



The GRAND

Annual Report

Environmental news for the residents of the Grand River watershed • Distribution 210,000 copies

A partner for progress in the Grand watershed

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

For 50 years, the Grand River Conservation Authority has had a dedicated partner at its side.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation helps pay for GRCA projects that otherwise would not be possible.

Thanks to the GRCF, there are rail-trails, nature centres, children's water festivals and improved facilities at GRCA parks. Wetlands have been restored and forests and grasslands continue to grow and thrive. The Foundation has also fostered stronger bonds with people and businesses in communities across the watershed.

The projects that the Foundation supports are the "essential extras" according to GRCA

The Grand River Conservation Foundation has raised \$11 million in it's 50 years

Executive Director Sara Wilbur. "The GRCA's budget covers the basics, but the Foundation allows much more."

These projects enhance the natural landscape and the quality of life for those who live near the Grand and its tributaries. They also help people connect with nature.

Since 1965, the Foundation has raised \$11 million for conservation projects. In the last three



Children participate in a learning game at the Haldimand Children's Water Festival, one of three festivals supported by the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

years, a refined fundraising focus has seen close to \$1 million raised each year. The Foundation is gaining momentum.

"One of our biggest challenges is letting people know they can support projects in their own backyard," said Wilbur. "We are a charity. The GRCA is a government organization and we have made some good progress within the last few years."

The Foundation expects to work more closely with people who enjoy active outdoor



Grand River
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

in communities across the watershed.

The GRCF has a board of directors and also a team of

lifestyles, as well as families and recreational groups. Many companies and organizations that align themselves with green living already support Foundation initiatives.

Most of the fundraising work is carried out by volunteers who live

dedicated volunteers called the Grand Champions. These are former Foundation directors and volunteers from across the watershed.

In addition, individuals

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Award winners

Watershed heroes were honored for their contributions to improving the Grand River watershed.

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A busy year

There was lots of activity by the GRCA and its partners in 2014.

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Top photo

An early-morning picture of the Cleaver Road bridge on Whitemans Creek won the 2014 photo contest.

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The GRCA

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A Message From the Chair



Jane Mitchell
Chair

The top ten reasons you should support the Grand River Conservation Authority.

10. Permits and regulations that stop you from building where it floods or erodes.
9. Recreation. Trout fishing and canoeing on the Grand River. Camping, picnicking, running a race in Grand River Parks.
8. The GRCA helps mitigate climate change by updating the limits of flooding on floodplain maps.
7. The Rural Water Quality Program and Sewage Treatment Plant Optimization Program reduce the amount of phosphates and nitrites going into the Grand and its tributaries, preventing algae blooms in Lake Erie.
6. The osprey nest webcam at Belwood Lake. Return of vanished animals and plants to the river.

A Message From the CAO



Joe Farwell
Chief Administrative Officer

The Grand River watershed supports a complex, living ecosystem. In 2014 the Grand River Conservation Authority, in partnership with watershed municipalities, First Nations, Provincial and Federal Ministries completed a water management plan for the Grand.

The plan addresses the issues of flooding, water quantity and water quality in the context of 21st Century challenges like climate change and population growth.

5. The new Water Management Plan that tackles future population growth, continuing intensive agriculture and climate change.
4. Educating children through water festivals in Haldimand, Brant-Brantford and Waterloo-Wellington. School visits to our nature centres.
3. Dams that stop the Grand and its tributaries from flooding and release water when the rivers are low. Turbines that produce renewable hydroelectric power.
2. The Grand has gone from being a sewer in the 1930s to an award winning Heritage River today that won the Thiess International Riverprize for one of the best managed rivers in the world.
1. A healthy watershed inheritance for our children and grandchildren, down to the seventh generation.
You can find the osprey webcam, campsite registration, and current river flows, among other things at www.grandriver.ca. You can like the GRCA on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/grandriverconservation>

The long range goals of the plan are to ensure sustainable water supply for watershed communities and ecosystems; to reduce potential flood damages; and to improve water quality to maintain river health. Effective implementation of the plan will depend on continuing cooperation among the partners.

The spring issue of The Grand highlights the 50th anniversary of the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

The Foundation works with the GRCA to raise funds for projects and programs that are an important part of life in the Grand. Funds from the Foundation our use to build trails, update nature centres and carry out projects that improve natural spaces.

We owe special thanks to all the Foundation volunteers who worked hard to improve our access to nature and improve the quality of life in the Grand.

Who speaks for you?

The municipality where you live appoints one or more representatives to the GRCA board to oversee the budget and activities of the conservation authority.

Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon, Southgate; Town of Grand Valley: Guy Gardhouse

Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North: Pat Salter

Township of Centre Wellington: Kelly Linton

Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch: Chris White

Regional Municipality of Waterloo (Cambridge, Kitchener, North Dumfries, Waterloo, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich): Les Armstrong, Sue Foxton, Helen Jowett, Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell (Chair), Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth, Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch, Wayne Wettlaufer

City of Guelph: Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury

Municipality of North Perth, Township of Perth East: George Wicke

Regional Municipality of Halton (Halton Hills and Milton): Cindy Lunau

City of Hamilton: Jeanette Jamieson

County of Oxford (Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich): Bruce Banbury

City of Brantford: Vic Prendergast (Vice-chair), vacant

County of Brant: Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons

Haldimand and Norfolk Counties: Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

Awards recognize watershed heroes

Special awards presented to Heritage River supporters

Each year the Grand River Conservation Authority recognizes the outstanding work of volunteers, companies and organizations that strive to improve the watershed. This is done by presenting awards to those who have worked to make the watershed healthier.

Honour Roll Award: Hillside Festival

After 31 years, this annual music festival at Guelph Lake Park is a leader in green initiatives thanks to a legion of volunteers and a supportive community that includes the 5,000 festival-goers.

Each year, Hillside volunteers think of additional ways to support the environment and ensure that the environmental impact of the festival is small. Their initiatives include reusable food containers and cutlery that are washed by volunteers, composting, active transportation for people and goods, a free bus to the festival, a solar stage and more. Because of Hillside Festival, Guelph Lake has a green roof stage, solar hot water for campers and many more trees.

Emil Frind

Emil Frind is a pioneer in water monitoring and has brought his expertise to many local initiatives. He helped the Region of Waterloo develop a water strategy based on groundwater. He has been involved in many other water initiatives over many years.

Guelph Hiking Trail Club

Since it started in 1972, the Guelph Hiking Trail Club has developed and managed 80 kilometres of trails and provides over 250 events each year that are open to everyone and free. Club membership is steadily growing. This club has always been a leader in hiking in the province. An initiative to get kids and families out



Watershed Award winners: From left are GRCA CAO Joe Farwell, Joyce Spies and Buck Ross, Marie Zimmerman (Hillside Festival), Fraser Gibson, Steven Price, Emil Frind, GRCA Chair Jane Mitchell, and Dave Culham and Jim Hoare representing the Guelph Hiking Trail Club.

hiking over the past few years has been especially successful.

Bird Studies Canada

This national organization fosters an interest in birds through education and monitoring programs. BSC operates many programs within the Grand River watershed that collect data about birds and other animals from hundreds of volunteers. This data is vitally important to help understand changes to local ecology.

Fraser Gibson

Fraser Gibson is a retired outdoor education teacher who loves nature and shares this interest with others. He is a tireless volunteer and encourages stewardship of natural areas. Gibson helped found Kitchener's Natural Areas Program and looks after the bees at Laurel Creek Nature Centre.

Buck Ross & Joyce Spies

Buck Ross and Joyce Spies have

been planting trees with the assistance of the GRCA since 1985. They know that trees improve water quality and have economic benefits to agriculture. They are leaders in best management practices and believe that nature should come first.

Heritage River Awards

Heritage River Awards were given out by the GRCA because 2014 was the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Grand River and its tributaries as Canadian Heritage rivers. The three recipients of this award were very involved during the designation process and during the five years leading up to 1994. They continue to be involved today.

Eva Salter was a member of the co-ordinating committee in 1994 representing the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation and has been an excellent resource for the Heritage Working Group for 20 years.

The Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo did the initial research for the river designation in a report created in 1987. The centre

has also been involved in other projects over the years, notably a heritage bridge inventory in 2013.

Barbara Veale was co-chair of the co-ordinating committee in 1994 and was a member of the GRCA staff until 2013. She led many initiatives to keep the Canadian Heritage River designation on the front burner over the past 20 years. Until recently, she chaired the Heritage Working Group that organizes the Heritage Day Workshop each year.

Heritage River Certificates

In addition to these awards, about 20 Heritage River pins and Heritage River Certificates were given to people who were instrumental in the designation of the Grand River in 1994. Those invited to receive the pins and certificates included members of the Grand Strategy steering committee, the Grand Strategy coordinating committee, the GRCA board in 1994 and a few others such as former GRCA CAO Mac Coutts.

Pictures of the award and certificate recipients can be seen at www.flickr.com/grandriverca.



Heritage River Award recipients: From left are Gordon Nelson of the Heritage Resources Centre, GRCA Chair Jane Mitchell, Barbara Veale, Robert Shipley (Heritage Centre), Eva Salter, GRCA CAO Joe Farwell and Bradley Fauteux of Ontario Parks who spoke at the event.



Fifty years of action

Throughout its 50 years, the Grand River Conservation Foundation has supported projects and programs that have helped improve the health of the environment and connected people with nature. Here's some examples of the work.



Betty Schneider a tree planting at Shades' Mills in 1970.

Helping kids enjoy nature

The outdoor education program got underway in the early 1970s with help from the Foundation.

Once Foundation members saw the need, they acted quickly.

On May 2, 1975, members of the Foundation held a tree planting ceremony at Laurel Creek Conservation Area to launch a campaign to raise funds to build a new nature centre to replace a temporary one on the site. The new centre opened in 1977.

The App's Mill Nature Centre near Brantford opened in 1981, thanks to a \$350,000 donation by SC Johnson and Sons Ltd.. App's is now undergoing renovations to improve accessibility. These enhancements also include two all-terrain wheelchairs to help ensure outdoor learning is accessible to all kids.

Currently the Foundation is raising money for a new nature centre at Guelph Lake Park. Construction will begin once 75 per cent of the funding required has been raised. Based on the great support so far, construction is expected to begin next year.



Owen Sodin, from James Hillier School in Brantford, tries an all-terrain wheelchair at App's Mill with his mother Lindsay and Joel Doherty, vice-president of the Walton Group of Companies which donated two chairs.

It started with a single tree

It took one solitary tree to activate the Foundation in 1970.

Betty Schneider, a determined, outdoorsy woman, decided she wanted to make a donation to plant a big tree at Shades' Mills to start the first memorial forest. Schneider had joined the board of the GRCA in 1966 and sat as the first woman on the board.

"I learned that there was only one way to make a personal financial donation and it had to be through the Foundation," said Betty Schneider recently.

In 1970, she breathed life into the Foundation. She became chair and in November of that year, helped plant a 30-ft memorial tree at Shades' Mills in Cambridge in memory of Hector Stewart.

Stewart, a Cambridge resident, who had been the GRCA's lawyer.

This was the first tree in the first memorial forest, which was the first project of the Foundation.

"I enjoyed working with the

Foundation so much and I saw it as an opportunity to involve people in the community," Schneider said. That vision has been realized today — anyone can plant a memorial tree or build a metre of trail for a \$30 donation.

A brochure about the Foundation produced that year says, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but at least I can do something."

Over 50 years, the GRCF has sponsored countless projects. Everyone can participate, be it an established company like Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada or Jaimee Courts, a Grade 5 student who raised \$330 through a garage sale.

"I really want to stress that we work with everyone, whether it is the aggregate industry, agriculture, a community group or individuals. Our goal is to support GRCA projects that make our watershed better," says Sara Wilbur, executive director.

Building partnerships

The GRCF is stepping up its green efforts and embracing partnerships to make things happen in communities across the watershed.

New partnerships have already been struck in 2015 — one with the Cambridge Tour de Grand, which is dedicating the 50 km road race to the 50th anniversary of the Foundation with funds from this race going to the GRCF. Nine routes from 10 km up to 160 km attract cyclists of all ages and abilities to this event, held June 14.

The Grand Porch Party takes place that day, which is also Canadian Rivers Day.

This annual free music festival held on the porches of homes in Uptown Waterloo will help raise awareness of the GRCF.

Foundation is 50 years old

Continued from Page 1
approach the Foundation with their own ideas on how to raise funds or projects they would like to support.

It all started on April 12, 1965, when the GRCF received its letters patent from the provincial government, creating a brand new organization with its own charter. Initially called the Grand Valley Conservation Foundation, it was formed to play a key role in raising funds for conservation projects that could not otherwise be undertaken.

At that time, there were still two organizations doing the work that the GRCA does today — the Grand River Conservation Commission, founded in 1934, and the Grand Valley Conservation Authority, founded in 1948. The two supported each other, but they officially amalgamated to form the GRCA in 1966.

In its last year of independent operation, the Grand Valley Conservation Authority created the Foundation.

During its first few years, the Foundation was not active because the original board members were also the directors of the conservation authority's Administration Advisory Board and were focused on the task of amalgamating the Authority with the Commission, recalls Mac Coutts, GRCA general manager of the GRCA. But they were also clearly thinking ahead to the future need to find donors to support various projects.

"When I started working here, I learned this organization has deep roots. We have a real solid base that was developed by the volunteer boards of previous years. We have been branching out, growing from there," says Wilbur.



A controlled burn at Brant Park will revitalize a grassland area.

Giving nature a helping hand

From wetlands to prairie habitat and forests, the GRCF has provided significant help to the GRCA with restoration efforts.

This is a big job, because the GRCA owns close to 20,000 hectares of land (48,000 acres). The land needs to be cared for, whether it is dedicated to recreation, restoration or preservation.

Sometimes the Foundation helps facilitate land donations to the GRCA. Other times it provides funds for restoration.

Often it has brought together many partners because restoration can be complex and can

take years.

In 2009, the Rotary Club of Kitchener-Conestoga funded the planting of 50,000 trees at Snyders Flats in Bloomingdale.

New ponds, wetlands and trails were dedicated at Taquanyah Conservation Area in the southern part of the watershed, while many hectares of land have also been restored at Luther Marsh.

A recent controlled burn at Brant Park will help to get rid of invasive plants and help prairie grasses to thrive.

Fire is a natural part of the life cycle of prairie grasses.

Memorial forests continue to grow

While the conservancy forest got underway in 1970, this program really took off in 1979, says Gord Chaplin, who was GRCF chair at the time.

This is when the Batesville Casket Company began to plant a tree for every casket they sold. This guaranteed a minimum of 5,000 trees per year over 20 years and a total donation equal to \$100,000.

"It was first long-term revenue stream for the Foundation, said Chaplin. It also created a Memorial Forest at Guelph Lake.

Now many funeral homes in the watershed support the GRCF with memorial tree programs. Initially, funding was matched by the provincial government, but when funding dried up in the 1990s the memorial forest program became even more important to the GRCA.

New forests are growing throughout the watershed due to



Tree planting at the Guelph Rotary Forest.

partnerships with businesses and community organizations like the Rotary Clubs.

At a time when tree canopy is suffering due to pests (Emerald Ash Borer and Pine Shoot Beetle) as well as severe weather, this program is an established mainstay of the Foundation.

Scholarships benefit students

For the past 30 years, the Foundation has supported post-secondary students with a variety of scholarships.

Each has different criteria and is for a student attending a watershed university of college:

- the SC Johnson Scholarship since 1994
- the McEwen Clean Water Prize since 2010, and
- the Allan Holmes Scholarship since 2012.

Grand River Conservation Foundation leaders

2014-2015 Board of Directors

Chair

Joy O'Donnell, *Brantford*

Vice-chair

Robin-Lee Norris, *Guelph*

Directors

Doug Brock, *Waterloo*

Dr. Howard Armitage,

Waterloo

J. Crawford Reid, *Brantford*

James den Ouden, *Waterloo*

Wayne Fyffe, *Paris*

Paul General, *Six Nations*

David Hales, *Waterloo*

C. Thomas LeBrun,

North Dumfries

Wayne Knox, *Caledonia*

Ian MacNaughton, *Breslau*

Malcolm Matheson, *Waterloo*

Richard Seibel, *Fergus*

John Whitney, *Waterloo*

Jane Mitchell, *Waterloo*

(GRCA Chair)

You can help, too!

Three ways to support the Foundation

1. Check the many ways to donate on www.grcf.ca and choose one that speaks to you.
2. Hold an event with funds going to the GRCF — paddle the Grand, collect donations for your birthday or contribute funds from your annual event.
3. Leave a living legacy by making a bequest to the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

For more information:

- To donate, visit www.grcf.ca
- Phone toll-free 1-877-29-GRAND
- E-mail foundation@grandriver.ca

GRCF was on board with rail-trail development

The GRCF was an Ontario pioneer when it adopted the project of buying and developing four scenic rail-trails in the Grand River watershed.

Rail-trails now criss-cross the province, but at the time, this was a new idea.

Fundraising started in 1990 and four years later, the rail-trails opened.

By 2000, a total of \$1.3 million had been raised to complete several trails, including the Alf Hales Trail through downtown Guelph.

Since then, the Foundation has continued to ensure trails

are built and maintained by providing funds.

Recently they provided financial support to develop and improve trails within two Grand River Parks.

In 2014 a boardwalk was constructed in Laurel Creek by the Kitchener-Grand River Rotary Club.

Runners who participate in Pinehurst Lake's annual Run for the Toad are contributing to a new Sarson Lakeside Trail that will loop around the lake. Work on this project gets underway this year.



Enjoying the Cambridge to Paris Rail-Trail.

Improving the Grand

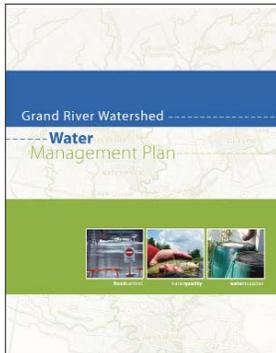
The GRCA manages a wide variety of programs and projects to protect and enhance the watershed environment. Here's a few highlights from 2014.

Water Management Plan addresses key issues

After five years of work, the Grand River Water Management Plan was completed. It contains 43 recommendations and 165 action items that the partner agencies are now working to complete. The action items respond to the three key challenges facing the watershed today: high population growth, extensive agriculture and a changing climate.

The last plan was published in 1982.

This plan addresses water supply, water quality and flooding issues. It is a product of a collaborative partnership of municipalities, provincial ministries, the federal government, Six Nations of the Grand River and the GRCA. It was endorsed by all levels of government and water management



agencies and implementation is underway. Several committees and working groups are working to implement the actions in the plan.

For more information check www.grandriver.ca/wmp.

Restoration at Luther Marsh

A few restoration projects took place at Luther Marsh.

About 35,000 trees were planted at Luther in 2014. Invasive species control of dog strangling vine and Common European Buckthorn was carried out thanks to funding provided by a donor through the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Grassland was restored on 70 hectares of land. This will be suitable for Henslow's sparrow, an endangered species which is recently returned to Luther Marsh.

This project was made possible by the financial support of Environment Canada and Hydro One. An additional 28 hectares of grassland will be created



GRCA staff plant wildflower seeds on a Hydro line corridor.

Hydro corridor turned into new habitat and seed source

A restoration project to establish native grasses and wildflowers within the high voltage hydro corridor is taking place at the GRCA Administration Centre in Cambridge.

The project is expected to reduce the number of non-native invasive shrubs in the corridor, improve aesthetics and reduce the

need for herbicide treatments during periodic maintenance by Hydro One. This will become a seed source collection area for native plants and provide a demonstration site for alternative hydro corridor maintenance.

The area was cleared in August and seeded with native grasses and wildflowers in late fall.

Ice storm impact will be felt for years to come

An ice storm in late 2013 posed big challenges for the GRCA forestry department during 2014 and will be felt into the future.

GRCA forestry staff, supplemented by outside contractors, were busy well into the summer removing hazard trees from parks, trails and other recreational areas.

Conestogo Lake Park opened two weeks late, and sections of Elora Gorge Park didn't open until June.

Some trails and passive areas remained closed until summer as well.

The cleanup cost was \$625,000 in 2014. The GRCA submitted a funding request for



Ice storm damage at Belwood.

\$550,000 to recover cleanup costs from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A first payment of \$191,000 was made in early 2015.

Volunteer program launched

A new formalized volunteer program got underway thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium that was received in the fall.

A volunteer coordinator is promoting existing and new volunteer opportunities, developing a list of GRCA projects suitable for volunteers and matching volunteers to the GRCA's needs.

This new staff person is also seeking support to make this program sustainable in the long-term and to ensure that health and safety processes are in place for volunteers.

To volunteer, send an email to volunteer@grandriver.ca or call the GRCA office.



New park pass on sale

Goodbye vehicle season pass stickers, hello Grand River Parks membership.

More than 3,000 park memberships were sold in 2014 so the new membership card that replaced the vehicle stickers was well received during the first year of the program.

Just like the vehicle season pass stickers of the past, the new Grand River Parks membership card allows unlimited entry to all Grand River Parks, every day of the season, for a car load of occupants.

But the new program offers more value as it comes with vouchers for exclusive rewards and freebies valued at over \$90. Eventually these passes will be used for automatic entry gates that will be installed at all parks.

Cameras watch the river around the clock

Two webcams were installed along the Grand River to help with real-time monitoring of river conditions.

The cameras are in West Montrose near the covered bridge looking downstream and in downtown Brantford looking downstream at the Veterans Memorial Parkway (formerly BSAR) bridge.

Both areas are prone to ice jams which can cause sudden increases in water levels and flooding and the cameras are a way to ice conditions and water levels.

Every hour, at the top of the hour, the most recent photo and video are posted on the GRCA's rivercam page.



View from the Brantford rivercam.

These supplement the data that comes from the GRCA's network of river flow, rainfall and temperature monitoring stations.

Cameras and other river, weather and reservoir data are available online at www.grandriver.ca/riverdata.

Some trees saved from borer

Two hundred healthy ash trees at locations across the watershed were injected with a substance called TreeAzin in order to save these trees from the Emerald Ash Borer.

The tiny green insect is expected to kill all ash trees in the watershed within a few years. The only way ash trees can be saved is to be injected with this systemic insecticide. It goes directly into the base of the ash tree at several locations. Ash trees need to be treated every two years for at least eight to 10 years in order to keep them alive.

The GRCA's goal for this program is to save the unique genetic material in local trees and to keep ash trees for their aesthetic value and the unique services that they provide. Keeping these trees alive will allow future generations to



Evidence of an emerald ash borer infestation.

see what an ash tree looks like. The trees are within parks or near recreational areas.

The other part of the EAB program involves monitoring parts of the watershed and arranging to remove infected trees that have become fragile and pose a threat to people and property.



Upgrade for Cambridge dike

Repairs were made to Cambridge's Living Levee in downtown Galt on the east side of the river between Mill Race Park and Dickson Street. A new canoe launch at the south end of Mill Race Park, a new walkway along the shoreline at the base of the floodwall and a new staircase ascending to Dickson Street – connecting to an existing walkway beneath the Main Street bridge – were also added.

Farmland to forest at Conestogo Lake

New forests are rising on old farm fields in Mapleton Township in an effort to improve water quality in streams feeding Conestogo Lake reservoir.

About 70,000 trees are being planted on two parcels of land totalling 40 hectares (100 acres) on the north side of the reservoir. Most of the native species of trees were planted in 2014 and some this year.

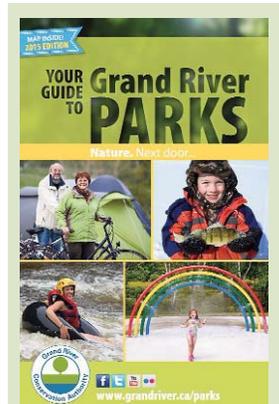
In addition to the new forests, the GRCA is also creating some seasonal wetlands. As the trees grow in coming years, the areas will quickly become home to a variety of animals, such as deer and wild turkeys. Later, as the forests mature, it's expected that several bird species including scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds and great horned owls will take up residence.

New boardwalk at Laurel

The Kitchener-Grand River Rotary Club completed a new boardwalk at Laurel Creek that was used at the Mud Puppy Trail Race in September.

About 250 metres of new trail now connect the boardwalk to the existing

trail system. The new water crossing means that an old route from a number of years ago has been reopened. This is a big improvement at the park and is the first of many trail enhancement projects that are expected at Laurel Creek in coming years.



New format for park booklet

GRCA Parks launched a new information booklet in 2014: "Your Guide to Grand River Parks." This new publication includes a section on each park, information about recreational activities and GRCA programs. There are also event listings through October. This booklet will be published each year by the GRCA and it is supported by advertisers.

The booklet is available at Grand River Parks, tourism centres or online at www.grandriver.ca/Parks/YourGuideToGrandRiverParks.pdf.



Creek photo wins top prize in contest

By Lara Fox
GRCA Communications Specialist

Having a camera while hiking local trails helped Darlene Hewson nab the top prize — a \$500 gift certificate from a local camera retailer — in the Grand River Conservation Authority's photo contest.

Nearly 270 photos were submitted during most of 2014.

"I love to hike and explore new places and trails. For me, hiking and photography go

hand in hand," she said.

Hewson is a member of the Brant Camera Club.

The Grand Prize winning photo — depicting Whitemans Creek and the Cleaver Road bridge in Brant County — was taken on a foggy autumn morning after hiking to the creek through the trails at the Apps' Mill Nature Centre property.

Other winners were:

Riverscapes: First, George Rosema; Second, Sara

Hannaford; Honorable mentions, Lisa Cassidy and Bill Chan

Recreation: First, Tina McAuley; Second, Sara Gray; Honourable mentions, Judee Richardson Schofield and Doug Hall.

Historic: First, Scott Munro; Second, Jeff Leader.

All of the winning photos, plus other selected entries, can be seen on the GRCA Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/grandriverconservation

GRCA holds the line on spending in 2015

The Grand River Conservation Authority is holding the line on spending in 2015 with a budget that's slightly less than last year.

The GRCA will spend about \$29.5 million this year on programs that protect water quality, reduce flood damages, protect natural areas, support responsible development and provide outdoor recreation and environmental education. The budget is down about \$256,000 from last year.

The budget was approved by the GRCA board in February. The board is made up of 26 members appointed by the municipalities in the Grand River watershed.

Municipalities will contribute about \$10.5 million to the GRCA this year, about 36 per cent of the total budget. That works out to about \$10.39 per resident. The municipal levy is up about 2.5 per cent this year.

Government grants, primarily from the province, are worth about \$3.9 million, representing about 13 per cent of the budget.

Finally, the GRCA generates about \$13.8 million (about 47 per cent per cent) of its own revenue through an assortment of fees and revenue sources including camping fees, park admissions, hydro sales, property rentals, tree sales and donations raised by the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Chair Jane Mitchell noted that even though the GRCA has con-

tained its spending, senior staff are continuing to look for efficiencies and additional revenues. She noted that a number of retirements this year will provide an opportunity to review operations. Some additional parks may open for winter activities, boosting revenues. There may be opportunities to generate more revenue from rental properties, she added.

Budget highlights

Emerald ash borer – About \$400,000 will be spent this year responding to damage inflicted by the invasive insect. Most of the money will go to remove hazardous trees in the areas where the infestation is the highest. Some money will also be spent on a continuing program to inoculate about 200 trees against the bug.

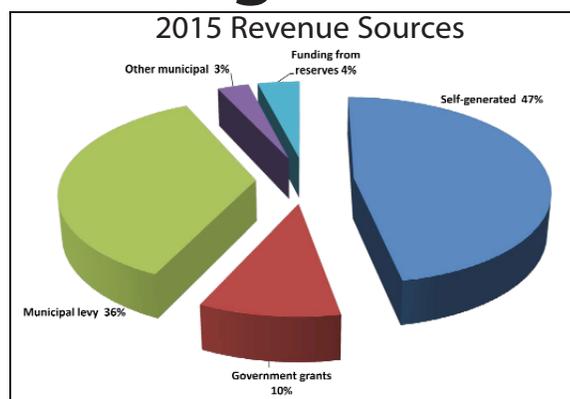
Floodplain mapping – The GRCA has received a grant of about \$170,000 from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to investigate new approaches to developing floodplain maps to take advantage of improved aerial and digital technology. Most existing floodplain maps across Ontario were developed decades ago and few have been digitized. The maps will give flood managers, municipalities and others better information about the potential extent of flooding and its impact on property. It will also assist with flood preparedness. Improved floodplain mapping has become a priority of the federal government in

the wake of serious floods in Calgary and Toronto as well as concerns about the impact of climate change.

Rural Water Quality Program – About \$800,000 will be available to farmers to help them undertake projects to protect water quality on their land including tree planting, erection of fences along water courses, construction of manure storage tanks and other projects. The money comes from watershed municipalities while the GRCA manages the program.

Large cover placement program – About \$55,000 will be spent to change the contour of the riverbed in an area downstream of Elora. This will improve fish habitat and have the added benefit of reducing frazil ice production in this area during the winter. Frazil ice is a slushy type of ice that can build up in a location and result in ice jams and flooding.

Wastewater Optimization Project – This is a three-year project financed by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to help municipalities improve the operation of their wastewater (sewage) treatment plants. The result is cleaner effluent coming out of the plants which has a positive impact on the health of the river system and Lake Erie. Based on the outcome of the work in the Grand River watershed, the program may be expanded across the province.



The total cost of the project is \$363,000 of which \$125,000 is allocated for 2015.

Conestogo Lake tree planting – About 20,000 trees will be planted on 27 acres of land near Conestogo Lake reservoir in the second year of a two-year project to rehabilitate former farmland that was subject to heavy erosion that impaired water quality. This part of the project will cost about \$20,000

Brantford dike work: About \$200,000 will be spent on two dike projects. Some portions of the concrete dike wall along River Road will be rebuilt at a cost of \$150,000. Another \$50,000 will be spent to remove vegetation from earthen dikes in the city. Trees and bushes on a dike can weaken it and potentially lead to a failure.

Drayton channel clearout: An estimated \$200,000 will be spent

to remove silt from the Conestogo River in the village of Drayton in Mapleton Township to increase the capacity of the river and lower the risk of flooding. The project is still subject to provincial approval.

Laurel Creek Dam safety study: About \$100,000 will be spent on a safety study of Laurel Creek Dam, which was built in 1968. The GRCA routinely carries out these studies to identify any areas where the dam has to be improved or modified to meet current safety standards.

Caledonia Dam upgrades: About \$115,000 will be spent install new stop logs and new safety railings.

Shand Dam upgrades: New heaters will be installed on the gates to ensure that ice can be cleared to allow operation of the gates in the winter. The cost is estimated at \$200,000.