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## Grand River Fisheries Update 2004

### New Trout Fishing Opportunity on the Conestogo River



Carl Hall, Wellington County Councillor, Bill Strauss, Mayor of Woolwich Twp. and local landowners, on hand for the Conestogo River Brown trout stocking.

#### Conestogo River Facts

- The Conestogo has traditionally been a good smallmouth bass and pike fishery.
- Water quality improvements have made this river suitable for trout introduction.
- Cold oxygen-rich water coming from the Conestogo Dam make this fishery possible.
- Brown trout were identified as the target species because they handle warmer water better than brook trout and are less migratory than rainbows.
- Stocking trout in the Conestogo River was one of 42 Best Bets from the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan.
- An assessment to identify and establish quality access points along this reach of river has started.
- Stocking will continue for the next five years. Each year 350 adult brown trout, 13,000 yearling brown trout and 45,000 brown trout fry will be stocked.

On a cool Monday afternoon in November neighboring landowners, municipal politicians, representatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Grand River Conservation Authority curious locals and the media were all on hand to see the first 120 adult brown trout stocked into the Conestogo River.

A group of dedicated volunteers were eager to help the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and various partner agencies fulfill one of the 42 "Best Bets" from the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan.

This was not simply an exercise of dumping a few fish in the river. First an environmental assessment was completed to examine the feasibility of introducing a trout species to the Conestogo River between the Conestogo Dam and St. Jacobs.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) that included water quality and biological research indicated that brown trout would be suitable to introduce into the system.

What was found through the EA process is that the water temperatures and habitat available may produce a fishery that rivals many other trout fishing destinations in Ontario and northeastern North America.

The existing brown trout fishery on the main stem of the Grand below the Shand Dam has a similar temperature regime to the waters below the Conestogo Dam. The temperatures in the Grand River support a world-class brown trout fishery, so there is evidence that the browns should do well in these new waters.

Brown trout were selected because they are tolerant of slightly higher water temperatures than the native brook trout and they tend to stay put better than migratory rainbows. They have also offered excellent angling opportunities in other parts of the province.

It is exciting that a trout species is being introduced into a watercourse that has previously been considered a warm-water environment. With continued improvements in land-use and water quality this fishery should only get better.

This initial stocking was just the start of a five year MNR plan to add brown trout in the species mix on the Conestogo.

In the spring of 2004 about 13,000 yearling brown trout will call the Conestogo home and 45,000 fry will also be planted in the cool waters between the Conestogo Dam and town of St. Jacobs.

Partners involved with helping the MNR with this stocking event included representatives from the local municipalities, Friends of the Grand River, KW Fly Fishers, Trout Unlimited, GRCA, local media and more.

This initial stocking of fish has the local community excited about the future prospects of the Conestogo River fishery.

For more information contact MNR District Biologist Ken Cornelisse at (519) 826-6849



Local Landowner John Weber and MNR District Manager Craig Selby releasing the first brown trout into the Conestogo River.



## A Unique Stewardship Program Helps Mill Creek



*In the field education with resource management professionals is a part of the Stewardship Ranger program.*

When you were 17 would you have liked to spend the summer learning how to improve fish habitat and getting your hands dirty making a difference?

That is exactly what four lucky youth did this past summer in the Mill Creek Watershed near Cambridge. In 2003, crew leader Ben McGill, with rangers Christopher Zuloinov, Silvie Van Twest,

Helena Krolak and Danielle Campbell became the first ever Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers.

The Mill Creek Stewardship Ranger (MCSR) program is modeled after the Ontario Stewardship Ranger (OSR) program sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, but with some very important differences.

While the OSR program encourages partnership and involvement by non-government organizations, it is supported entirely by public sector funds. The OSR program provides work experience, training and enrichment from an entirely public sector perspective.

The MCSR program is sponsored primarily by the private sector and local businesses participate actively in the program that has been developed over the past 15 years by the MNR, GRCA and volunteers from the Kitchener Waterloo Fly Fishers.

Partners who supported the program in 2003 include the Optimist Club of Puslinch, Township of Puslinch, Ministry of Natural Resources, Grand River Conservation Authority, Friends of Mill Creek and the Wellington County Stewardship Council as well as several local aggregate operators and consultants.

Mill Creek is a cold water stream that is in need of some restoration to improve the water quality and fish populations found in the stream. The Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers dedicated their summer to making improvements to Mill Creek.

In conjunction with local landowners, the crew used brush bundles to create deflectors to narrow the stream channel and improve trout habitat. In other areas, debris was cleared from the stream to keep the water deep and cool. The crew also learned why these structures help the stream.

The MCSRs had a chance to perform fisheries assessment work with a back pack electro-shocker. This device places an electrical charge in the water that temporarily stuns the fish allowing researchers to study the fish before releasing them unharmed.

Other tasks included trail maintenance and garbage clean-up along the stream.

The program was not all hard work though. Enrichment opportunities were provided to help these future resource managers learn more about stream rehabilitation and wildlife management. The crew had a chance to talk with local environmental consultants, visit aggregate operations and go camping and a canoeing down the Grand River as rewards for their hard work on stream.



*Mill Creek Stewardship Rangers installing brush deflectors in to Mill Creek to improve fish habitat and stream structure*

The program will receive support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for the next three years.

For more information or to get involved with next year's program contact Larry Halyk Wellington County Stewardship Council, at (519) 826-4936 or Warren Yerex, GRCA, at (519) 621-2761 X249.

## New Trout Unlimited Chapter in the Middle Grand River

During May 2003, the Middle Grand River Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada was born. It evolved from the original Whiteman's Creek Chapter expanding its horizon to include the Middle Grand River and its tributaries from Cambridge to Brantford.

At the inaugural Chapter meeting, Dave Chapman was elected as Chapter President. Chapter Board members include: Mary Lou Roxborough, Stuart Roxborough, Mark

Hartley, John Shannon, Erik Rule, Doug Knowles, Neil Holding and Rick Whorwood.

The chapter's 2004 conservation focus will be on salmonid habitat improvement, including prime spawning and rearing tributaries of the Middle Grand River system. Planned projects for the upcoming 2004 season include stream rehabilitation at Rest Acres Creek and Falkland Creek, a spawning survey at Cedar Creek, and temperature monitoring in the Grand and Nith Rivers.

The Chapter has already been actively participating in a variety of events in the area. The chapter participated in Dofasco's Canada Day celebrations. With support from Grindstone Angling, the Hamilton Fly Fishing & Tying Club and Bill and Kathi Spicer, the TUC Middle Grand River Chapter gave fly tying and casting instructions to a steady procession of people at



*The TU middle Grand River Chapter was instrumental in bringing people from as far away as Washington State and Scotland to the Grand Spey Clave 2003*

this large event. The Chapter was also a key sponsor of the Grand River Spey Clave held in Brantford during October.

For more information or to get involved with this group contact Dave Chapman at (905) 573-9017.

## D'Aubigny : A Community Caring for the Creek!



D'Aubigny Creek is an unassuming waterway that winds through southwest Brantford. This cold-water stream faces a variety of stresses, but, it has friends in the community.

Stream improvements were initiated in the summer of 1991 through the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and since then various community groups have pitched in to help D'Aubigny.

One of the key programs that has helped these improvements along is the environmental program at Pauline Johnson Collegiate (PJC).

Students registered in Science classes at PJC spend several days each year monitoring and rehabilitating D'Aubigny Creek.

They grow and plant trees, stabilize stream banks and remove debris from the creek. Students also conduct water tests and biological surveys. They even get to

use an electroshocker to study the fish population.

These activities are a valuable component of the ecology and biology science curriculum and allow students to improve their local environment.

Many partners have made this program such a success. The Guelph District of the Ministry of Natural Resources has provided scientific and technical expertise and the MNR's CFWIP program has contributed significant funding for equipment and materials used on-site.

The Brantford Steelheaders, The Brant Resource Stewardship Network (BRSN), Grand River Conservation Authority and the City of Brantford are also key partners that provide direction and supplies for this program and the D'Aubigny Creek Environmental Council.

Through Ontario's MNR Ontario Stewardship Rangers, a crew, of 4 students and an experienced crew leader worked on D'Aubigny Creek during the low water period in the summer under the guidance of



*Ontario Stewardship Rangers pitching in to rehabilitate D'Aubigny Creek*

the Brantford Steelheaders to further the work done by PJC students.

The area around D'Aubigny Creek continues to face pressures from development. But, with friends from various sources in the community on its side it will continue to be an environmental oasis in the City of Brantford.

For more information contact Rob Wallis, Stewardship Coordinator, Brant Resource Stewardship Network (519) 448-1714 or Larry Mellors, Brantford Steelheaders (519) 758-9400

## Exceptional Waters Gets a Boost



The Paris-Brantford Exceptional Waters Program received a huge boost recently compliments of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Foundation is funding a Coordinator for two years to help bring the program to a new level of community involvement. Bob Scott started on December 1, 2003 and will work closely with the newly formed Exceptional Waters Community Advisory Committee.

The goal of the Exceptional Waters approach is "To develop and promote the engagement of members of local communities so that waters of exceptional quality may be managed as a community resource to ensure their sustainability".

The Exceptional Waters Program is a community-based process that engages local communities to protect, manage and restore waters of exceptional quality and productivity. The process is inclusive and strives to ensure that exceptional environments are protected as a community asset and resource. The emphasis is protection, management and restoration by a process that engages landowners, interest groups, agencies and organizations to share responsibility and build capacity for monitoring, evaluation and management of these environments. This approach is gaining major interest in Ontario and across Canada.

The Grand River between Paris and Brantford is one such waterway. This portion of the Grand has a well forested valley, high quality aquatic habitat and rare

and unusual terrestrial community. Many of the municipalities on the Grand River upstream of this reach discharge treated effluent into the river. Brantford, a community of over 86,000 people derives its water supply exclusively from the river. Therefore the status of the river's water quality and ecosystem is of immense interest from both a human and environmental health perspective.

The community has a strong focus on the river. At local meetings of landowners, interest groups and other local stakeholders in 1999-2000, people in the Paris to Brantford area indicated that the quality of the valley, the animals, plants and aesthetic views are very important to them. They realize that things change, but wish to ensure that the quality of the local environment is maintained and improved through sound management practices. The participants want all partners to strive to work with the community to develop the tools, understanding of the system and a resource plan to ensure that the river stays healthy for people and the environment.

As a component of Exceptional Waters, an Access Plan for this reach of the Grand River was completed and then presented to the public for endorsement in early 2003. The Exceptional Waters Community Advisory Committee got its start as a result of individual interest expressed at the Access Plan public meeting. The Committee has grown since.

### Exceptional Waters Community Advisory Committee Initiated

The advisory committee, chaired by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, provides a forum to discuss opportunities for public access to the Grand River, helps implement the access management plan, provides general direction to the Exceptional Waters Coordinator, and makes recommendations to municipalities, community groups, resource users and landowners on ways to implement the Exceptional Waters Program and Access Management Plan. The Committee is well represented by community groups, foundations, local businesses, municipalities, community-at-large and resource agencies.

Some of the activities that Bob Scott will be working on include:

- Develop educational material for riparian landowners and resource users about the importance of maintaining this reach of river as 'exceptional'
- Develop a framework that outlines an approach to the longevity of the Coordinator position and Advisory Committee
- Develop a comprehensive signage program for the entire Exceptional Waters reach including location and implementation schedule

"The Exceptional Waters area is simply that "exceptional". The river in this reach has the potential to provide world-class fishing, in a high quality river environment. From the scenery, to the diversity of life, both in the river and along its banks, this area is truly spectacular."

The Exceptional Waters area of the Grand River between Paris and Brantford is home to a high quality environment and angling experiences for quality smallmouth bass and steelhead.

- Develop a "State of the Resource" Report for the community using existing and new data
- Develop a long term community monitoring and assessment program using baseline information already collected and summarized in the State of the Resource Report, and; develop a community-based resource management plan. The plan will identify the major environmental and human use interests of the river and strategies to achieve these interests with all partners.

To contact Bob Scott call (519) 621-2763 x296 or e-mail [bscott@grandriver.ca](mailto:bscott@grandriver.ca).



The Exceptional Waters area of the Grand River between Paris and Brantford is home to a high quality environment and angling experiences for quality smallmouth bass and steelhead.

## Friends of the Grand River: Volunteers in Action



FOGR volunteers working on a Grand River tributary. Tree planting, cattle exclusion fencing and bank stabilization are being completed on this site.

Friends of the Grand River (FOGR) has been an active partner in the management of the Grand River since this group's founding in 1995. This volunteer Non-Profit Charitable organization has completed several projects identified in the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan.

This group has partnered with local universities to collect data and analyze it to provide much needed information to direct future projects.

Friends of the Grand River also initiated the provincially recognized River Watch

Program which laid much of the groundwork for the Province-wide Fish & Wildlife Guardian Program. These programs see individuals assisting government enforcement agencies with collecting information about infractions and educating river users.

Another education commitment that FOGR has is its annual Fly-fishing Forum held at Belwood Lake Conservation Area. This event raises the awareness and the ethical use of this world-class brown trout fishery.

FOGR and its partner agencies have also improved public access in the Belwood Lake tail-water stretch of the Grand River. Through its tree-planting days, river clean-up and road clean-ups it maintains a high profile in the community that reflects its commitment to doing its part improving the Grand River.

Friends of the Grand is also a key partner in the development of the Belwood Tail-water Fisheries Management Plan. This plan will give clearer direction for FOGR, MNR, GRCA and other group's efforts over the next several years.

These volunteers in action are supportive of the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan and are dedicated to tackling many of the "Best Bets" that affect their region with local grass-roots support and commitment.

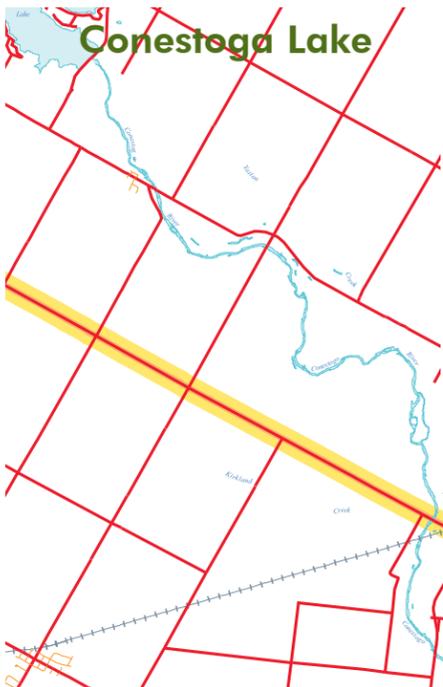
For More information about FOGR contact Larry McGratton, FOGR president at (519) 843-3102.



"Grand Opportunities" educates fly fishers through on-water seminars that help anglers better appreciate the Grand River tail-water fishery.



Work of groups like Friends of the Grand River make it possible to fish beautiful waters close to urban areas



## Partnerships Forming to Develop Access on Conestogo River Tail-water

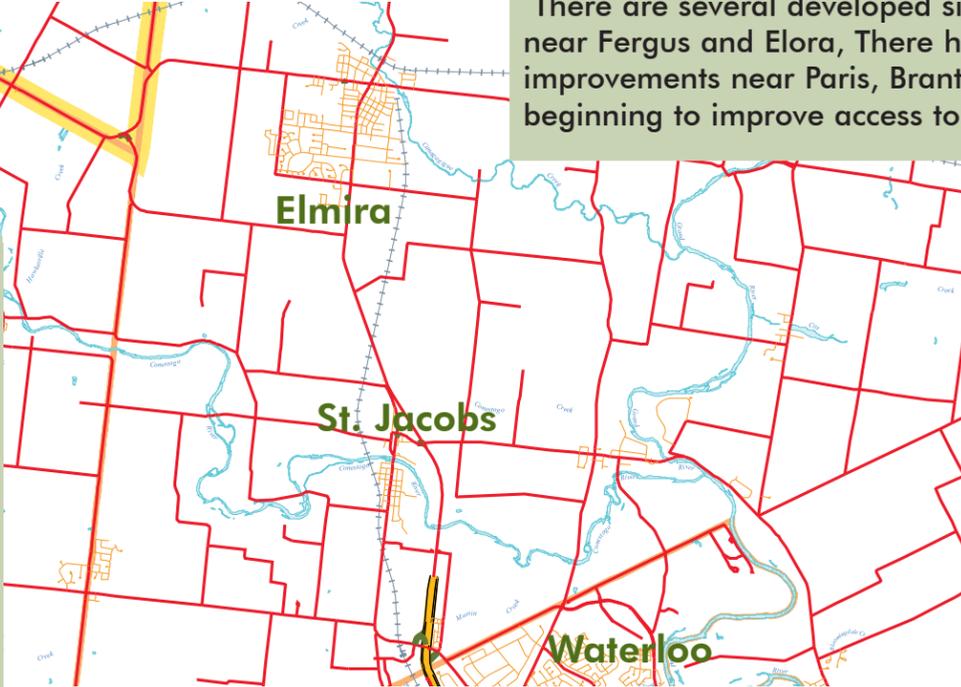
## Access to Grand Fishing is Better than Ever

Quality access is one of the cornerstones of a great fishery. The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan recognizes this and has taken action in various reaches of the river to ensure that the public can appreciate and enjoy the river.

Access and signs programs have been developed or are being developed throughout the watershed.

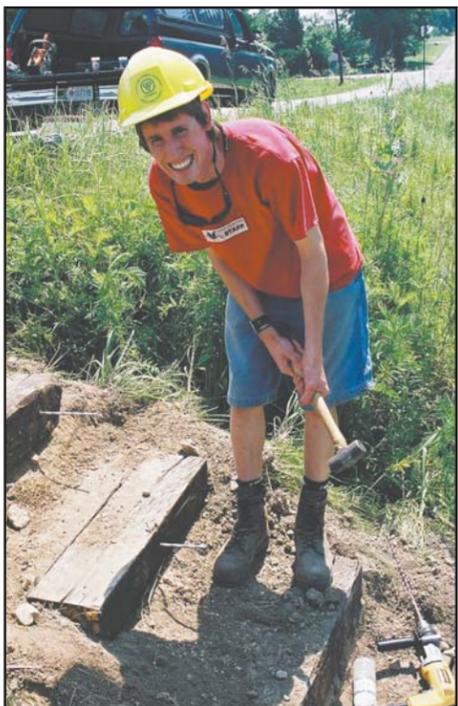
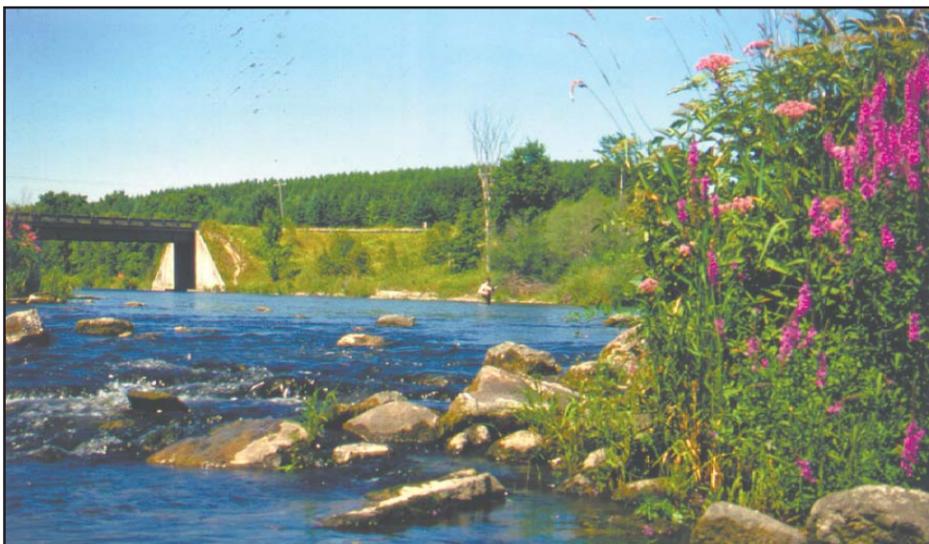
There are several developed sites in the Grand River Tail-water near Fergus and Elora, There have been access and accessibility improvements near Paris, Brantford and Caledonia and work is beginning to improve access to the Conestogo River's fishery.

With the stocking program for the Conestogo River now in place, a next step is to provide safe access points to the river. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is providing \$10,000 in funding to Trout Unlimited Canada to create a developed access point near the Macton Bridge in early 2004. This appears to be just the start of work in this area. A local community group is forming called Conestogo River Enhancement Workgroup (CREW) that has big plans to improve access and the environment along the Conestogo River.



With the recently stocked brown trout in the Conestogo this fishery has a promising future.

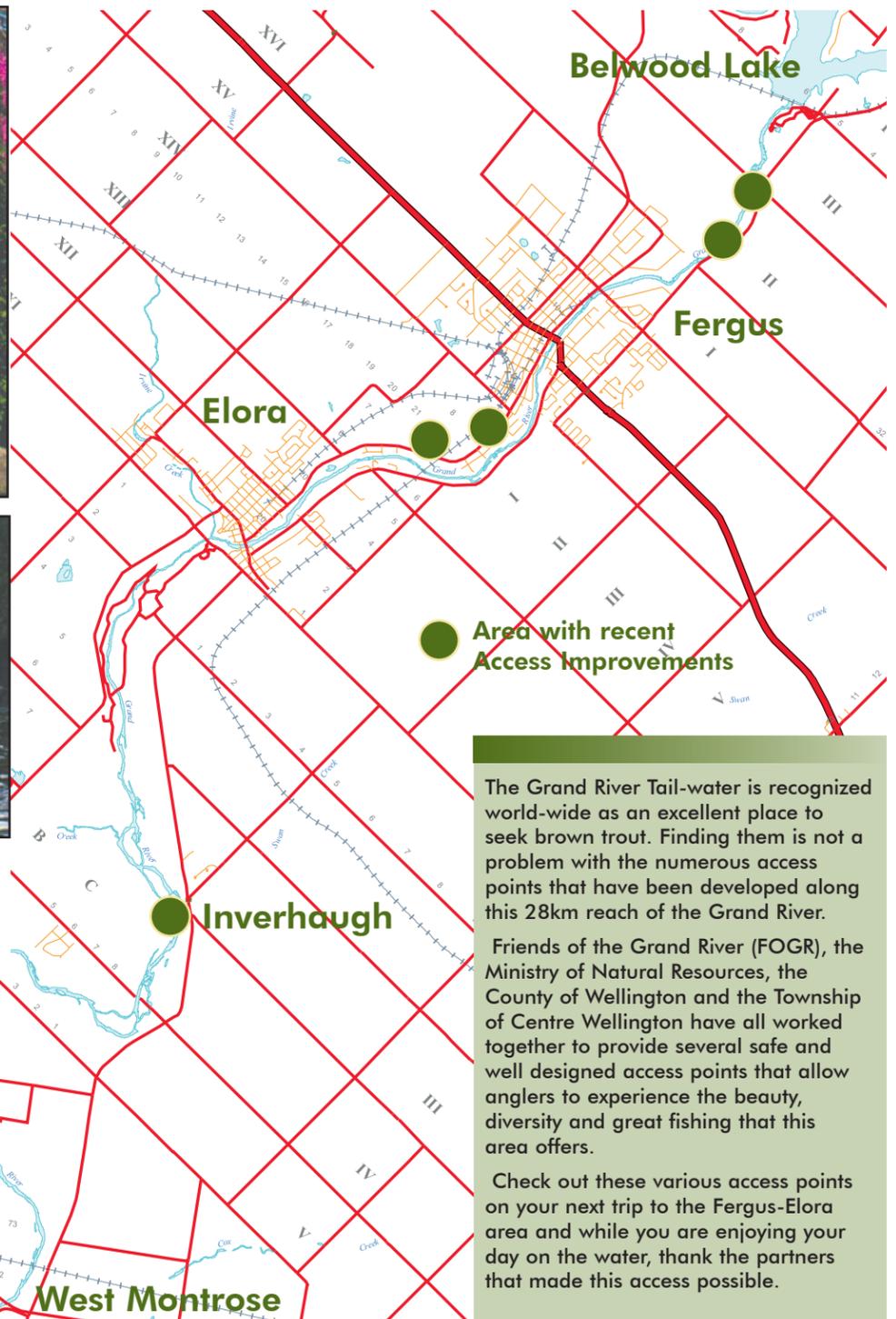
## Getting to the Grand River (Belwood) Tail-water is Now Easier and Safer



This set of stairs on the Grand River Tail-water was put in by FOGR volunteers and members of the Ministry of Natural Resource's Ontario Stewardship Rangers



Easy access on the Grand River tail-water make finding brown trout like this easier.



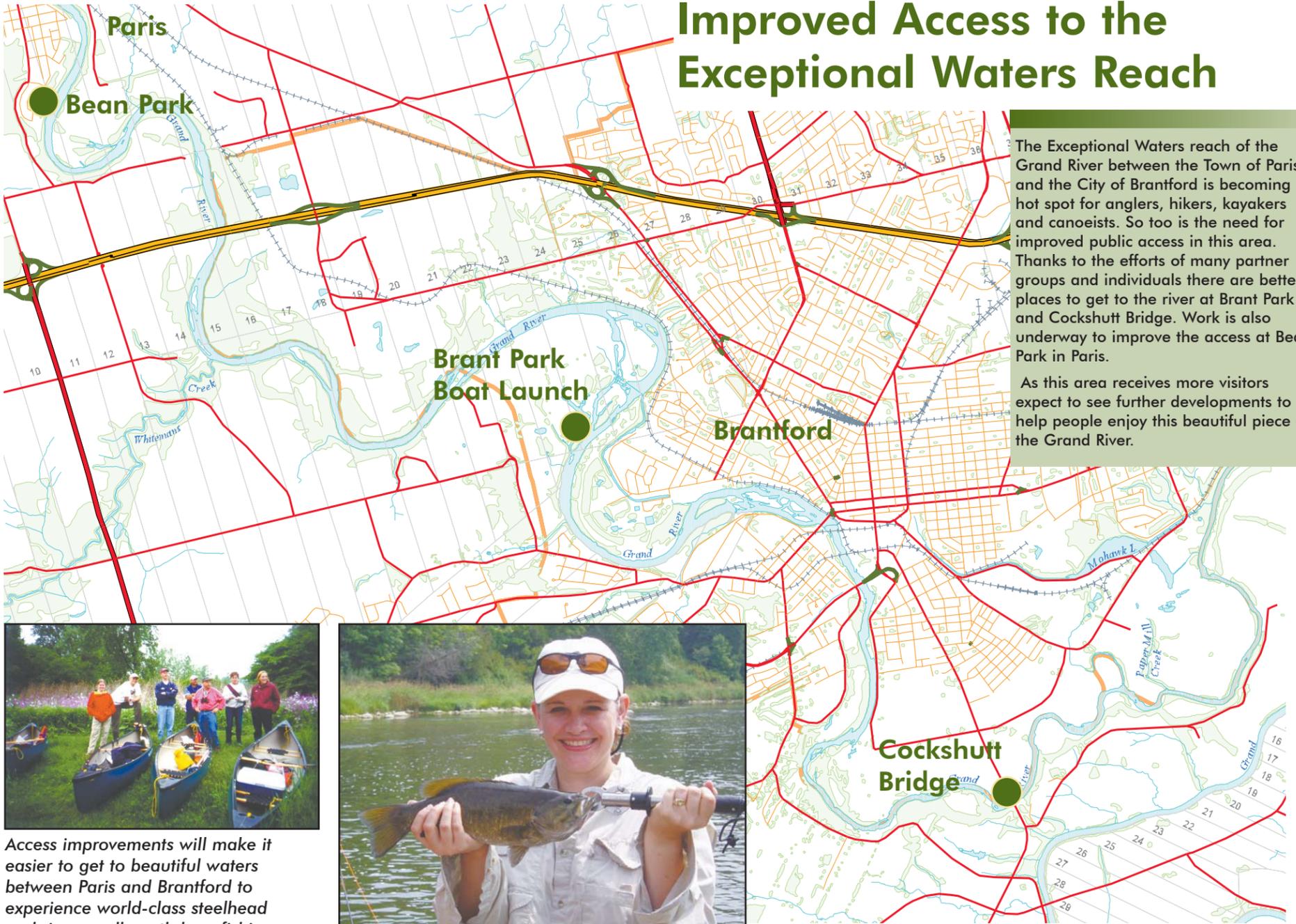
Area with recent Access Improvements

The Grand River Tail-water is recognized world-wide as an excellent place to seek brown trout. Finding them is not a problem with the numerous access points that have been developed along this 28km reach of the Grand River.

Friends of the Grand River (FOGR), the Ministry of Natural Resources, the County of Wellington and the Township of Centre Wellington have all worked together to provide several safe and well designed access points that allow anglers to experience the beauty, diversity and great fishing that this area offers.

Check out these various access points on your next trip to the Fergus-Elora area and while you are enjoying your day on the water, thank the partners that made this access possible.

## Improved Access to the Exceptional Waters Reach



The Exceptional Waters reach of the Grand River between the Town of Paris and the City of Brantford is becoming a hot spot for anglers, hikers, kayakers and canoeists. So too is the need for improved public access in this area. Thanks to the efforts of many partner groups and individuals there are better places to get to the river at Brant Park and Cockshutt Bridge. Work is also underway to improve the access at Bean Park in Paris.

As this area receives more visitors expect to see further developments to help people enjoy this beautiful piece of the Grand River.

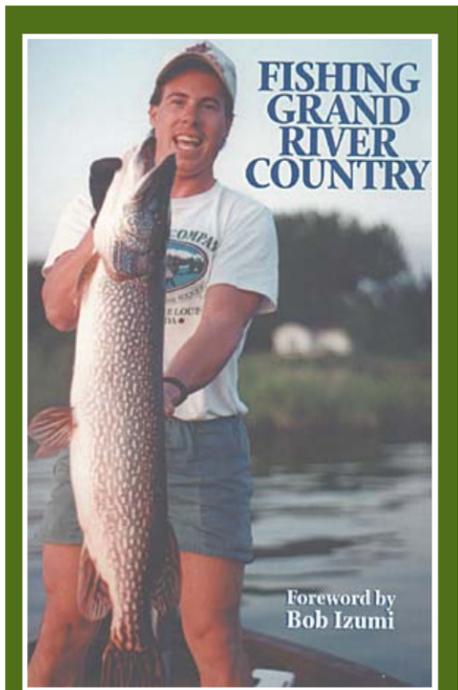


Access improvements will make it easier to get to beautiful waters between Paris and Brantford to experience world-class steelhead and river smallmouth bass fishing via boat or canoe.



Access improvements in the exceptional waters area are making the river a better place for anglers, hikers and canoeists.

● Area with recent Access Improvements



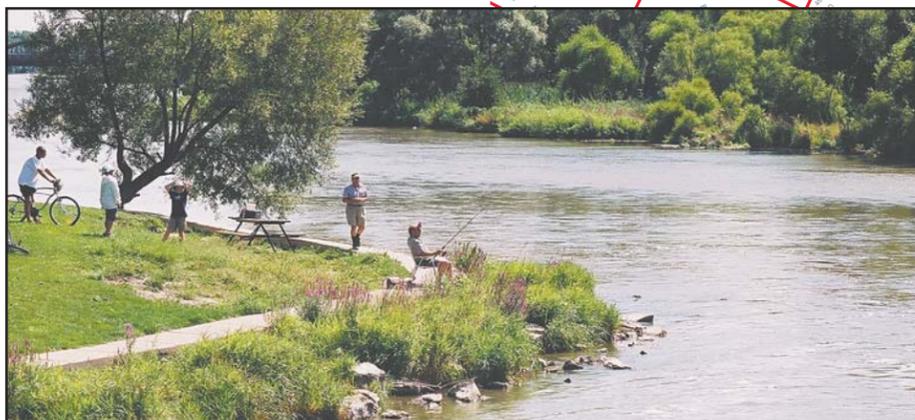
For information about the great fishing areas on the Grand River contact the GRCA or your local retailer to get a copy of "Fishing Grand River Country".

## Easier Access to the Southern Grand



There have been several developments to help improve access in the southern Grand River near Caledonia, York and Cayuga. The highlight of this access is the wheelchair accessible fishing platform at the dam in Caledonia.

Additional developments include the new Rotary Club River Trail along the river between Seneca Park and the Simms Lock that allows hikers, anglers and canoeists to access the Grand River between Caledonia and York. In Cayuga improved signage will help people find the boat launch and public access to the river. There are many other access improvements in the Southern Grand to look for in the coming months.



An accessible river in Caledonia makes it a popular place for people to visit and share in the fishing experience



Rebecca Kellman (in wheelchair) and her mother Cheryl Thompson of Burlington at the new accessible fishing platform in Caledonia in July 2003

## Larger Cover Placement in Tail-water

The question always arises, Can we make this river better?

For an 8km reach of river in the Grand River between the Low Level Bridge below the Elora Gorge and the Town Line bridge downstream researchers from the MNR, GRCA and Parrish Geomorphoc came up with a plan to improve this reach of river.

The "Large Cover Placement" project will restore some missing structural elements in the river that would normally be provided by unregulated high water flows.

After decades of moderated flows coming from the Shand Dam this part of the Grand is not acting like a wild river.

The Shand Dam was designed to reduce flooding in downstream communities and

to augment flows in the driest times to meet downstream needs. This means that natural movements of gravel, trees and riverbanks is not happening.

Mother Nature uses flooding events to refresh and maintain fish habitat in a wild river.

By improving riffle habitat and deeper pools in key locations in the river this project will improve the habitat and be able to support a healthier population of fish.

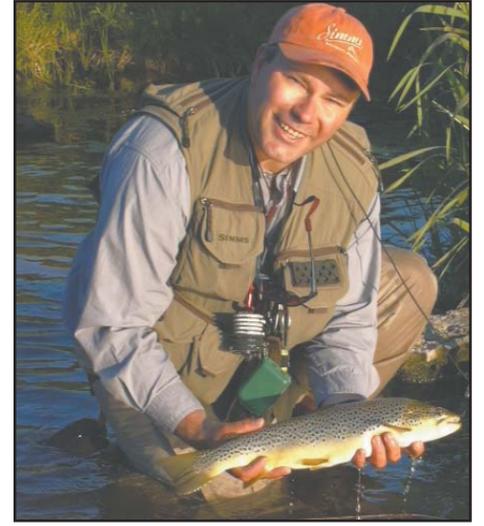
The stream works proposed will require the use of heavy equipment and costs will be significant, but the resulting improved habitat will make for better fishing. This fishery already generates millions of dollars for the communities of Fergus and Elora. It looks like a good investment.

The "Large Cover Placement Plan" identifies seven sites for potential restoration activities that will be designed to provide critical habitat for fish in the heat of the summer, icy winter conditions and for reproduction.

To complete a project of this magnitude a lot of background work is required. This past summer the MNR collected biological data to help with an Environmental Assessment of the project anticipated to begin in 2004 or 2005.

Other data will be carefully examined to ensure that the proposed project will actually make the positive changes to the river that it expects.

Please contact Mitch Wilson at (519) 826-4914 for more information.



*Large cover placement will narrow the channel and improve fish habitat in this reach of river to help increase the populations of healthy brown trout.*

## Learning More About the Southern Grand River



*A research boat provided entirely by partner funding helps with walleye tracking and water quality testing on the Southern Grand.*

The Lake Erie ecosystem is vital to managing and ultimately to improving upon the fisheries in the southern Grand River area. This is exactly what the Lake Erie Management Unit of the Ministry of Natural Resources (LEMU) and a wide variety of partner groups are trying to do.

LEMU researchers and volunteers from the Dunville Hunters & Anglers, Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters and several other organizations have found is that the ecosystem of the Grand River is closely linked to Lake Erie, into which it flows. This is especially true with the walleye population.

Walleye produced in the southern Grand River contribute to fisheries in both the river and the eastern basin of the lake.

Work began in 2000 as part of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) 5-Year Lake Erie Eastern Basin Restoration Plan and was expanded upon in 2003 due to funding from the Canada Ontario Agreement. The project is part of a multi-partner initiative which includes the MNR, Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Environment Canada, Ministry of the Environment, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and local conservation clubs.

In 2003, an MNR/GRCA field crew gathered detailed information on water quality, fish habitat and the fish that make use of the southern Grand, especially walleye.

Important questions to be answered included how accessible spawning habitat below Caledonia is to walleye coming upstream from the lake and where walleye prefer to be when water quality conditions are poor.

This past year several walleye were fitted with radio transmitter tags, released above and below the dam at Dunnville, and followed throughout the season. There were some pretty interesting results.

It was found that if these fish get above the dam, they use the quality habitat located between Cayuga and Caledonia, however, tagged fish below the dam did not often attempt to go through the fish-way to access the upper portion of the river.

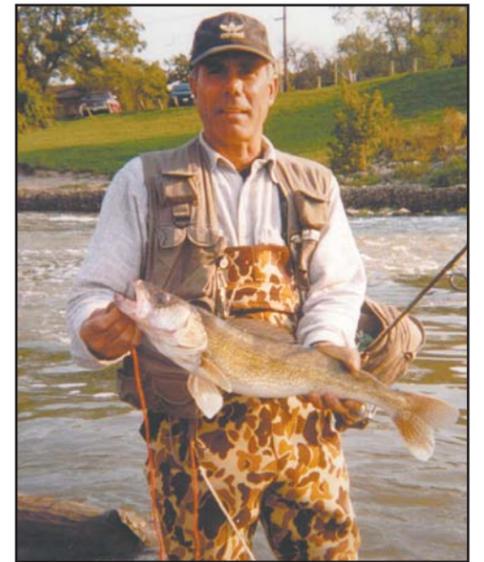
Many of the mature walleye from the spring spawning run moved to the lake for the summer; some returning in the fall. Most of the walleye that stay in the river for the summer are juvenile fish. Radio tracking of these fish suggests that they move very little, especially during times of higher water temperatures.

It was always interesting to see where the fish were located. One fish disappeared upstream and was found over 20km from

the release site in only three days. Another fish was tracked through a corn field to the base of an osprey nest.

A better understanding of the ecology of the Southern Grand River will aid in fish management decisions, guide habitat rehabilitation, and improve Southern Grand River fisheries. We will keep you posted.

For more information about this research contact The LEMU at (519) 873-4610.



*Researchers are monitoring the movements of large walleye like this to help improve the populations of these popular game fish.*

## Protecting a World-Class Fishery: The Grand River Tail-water

"People travel from around the world to fish for brown trout in the Grand River. The quality of the fishery and environment found here will be maintained or improved through a quality management plan."

The tail-water on the Grand River below the Shand Dam has been recognized by fly fishing magazines as one of the top brown trout fisheries in eastern North America. There is a good reason for this!

A "tail-water" is the environment created when cold water from Belwood Lake is released from the bottom of the dam.

A lot of hard work and planning has resulted in a river that produces a world-class angling experience. In the Grand River Tail-water anglers can expect to find excellent access to the river, a beautiful area to fish and of course a healthy population of brown trout. There is also significant volunteer involvement in the fishery

that makes sure the area is clean and safe and that various environmental improvement projects are completed.

To maintain or enhance this gem, a Tail-water Management Plan was initiated in 2001. Public meetings were held and key players including resource managers, fishing guides, landowners, angling groups and local municipalities got together to build a plan to guide management in this reach of river. The plan will be ready for public review this spring.

This plan identified over 30 "Issues" that were addressed with corresponding "Strategies" and on-the-ground "Tactics" to address these "Issues".

This plan, will be a valuable tool to direct the activities in the Grand River Tail-water for the next several years.

The Tail-water Management Plan will ensure that this fishery is as successful as it has been over the past several years and set a course of action to maintain or improve this fishery for the future.

For more information contact the Guelph District Ministry of Natural Resources Biologist Art Timmerman at (519) 826-4935.



*High quality brown trout in a beautiful environment is what attracts anglers from around the world to the Grand River tail-water.*

## Southern River Volunteers Pitch in to Help Walleye

Volunteers are making a difference in the Southern Grand River. Through operating the Dunnville Fishway, working to improve walleye stocks and creating new public access, volunteers are an important force improving a "Grand" fishery

Walleye are the species of choice for anglers in the Lower Grand River and there is a dedicated core of volunteers that are helping along the population of these popular fish.

The Dunnville District Hunters & Anglers Conservation Club, Port Colborne Conservation Club, Fort Erie Conservation Club, Six Nations, Niagara College and Dofasco Angling Club have contributed

thousands of hours and dollars to help the fisheries in the Lower Grand River.

Each season volunteers monitor the fish way in Dunnville to help non-jumping species like walleye negotiate the dam to access prime spawning and nursery water upstream.

Monitoring a fish way may not seem like a huge task, but it takes about 8000 volunteer hours a season to keep thousands of fish moving upstream.

These dedicated volunteers have also reared 15,000 to 30,000 walleye fry each spring for the past few years to supplement natural Lake Erie and Grand River walleye stocks.

Rearing walleye is a labour intensive process where volunteers hatch out walleye

in what is called a "jar hatchery". They then raise the fish in rearing ponds in Dunnville, Port Colborne and Fort Erie with the assistance of local volunteers.

The in-river activities of these groups has also contributed improved walleye spawning sites below the weirs in Dunnville. This should help walleye reproduce naturally in this area.

The work in the Southern Grand River area is a true partnership where several groups are working to improve the water quality and fish habitat so that there will be happy walleye anglers in the Southern Grand River for years to come. For more information contact Felix Barbetti (905) 892-4381 Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters.



Dunnville Hunter & Angler Conservation Club volunteers lifting the cage at the Dunnville Fishway.

## Helping Species At Risk in the Grand River



The Redside Dace (above) and Black Redhorse Sucker are two of the many Species at Risk that call the Grand River home.

The Grand River is a unique environment and it is home to some of the rarest fish in Canada. six of 29 VTE fishes (vulnerable, threatened, endangered under COSEWIC) occur in the Grand River Watershed.

A recovery action group is tackling the challenges associated with securing existing populations of species at risk and re-establishing them in parts of their historic range.

These species include the Silver Shiner, Redside Dace, Greenside Darter and River Redhorse, Black Redhorse, and Eastern Sand Darter.

Many of these species are threatened by poor conditions created by runoff from farmlands, urban development and erosion. Dams can also have an impact by preventing colonization of additional areas, fragmenting already declining populations or through temperature change caused by impounded water.

The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan contains detailed strategies to address concerns surrounding these species. Surveys are being completed to determine species distribution and to determine critical habitat areas.

As a result of outreach activities, local residents have benefited through an improved understanding of species at risk and the ongoing recovery activities in the watershed.

As we work to improve the environment in the Grand River we will continue to enjoy having healthy fish populations that include some of these threatened species.

For more information about Species at Risk in the Grand River contact Kara Vlasman MNR Species at Risk Biologist [kara.vlasman@mnr.gov.on.ca](mailto:kara.vlasman@mnr.gov.on.ca).

## Clean Water Begins on the Farm



Cattle fencing allows a riparian area to develop that will stabilize stream banks, reduce water temperatures and improve water quality. Notice the difference before and after in these two pictures.

One of the best ways to ensure that surface water is clean and natural habitats are protected is to attack pollution problems right at the source.

That's the goal of the Rural Water Quality Program, which provides financial assistance and technical advice to help rural landowners adopt farming practices that protect water.

With proper management practices in place, farms can maintain clean water for

the rivers and streams of the Grand River Watershed.

In fact, the close connection between the farm program and water quality was an important factor in the decision to stock brown trout in the Conestogo River last fall.

The Conestogo River flows through some of the most intensely farmed land in the watershed, which has had a significant impact on water quality. Farm runoff, which often carries eroded soils and nutri-

ents (phosphorous and nitrates) from fertilizers and manure, makes the river less hospitable for some fish.

Trout are particularly sensitive to the low oxygen levels that accompany high nutrient levels.

However, a concerted effort to change farming practices in the Conestogo River region through the Rural Water Quality Program has had a noticeable impact on water quality in recent years.

In the Conestogo River area, more than \$2.2 million has been invested in more than 200 farm improvement projects under the Rural Water Quality Program, with the goal of keeping water clean as it leaves farm properties and enters watercourses.

Of that total, about \$1.3 million was spent by farmers, with the remaining coming from the program sponsors: the Region of Waterloo, City of Guelph, County of Wellington and the Healthy Futures Program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The GRCA administers the program on their behalf.

The Rural Water Quality Program is having an impact on water quality in other parts of the Grand River watershed, too.

The Rural Water Quality Program started as an initiative of Waterloo Region and the GRCA in 1998. The region provided the financial resources and the GRCA provided technical and administrative support.

Since then the program has spread to Guelph-Wellington and Brant-Brantford. Across the watershed, all three levels of government plus two private foundations provide funding to rural water quality programs.

The program offers farmers partial grants to plant trees and build fences to establish buffer strips along streams, and construct

Since 1998 the Rural Water Quality Program has completed over 825 projects that have resulted in planting of over 460 acres of trees, erecting 55 kilometers of fencing to keep over 4000 livestock out of waterways and many more activities to improve water quality in the Grand River watershed.

manure storage tanks and fertilizer and fuel storage facilities. Farmers can also get help with developing nutrient management plans, protecting wellheads and retiring environmentally fragile lands. The grants range from 50 per cent to 100 per cent of the cost, depending on the project. The landowner is expected to contribute the balance by providing money, materials and labour.

Projects are developed by the farmers in conjunction with technical advisers from the GRCA and then must be approved by a peer review committee.

Across the entire Grand River watershed, close to \$8 million has been spent on about 900 projects. Of that, about \$3 million was in grants from various levels of government, with the remaining \$5 million coming from farmers themselves.

The projects include the construction of more than 100 manure storage facilities and 115 fences along 55 kilometers of watercourse. The fences keep about 4,000 livestock out of streams and rivers. Farmers have also planted trees on more than 460 acres of streamside buffers and in ground-water recharge areas.

All of these activities help to keep nutrients, bacteria and other contaminants out of the Grand River and its tributaries leading to better and healthier fish populations.

## Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Implementation Committee Newsletter

For More information concerning projects associated with the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Implementation Committee Contact :

Mitch Wilson,  
Ministry of Natural Resources,  
Guelph District Office (519) 826-4914  
Or Warren Yerex, Grand River  
Conservation Authority  
(519) 621-2761 X249



### Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Best Bets

	In Progress	Ongoing	Deferred	Complete
<b>Land Management</b>				
Land Stewardship Incentive Program		✓		
<b>Habitat Management</b>				
Aquatic Renewal Program				
Dunnville/Port Maitland Habitat Incentive	✓			
Large Cover Placement- Grand Tail-water	✓			
Municipal Drain Incentive	✓			
Small Dam Conversion/Removal Incentive		✓		
Cold Water Enhancement-Middle Grand			✓	
Reservoir Habitat Enhancement			✓	
<b>Extension /Promotion</b>				
Exceptional Waters	✓			
Aquatic Resources Centres			✓	
Public Access Development and Signage		✓		
Expanded Distribution of Data, Resources and Guides		✓		
Promotion of Under Utilized and Urban Fisheries			✓	
"Grand Slam" Angler Awards Program			✓	
<b>Implementation</b>				
Implementation Steering Committee		✓		
Marketing Strategy to Fund Implementation	✓			
Fisheries Plan Promotional Package	✓			
Voluntary "Fisheries Stamp" Program			✓	
<b>Planning and Information Management</b>				
Integration of Fisheries Plan and Watershed Plans		✓		
Establish Long term Data Monitoring Programs	✓			
Grand River Tail-water Management Plan	✓			
Conestogo River Tail-water Fishery Feasibility Study				✓
Migratory Fish Management Strategy	✓			
Lake Sturgeon Recovery Plan				✓
Muskellunge Recovery Plan				✓
Fish Habitat Protection and Management Plan		✓		
Information Needs Strategy		✓		
Dam-Pond Inventory Initiative : Cold Water Streams	✓			
Baitfish Management Review			✓	
Restoration Plans for VTE Fish Species at Risk				✓
Ice Fishing Management and Promotional Strategy			✓	
<b>Fish Community Management</b>				
Caledonia Fishway Improvements	✓			
Barrier Maintenance			✓	
Native Species Reintroduction Initiatives			✓	
<b>Regulatory Initiatives</b>				
Extended Fall Fishery: Rainbow Trout				✓
Trout Stream Sanctuaries				✓
Lower Grand River Pike Season				✓
Smallmouth Bass Special Regulations Zone				✓
Extension of Existing Trout Special Regulation Areas				✓
Voluntary Conservation Limits	✓			
Specials Regulations at Rehabilitations Sites				✓

## Welcome from the GRFMPIC

The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Implementation Committee (IC) has been in existence since the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan (GRFMP) was adopted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Grand River Conservation Authority and partners in 1998.

The GRFMP represents the combined efforts of various resource management agencies and several organizations working in partnership. The Plan provides guidance in managing the fish resources and overall health of the Grand River watershed.

The Implementation Committee was extremely active in 2003, accomplishing a number of projects including activity on many of the 'Best Bets' identified in the GRFMP.

Some of IC's significant achievements in 2003 include:

- Signage and access improvements along the Grand River.
- Habitat improvements in the Grand River and its tributaries.

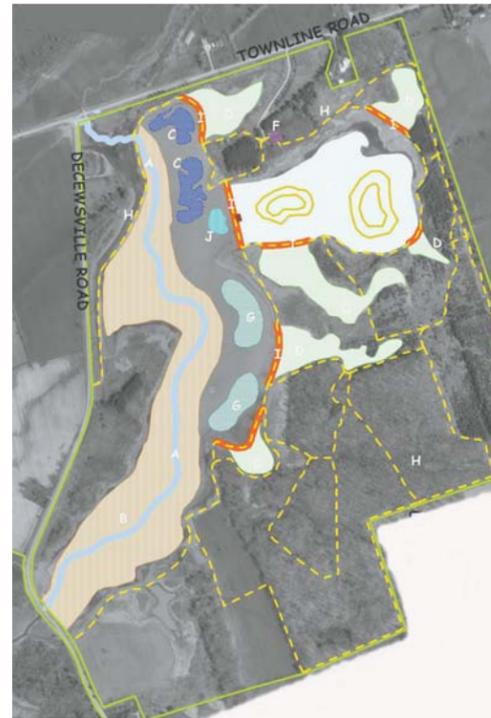
- Establishment of the Exceptional Waters Community Advisory Committee and hiring of an Exceptional Waters Coordinator.
- Creation of a promotional video.
- Stocking of brown trout in the Conestogo River tail-water.
- Maintaining interest and continuity within the IC.
- Hosting Open Houses updating IC accomplishments across the watershed in the spring 2003.

Many thanks go to the volunteers and agency representatives on the IC for an outstanding and successful year. We have long since realized that the success of the IC is a result of the continued support and involvement of its members. We look forward to another successful year 2004 including the completion of the Grand River Tail-water Plan, further progress on the Grand River Large Cover Placement Project, additional habitat assessment work in the southern Grand, and a marketing strategy for the Fish Plan to be used with the promotional video to raise funds for further implementation projects.

**Mitch Wilson, Co-Chair**  
Ministry of Natural Resources

**Warren Yerex, Co-Chair**  
Grand River Conservation Authority

## Taquanyah: Coldwater Stream Rehabilitation



The proposed dam removal/restoration plan at Taquanyah.

Taquanya is a small creek that flows into the southern Grand. The importance of this waterway is that it is a cold-water creek that could contribute to water quality improvements in the southern Grand.

Work is underway to remove an on-line pond that heats up the water significantly and reduces the cooling effect that this creek can have on the Grand.

Work with a wide variety of partners is accomplishing these improvements at this significant site. For more information Contact Lorraine Norminton at [lorraine.norminton@mnr.gov.on.ca](mailto:lorraine.norminton@mnr.gov.on.ca) or Warren Yerex GRCA (519) 621-2761 X249.

## Partners Creating a "Grand" Place to Wet a Line

The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan Implementation Committee is composed of a wide variety of representatives that have an interest in the fisheries and their improvement on the Grand River. Representatives of the committee include:

Brantford Steelheaders, Caledonia Bait & Tackle, Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Dunnville Hunters & Anglers, Friends of the Grand River, Isaac Walton Fly Fishing Club, Grand River Migratory Fish Working Group, Ontario

Federation of Anglers & Hunters, Ontario Steelheaders, Ontario Streams, Six Nations (Wildlife Management), Southern Grand River Advisory Board, Trout Unlimited Canada, Grand River Conservation Authority, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Wellington County Stewardship Council.

Volunteers and staff members from these groups dedicate hundreds of hours of work and thousands of dollars a year to the improvement of the fisheries in the Grand River Watershed.