for an afternoon of exploring nature, playing games and learning (while having fun) about our outdoor world. Did you or your child attend GLNC on a school trip or summer camp? Or, have you always wondered about the nature centre? Then this event is for you. Outdoor games, nature activities and presentations throughout the afternoon. This is a free event with activities for all ages. Registration is not required, but if you have questions please contact Logan Walsh lwalsh@grandriver.ca or 519-621-2763 ext. 2371. Those 16 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult.

**The Best Dam Gala, The Cambridge Mill, Thursday, Oct. 18, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Show your support for sustainable energy at the Best Dam Gala: A fundraising event to support a new hydro turbine at the Parkhill Dam in Cambridge, Ontario. The gala will highlight the innovative way this turbine will supply clean, reliable energy as well as the partnership between the Ontario Stone Sand and Gravel Association and the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Please contact Sara Wilbur at swilbur@grandriver.ca or 519-621-2763 ext 2272 for ticket information.

**Hike Ontario Summit, Bingemans, 425 Bingemans Centre Drive, Kitchener, Saturday, Nov. 3, 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.**

A gathering of 29 trail associations from across the province who belong to the umbrella group, Hike Ontario. This event is hosted by the Grand Valley Trail Association. There will be several break out sessions and presentations during the day. Following that there will be a celebration dinner with guest speaker, Kevin Callan, known as The Happy Camper. Registration for evening and day events is separate and can be done online at www.gvta.on.ca/40

**Guided hikes along the Grand Valley Trail, Sunday, Nov. 4, 9 a.m. to noon**

The public is invited to participate in three anniversary hikes on the Grand Valley Trail, the River Trail and the Waterloo Moraine as part of the anniversary celebrations. Details and registration are posted online www.gvta.on.ca/40

**Heritage Day Workshop, Friday, Feb. 15, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Dunnville Community Lifespan Centre**

The theme for 2013 is Crossroads of Conflict, Pathways to Peace: The Haldimand Experience. This workshop builds on the theme from 2012. Registration information is posted online on www.grandriver.ca.

Note: A full listing of nature centre and GRCA events is available at www.grandriver.ca/calendar.
Grand River Watershed
16th Annual Heritage Day Workshop & Celebration
Friday, February 15, 2013  8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Dunnville Community Lifespan Centre, 275 Ramsey Drive
Dunnville, Ontario

Crossroads of Conflict, Pathways to Peace: *The Haldimand Experience*

**Moderator**  
Don Edwards, Director of Operations for Hon. Diane Finley PC, MP Haldimand-Norfolk and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

**Morning Program**

8:30 - 9:00 a.m.  
Registration *(refreshments will be available)*

9:10 - 9:30 a.m.  
Welcoming Remarks – Ken Hewitt, Mayor, Haldimand County; Jane Mitchell, Chair, Grand River Conservation Authority; Barbara Veale, Chair, Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group

9:30 - 10:00 a.m.  
Historical Overview of Haldimand County’s Role in the War of 1812: – Karen Richardson, Haldimand Museums

10:00 - 10:30 a.m.  
Route 1812 – Adrienne Horne, Western Corridor Bicentennial Alliance

10:30 - 11:00 a.m.  
Refreshment Break & Displays

11:00 - 11:15 a.m.  
War of 1812 Trivia – Anne Unyi, Haldimand Museums

11:15 - 11:45 a.m.  
Traditional Music – Ian Bell, Port Dover Museum

**Buffet Lunch – Displays**

**Afternoon Program**

1:00 - 1:10 p.m.  
Welcoming Remarks – Lorne Boyko, Councillor; Haldimand County; Hon. Diane Finley, MP Haldimand-Norfolk; Toby Barrett, MPP Haldimand Norfolk

1:10 - 1:40 p.m.  
Commemorating the Haldimand Experience in Local Food, Wine, & Culture – Panel Discussion

1:40 – 2:00 p.m.  
Ladies of the Night – Historical Vignettes

2:00 - 2:30 p.m.  
Barn Quilt Trail - Mike Baker, Elgin County Museum

2:30 – 3:00 p.m  
Legacy of the Grand River Exhibit - Claus Breede, Canadian Cultural Resource Consultants Inc.

3:00 - 3:30 p.m.  
Desert Between Us and Them Launch - Yvonne and Zach Melnick, Lock3 Media

**Registration** is free but space is limited. **All participants must be preregistered.**

Registrations will be accepted until **Friday, February 8, 2013** or until the registration is at capacity. Donations to help defray costs will be gratefully received and can be made online at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca) or at the event.

Register online at [www.haldimandcounty.on.ca](http://www.haldimandcounty.on.ca). Follow the Leisure Link and enter barcode 25808 or return a completed form to: Karen Richardson, 8 Echo Street, Cayuga, ON N0A 1E0  Email: krichardson@haldimandcounty.on.ca  Phone: 905-772-5880

**Name:** 

**Title:**

**Organization:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Fax:**

**E-mail:**

I will be staying for lunch ☐

I am interested in taking a bus from Cambridge or Brantford to Dunnville for a nominal fee ($20.00) ☐

**HOSTED BY:** Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group

**SPONSORED BY:** Haldimand County and Grand River Conservation Authority

**ORGANIZED BY:** Haldimand County, Ruthven National Historic Site, Grand River Conservation Authority, Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group