

GRAND ACTIONS

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL ISSUE



Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

SPECIAL ISSUE



Riverprize 2000

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Cover photo

Peter Krause, GRCA Chairman, accepts the prestigious Riverprize trophy on behalf of the GRCA and its partners.

Left to right: Martin Albrecht, Theiss Managing Director; Peter Krause; and Jim Soorley, Lord Mayor of Brisbane.



A GRAND CELEBRATION Riverprize 2000 Belongs to Us All

It was the moment of a lifetime. Imagine standing on a stage at the other side of the world, in front of the world's most respected authorities on river management, and being told that this year you are the best!

The people who make up the partnerships of *The Grand Strategy* and the individuals who work for the GRCA were all there in spirit. Four people represented us and brought the prize home, but it is our prize and we can all celebrate our achievement.

This issue of *Grand Actions* is dedicated to the Riverprize and the events that surrounded the selection and presentation process.

**It takes time to succeed
because success is merely the
natural reward of taking time to
do anything well.**

Joseph Ross

A Message from Peter Krause, GRCA Chairman

From the time it was first settled, the Grand River has been the defining symbol of our community, uniting each generation in a life experience that is unique to our region. It is our greatest legacy to our children, the key to our economic growth and future prosperity. For over 60 years, the GRCA and its member municipalities have taken actions to protect and enhance our Grand legacy for future generations.

Recently, our success in bringing our river back from the brink of disaster in the 1930s to a stage where it is now one of the healthiest in North America was internationally applauded. In September I was honoured to represent the GRCA, along with Tony Smith, Barbara Veale and Marilyn Murray, immediate past president of The Grand River Foundation, in accepting on your behalf, the Thiess Riverprize, the world's most prestigious award for river management

CHAIR

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excellence in Brisbane, Australia.

The Riverprize, worth AUD \$100,000 and sponsored by Thiess Services, is awarded during Brisbane's Riverfestival. This tremendous accomplishment is testimony to all of those who believed in the vision of a healthier watershed for the people of the Grand and who worked tirelessly to achieve that goal – to former staff, municipal leaders and community partners. This honour also recognizes the recent accomplishments of the Conservation Authority and its partners through *The Grand Strategy* to tackle pressing resource issues around the impacts of rapid development in our watershed.

The continued good health of the watershed is paramount. Our collective challenge is to find effective solutions and to stretch limited dollars in support of effective actions. While we bask in the glow of recognition for a job well done, we cannot rest on our laurels but must continue to work together to secure a healthy future for our children.

It is with this thought in mind, that I am very pleased to say that the award money has been entrusted to The Grand River Foundation to be placed in a special Brisbane-Thiess Riverprize Endowment Fund. This fund will be used to support initiatives of the Grand River Conservation Authority that improve river health and build community partnerships for action. An annual "Riverprize" initiative will remind watershed residents and others of the international regard given to the Conservation Authority for its excellence in river management for years to come. I hope that it will also renew the already strong commitment of GRCA staff, board members and municipalities to sustain the Grand River watershed as one of the best places in Canada to live, work and play.



The Riverprize trophy represents a stylized "Coolamon", an aboriginal vessel for carrying water. These hand-carved wooden bowls were traditionally made by women and often carried by balancing the bowl on a handspun ring placed on the head. The women decorated the coolamons with hand engraved designs representing traditional Aboriginal stories. The trophy, by Aboriginal artist Judy Watson, is cast in aluminum to represent the shimmer of water.

A Message from Paul Emerson, Chief Administrative Officer, GRCA

Thanks to the conservation programs undertaken by the Grand River Conservation Authority and its member municipalities over the past 60 years, the Grand River is one of the healthiest river systems in North America in a heavily populated area. The sport fish are back, and recreational use of the river has increased significantly. In fact, the river has improved so much that in 1994, it was declared a Canadian Heritage River

on the basis of its outstanding human heritage features and values, and its abundance and diversity of excellent recreational opportunities.

There is now clearly an awareness of the river's worth. Residents explore and enjoy its many natural and cultural resources in growing number, and the general level of concern for how the river is used and treated has increased. There is much to be proud of!

It was the foresightedness of our early conservation pioneers who convinced the Province of the benefits of a municipal partnership on a watershed basis to deal with land and water resource issues. The Conservation Authorities Act, passed in 1946, gave Conservation Authorities the broad mandate to "undertake any scheme for the purposes of conservation, restoration, and development of natural resources other gas, oil, coal and minerals." One of the greatest challenges around watershed management in Australia is finding a suitable coordinating mechanism to bring different interests together up and down a river system.

In Ontario, we are extremely fortunate to have thirty-seven other conservation authorities to coordinate and manage our watershed resources. So this award not only recognizes the tireless efforts of so many people in the Grand River watershed - it recognizes the important flood management and environmental activities of all conservation authorities and their municipalities across Ontario.

In the 21st century, our resource base, especially our water resources, will be even more pressured as growth continues its rapid pace. The need for a watershed approach is more important than ever to maintain a healthy place to live. This honour and recognition bestowed on the Grand River Conservation Authority will keep us ever mindful of that fact.

Brisbane's Riverfestival

The Riverfestival is a week of festivities and celebrations around the Brisbane River in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. This includes a three-day Riversymposium, started in 1998, and quickly establishing itself as one of the premier events on the Australian and international calendar for river and river basin managers.

The symposium's mission statement reads:

"The Riversymposium and Riverprize will focus national and international attention on river management, provide a forum to discuss substantive issues, and showcase, analyze and award examples of successful approaches and practices."

Thiess Environmental Services is an Australian company providing services to commercial and industrial businesses in water and wastewater, landfill and remediation, collection and recycling, and waste management systems. In 1999, Thiess stepped forward to pledge AUD one-half million dollars over five years to host a Riverprize. The Riverprize acknowledges outstanding achievement in river management worldwide. The primary judging criteria is the ability of an organization or group to demonstrate progress and achievements in effecting real river management outcomes.

The four criteria are:

- Demonstrated performance in delivering on-the-ground management actions throughout a river and its basin;
- Demonstrated genuine participation by levels of government, community and industry – and associated transparent and accountable planning and policy-making;
- Innovations in river basin management, whether these be science and technology, planning, management, policy or institutional arrangements;

- Demonstrated levels of public accountability and reporting of achievements.

An international Judging Panel is drawn from all parts of the world and from all sections of the river management fraternity.

The Nomination

The GRCA became aware of the Riversymposium and the Riverprize after last year's symposium. Invitations to submit a nomination for Riverprize 2000 were publicized early last spring. Nominations were to be succinct and include only two pages to outline the accomplishments and achievements of the organization, and no more than five pages detailing the organizational structure. Copies of all supporting materials were also required. In May, the GRCA submitted its nomination.

Our nomination stated *"ours is a story of the recovery of the Grand River from years of degradation and industrialization and how we are working together to keep it healthy for future generations."* Through partnerships with its member municipalities, the Province, and non-government organizations, the GRCA has delivered a wide range of resource activities to reduce flood damage, improve water quality, provide adequate water supply, protect natural areas, provide environmental education and develop quality outdoor opportunities. Activities included: reforestation, land acquisition, dams, dyking, channelization, erosion control works, regulation of development in floodplains and wetlands, watershed planning, outreach programs to

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Brisbane, host of the Riverfestival, is Australia's third largest city, and the state capital of Queensland. Home to 1.6 million people, it is also a popular tourist destination because of its near perfect, year-round climate and attractive scenery. The Brisbane River rises in the hills and ranges northwest of the city and is about 320 km long overall. The City Cat in this photo serves as regular city transportation for downtown Brisbane. The Southbank of the river is a "people place" with walkways, fountains, swimming areas, restaurants and other public amenities.

NOMINATION

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landowners (i.e., one-on-one consultations, demonstration projects), nature centre programs for school children and the general public, and development of outdoor recreation areas.

The nomination emphasized that conservation activities were guided by three key watershed-wide management plans including: Grand River Conservation Report – Hydraulics (1954); Grand River Basin Water Management Study (1982); and *The Grand Strategy* (1994 and ongoing). The positive results of these activities were pointed out, including our national recognition as a Canadian Heritage River.

Our collective efforts and recent successes to tackle resource issues through *The Grand Strategy* were also highlighted and promoted as an innovative working model to secure partnerships, consolidate resources, and undertake priority actions to address pressing issues on a watershed basis.

On July 8, 2000, the GRCA was notified that its nomination was one of eight finalists short-listed from the twenty nominations received.

The 2000 Riverprize finalists were:

1. The Grand River Conservation Authority, Ontario, Canada;
2. The Tsurumi River, Tokyo, Japan;
3. The Whanganui River, Wanganui, New Zealand;
4. Afonydd Glan/Clean Rivers Project, Wales.
5. The Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority, Victoria, Australia;
6. The Blackwood Basin Group, Western Australia;
7. The Mitchell River Watershed Management Group, Far North Queensland, Australia; and
8. The Healthy Waterways Program, Melbourne Water, Victoria, Australia;

In the words of Brisbane's Lord



All the RiverPrize finalists are represented in this photo, except for the Afonydd Glan/Clean Rivers Project, Wales.

Mayor Jim Soorley, "this year's [2000] finalists represent outstanding river management from around the world and offer important lessons for communities everywhere." We were certainly in worthy company.

Preparing for the Big Day

On July 28, 2000, the Conservation Authority was notified that we had won the Riverprize but we were asked to keep the win confidential. A gala ceremony was being planned for September 6, 2000, at which time the formal announcement would be made. We would be required to deliver a 45 minute address to the plenary session the following morning and meet with various stakeholders, community groups, and management agencies throughout the

week following the award presentation.

The Conservation Authority decided to send three representatives; Chairman Peter Krause, Assistant CAO Dr. Tony Smith, and Barbara Veale, Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Partnerships. Since the symposium organizers were particularly interested in partnership building and shared implementation, The Grand River Foundation chose to be represented at the symposium as well by sending Past President Marilyn Murray.

For over 30 years, The Grand River Foundation has raised funds for environmental projects in the Grand River valley that would not otherwise be undertaken. The Foundation Board is comprised of volunteers from the corporate community, with staff administrative support supplied by the GRCA. As a Foundation that undertakes local work, the projects supported tend to be very visible in nature, and of tangible benefit to residents in communities throughout the Grand River watershed.



The First Riverprize

The first Riverprize was awarded in 1999 at Riversymposium to the Mersey Basin Campaign in England.

The Mersey Basin River watershed covers an area of some 4680 square kilometres taking in 2000 km of watercourses. The Campaign is a unique initiative which shares a vision and determination to regenerate the river and canal systems in England's northwest from almost 200 years of neglect and decline. It is a government-backed partnership launched in 1985 that brings together public and private sectors to deliver water quality improvements and waterside regeneration throughout the Mersey Basin river system.

Jeff Hinchcliffe, CEO of the Campaign, stated that the Riverprize has helped boost recognition of the Campaign's work both in the UK community and throughout the world.

The Mersey Basin Campaign is using the award to support a range of new initiatives in the Mersey Basin. These include remedial works, "hands-on" monitoring resource kits for schools, river dance - a play developed for youth groups and schools to highlight environmental issues, internet development to encourage exchange of ideas regarding sustainable development world-wide, and development of pathways adjacent to waterways in urban centres.

The Big Day

The Thiess Riverprize was awarded at a special gala ceremony held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. Peter Krause accepted the trophy from Martin Albrecht, Thiess Services Managing Director, on behalf of the GRCA. Brisbane's Lord Mayor Jim Soorley stated that, "It is not an easy award to win and the Grand River Conservation Authority has shown remarkable achievement across

the range of judging criteria. The Authority offers important lessons for river managers everywhere. It has delivered remarkable environmental success while also providing for human needs, a delicate balancing act that communities and governments struggle with all over the world."

The Riverfeast followed the Riverprize ceremony. This event was held on Victoria Bridge in the heart of



The didgeridoo is an unusual trumpet played by the Aborigines of northern Australia to accompany dance and song. It is constructed of a large tube of Eucalyptus wood or bamboo. One end rests on the ground, while the player simultaneously blows and sings into the other end of the instrument, producing a deep, buzzing drone and more subtle effects: high partials, rhythmic articulations, and changes of tone color. To create this sound requires circular breathing, a difficult technique of taking in air through the nose while at the same time blowing air out through the mouth. A didgeridoo player was part of the River Symphony, performed by the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra at the Riverprize Award ceremony.

the city. On the bridge, thousands of guests sat down to dinner served by the city's leading restaurants. This "night of nights" specifically celebrated the presentation of the Thiess Riverprize. The evening culminated in a spectacular fireworks display over the Brisbane River.

The Riversymposium provided Conservation Authority representatives with the opportunities to network and meet a wide array of individuals from resource agencies and groups from Australia, Asia, UK, and the United States. The week following the symposium, was filled with meetings and events hosted by various agencies and groups that provided additional opportunities for exchanging information and exploring ideas with other river managers from the Brisbane area, university researchers, and community groups. We had much to teach but we also had much to learn.

The Future

Immediately after the formal announcement was made, press releases were issued simultaneously in Australia and Canada. The tremendous public support and excitement generated by the various articles and editorial comments included in the local and national media were very inspiring. To be compared with other agencies and organizations in the world and to be considered one of the very best is a tremendous accolade. It also reminds us that we are making great strides together and shouldn't take our collective efforts and expertise for granted.

Our watershed model is the envy of the world. This recognition provides us all with an exciting and remarkable opportunity to assume a stronger leadership role in resource management in the watershed, provincial, national and international context. This, in turn, will help to foster new

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FUTURE

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partnerships that are necessary to advance *The Grand Strategy* and to deal with imminent resource issues in the future. Increased profile and awareness of the Conservation Authority and its achievements will boost opportunities for The Grand River Foundation to lever funds to grow the Brisbane-Thiess Riverprize Endowment Fund. Furthermore, the Riverprize will open doors in the future for new endeavours and opportunities yet unimagined.

We've Got Letters

Since the Riverprize announcement, we've had a lot of nice comments from a great variety of people and organizations. Here are a few of the letters we received.

"The GRCA was the first watershed and river management organization in Canada, and the third oldest in the world. This award reflects the respect and admiration of your industry. The contribution you have

made to the community is an inspiration to other organizations and individuals, and to all of Ontario".

The Honourable Michael D. Harris, Premier of Ontario.

"Congratulations to the Grand River Conservation Authority on winning the River Basin Olympics".

James P. Bruce, Canadian Policy Representative, Soil and Water Conservation Society.

"The award is deserved and the GRCA is once again on the cutting edge. This distinction has brought honour and respect to the GRCA in particular and reflects well on the rest of us, and we appreciate the opportunity to bask in your limelight".

Don Pearson, General Manager, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

"Our Federation was founded in the 1930s as well, with the many of the same concerns and motivations as the founders of the GRCA. With this parallel existence we are aware of the long tradition of wise and professional work on behalf of the environment within the Grand River watershed. We admire the leadership and

innovation demonstrated by GRCA that extend far beyond the basic mandate of flood and erosion control and to embrace environmental education and building consensus for community conservation. We believe that this vision and professionalism has established and supported your effective work in the watershed for many years".

Ric Symmes, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

This award is a major step forward for river conservation in Canada in providing both national and international recognition to the significant achievements of the GRCA in managing the Grand as a Canadian Heritage River. The management strategies and promotional activities developed by the GRCA for the Grand are cutting edge and serve as an excellent model for other communities around the world to emulate.

Don MacAulay, Chair, Canadian Heritage Rivers Board.

To win this landmark international award against other countries such as Japan, Wales, New Zealand, and Australia, takes years of collective effort from the staff of the GRCA. You are "gold medal winners"

Paul Puopolo, Planning and Environmental Initiatives, Ltd., Kitchener.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is produced by the Grand River Conservation Authority on behalf of the partners in *The Grand Strategy*. This newsletter can be seen on the Internet at

www.grandriver.on.ca

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The Elders-in-Council of the Minjerribah and Moorgumpin Aboriginal people of North Stradbroke Island are active participants in the planning and management of Moreton Bay at the mouth of the Brisbane River, Australia. GRCA staff visited the area to meet resource managers and community groups.