

GRAND ACTIONS

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

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Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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Cover photo

Author and photographer Carl Hiebert captures the patterns and subtleties of the rural landscape. This small tributary has been fenced and protected as part of the Rural Water Quality Program.



FANCY A FENCE?

by Anne Loeffler, Grand River Conservation Authority

In December, the snow is flying, but local fencing contractors still had more than enough fencing jobs to finish before winter tightened its grip on the land. What's going on? Why the demand for fencing contractors?

Stream fencing projects are part of the reason. In the last two years, 18 projects to fence livestock from streams have been completed under the Rural Water Quality Program in the Region of Waterloo and Wellington County. Tree buffers have been established between the fence and the watercourse on most of the participating farms. And already there's interest from at least 30 farms to complete similar fencing/buffer projects next year.

This increased fencing activity comes as a surprise to some. After all, times are difficult for farmers. Input costs are up; commodity prices are down. Profit margins have decreased, forcing intensification for many operations, including those who pasture their livestock throughout the Grand watershed. On many farms, cattle have historically been pastured

near the watercourses to provide them with easy access to drinking water. The resulting streambank erosion and water quality degradation has affected humans and beasts downstream, and thereby has become a societal issue.

But change is lurking around the upstream bend. The change is happening on farms throughout the Grand watershed, where more farmers than ever before are participating in environmental programs. One such program is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program, which has been instrumental in helping farm families identify environmental areas of concern and priorities for action on their farm. The EFP also offers some limited financial assistance to the farmer taking these actions.

Once farmers have completed an EFP for the farm, they are eligible to receive financial assistance from the Rural Water Quality Program (RWQP). The RWQP offers technical and financial assistance to implement a variety of best management practices that improve and protect water quality. Funded by the Regional

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FANCY A FENCE?

from page one

Municipality of Waterloo, the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph, the RWQP programs have been able to provide over \$700,000 in financial assistance to implement 160 water quality protection projects since 1998. The program is delivered to farmers by GRCA staff who conduct site visits, assist the farmer in the application process, and supply technical assistance as required.

For example, a farmer is eligible to receive up to \$10,000 to share the cost of fencing livestock out of creeks. Eligible project items include fencing, installation of a livestock stream crossing, and an alternate water supply. The RWQP pays for 75% of the costs if the farmer has hired the job out to a contractor; however, if the farmer supplies the labour, he is reimbursed for 100% of the cost of the materials. The program also shares the cost of tree seedlings and saplings to be planted in the newly retired stream buffer area at a rate of 75% to a maximum of \$6,000. Former pasture land which has been retired into trees through the program is also eligible for a performance incentive of \$250/acre/year for up to three years to compensate the farmer for loss of production from the land, and to cover ongoing management costs for weed control.

Obviously this cost share formula has proven to be attractive to many. To date, RWQP fencing/buffer projects have resulted in the establishment of over 30,000 trees in stream buffers, more than 13 kilometres of stream fencing, and the exclusion of about 750 head of livestock from watercourses. The farmers themselves have supplied much of the labour. It is estimated that, to date, local farmers have contributed over 1,700 hours of labour to construct fences on their farms to restrict livestock from creeks. An impressive indicator of commitment to environmental protection!



In 1999, this farm stream showed badly eroded banks, with sediment moving freely into the water. The stream was open and unshaded with poor water quality.

The environmental benefits of stream buffers are numerous. Streambank erosion is reduced; nutrient, pathogen and sediment inputs into the watercourse decrease; fish habitat is protected and enhanced; wildlife habitat and corridors are created. Benefits to the farming operation can include improved herd health, improved pasture productivity, and windbreak and shading effects from the trees in the buffer.

There can be educational benefits as well. The Grade 8 class from Linwood

Public School recently helped establish a tree buffer in the Boomer Creek watershed. This project was supported by Home Hardware through the Tree Canada Foundation. Students spent part of the day planting 180 hardwood saplings at the farm, and then planted 25 saplings in their schoolyard to provide shade.

How do the students feel about participating in a stream buffer planting? Here are some of their answers:



In 2000, the same stream is already on its way to becoming a healthy, clean watercourse. Fencing keeps out livestock, and new trees will eventually shade and protect the stream.

- We helped prevent erosion. The stream buffer will clean up the water.
- It was a cool experience. We learned how to properly plant trees and how important they are.
- We helped animals that live in the creek.
- The water will be cleaner so less people will get sick.
- We learned how to respect our environment.
- By planting trees, we made the air cleaner and fresher.
- It was good experience, good exercise, and we got stronger.
- We were satisfied with the work we did.
- We enjoyed knowing that we made a difference!

Do you want to establish a fence and stream buffer on your farm? For more information on the Rural Water Quality Program, contact the GRCA at 519-621-2761.



MILESTONES

Milestones are progress or products of *The Grand Strategy* Joint Work Plan.

Forest Plan Comes Together

Even with much of the watershed blanketed in a thick layer of snow, the stakeholder groups of the Watershed Forest Plan are already thinking of the warmer days of spring and of course, trees. Since the initial survey went out to the watershed community in November of last year, the Watershed Forest Plan has forged ahead with broad public support, and great progress has been made towards its completion. With the final draft nearing completion, it is time to look forward to the immediate and long-term futures of the Watershed Forest

Plan.

In early November the Steering Committee for the Watershed Forest Plan met to review each draft section of the plan and also to generate ideas and action plans for implementation of the plan starting this spring. Many excellent ideas were discussed and broad priorities were set. Some of the project and program recommendations of the Steering Committee are available to review on-line at the Watershed Forest Plan website in the form of fact-sheets.

Completed draft sections of the Watershed Forest Plan are also available on-line and broad community input on these sections is needed and encouraged. People can then quickly and easily fill out the on-line comments form for the section they wish to provide feedback on and submit their comments for consideration.

Public open houses are also being scheduled for January and February to give the general public an opportunity to review the final draft of the WFP and offer their comments and suggestions (see *Grand Actions Calendar*, page 8, for details). The Watershed Forest Plan website will continue to play an important role in providing information to the stakeholders groups and the public about the plan, meeting dates and minutes, and about forest resources of the Grand River Watershed and about implementation of the plan. The final version of the plan is to be completed in early spring this year.

So take the opportunity to use the cold months of winter to reflect on some of the great trees you've known, planted, climbed on, swung from or had in your living room decorated with lights. The forests of the Grand River benefit everyone in the watershed; even if it's just thoughts of fresh air and a shady retreat on a hot, summer's day.....in January.

The Watershed Forest Plan website can be accessed through the GRCA website at www.grandriver.on.ca

Walper Hosts Heritage Workshop

The Walper Terrace Hotel in Kitchener will be the host venue for the 4th Annual Heritage Day Workshop on February 19, 2001, organized by *The Grand Strategy* Heritage Working Group. This heritage inn makes this an ideal location for the workshop with its theme *Heritage Makes Sense: Discover Why*.

An inn at the centre of the community has welcomed visitors since early settlers came to Sandhills (now Kitchener). Originally the Varnum Inn stood on the site at Schneiders Road (Queen South) and Preston Road (King Street). In 1836, Frederick Gaukel purchased the inn, enlarged it and renamed it Gaukel's Hotel. The hotel saw several owners and name changes before C. H. Walper took over in 1886. Then known as the Commercial Hotel, the building was destroyed by fire in 1892. The following year a new building was erected as a high-class hotel at the cost of \$74,000. In 1908, \$4.50 a week supplied the guest with a room, meals and a maid to fill the water pitcher, while beer and whiskey sold for 5 cents a glass. Hotel rooms were then lighted by gas jet, only two rooms had baths and there was one telephone in the lobby.

Since then the hotel has undergone many changes, from recognition as one of the best eating places in Canada to closing its doors in 1979 because of financial difficulties. In 1982, Fred Fontaine purchased the building and refurbished the hotel to create an elegant reminder of its golden age. The \$7 million project succeeded; Tourism Ontario bestowed a five star rating on the hotel and business is improving. This handsome hotel in the heart of Kitchener is proof that preserving our heritage buildings can be a sound investment.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Unused Wells Pathways for Pollution

by Mitch Wilson, Hamilton-
Wentworth Stewardship
Council.

What do think about when you drive the rural roads of the watershed? If you are a well contractor you probably ponder about the hundreds, if not thousands, of unused wells that dot the landscape. An unused well is a general term used to describe a water well that is not currently used or is used occasionally.

Early farm and rural water supplies were drawn from streams, springs and hand-dug wells. Since the early days, the needs of rural residents, and the well technology to meet those needs, have evolved. Our reliance on a clean and plentiful groundwater source has also grown. Our constant search for a safe and reliable water supply on the farm or behind the house often results in the improper abandonment of one well for the use of another. More often

than not, these unused wells are not properly maintained.

Even a well you're not using now, but might be in the future, must be maintained like a working well. A well that won't be used again must be properly abandoned (plugged or sealed) to protect the aquifer from surface contamination and to eliminate a safety hazard to humans, livestock and wildlife.

Well and aquifer contamination can occur in many different ways. For example, feedlots, animal yards, septic systems, manure storage, fertilizer and pesticides can all contaminate your water supply. The amount of risk will depend on the condition of your well and how close it is to potential sources of contamination.

Why should you be concerned? It is a lot easier and cheaper to prevent contamination than to try and clean it up. Treating the water, constructing a new well, or getting water from another source are all inconvenient and can be expensive.

The correct way to plug a well depends on the well's construction. Methods of plugging unused wells are described in the Best Management Practices (BMP) book on Water Wells

prepared by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This BMP can be obtained by contacting the Ontario Federation of Agriculture at (416) 485-3333. In the event that you need work done on your well, it should be done by a contractor licenced by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

Grand River watershed residents planning to plug an unused well may be eligible for assistance through the Environmental Farm Plan program or the Rural Water Quality Program. Call the GRCA Soil and Water Conservation Services at (519) 621-2761 for more information.

Latornell Symposium

The annual A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium provides a forum for discussion and understanding around emerging conservation issues. It is Ontario's premier conservation conference, attracting over 400 delegates annually. The 7th annual Symposium was held on October 23-25, 2000, at the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston. Delegates came from conservation authorities, federal and provincial agencies, municipalities, and private business, universities and community groups.

The theme was *Growth and Conservation: Chaos or Compatibility*, and focussed on the delicate balance between growth and conservation, urban and rural interests, and private benefits versus public good. Speakers delved into urban and rural issues around growth, the impacts of municipal amalgamation and restructuring, concerns about the changing landscapes, aquatic habitat manipulation, and the ever-increasing demands we place on our water and land resources. Concurrent sessions dealt specifically with surface and groundwater issues, differing management approaches and innovative tools and new technologies.



On March 26, 2001, TV viewers across Canada will learn what Grand River watershed residents already know. The Grand, pictured above, is a beautiful Canadian Heritage River and an important part of our lives.

Great Canadian Rivers

A new television series, from Good Earth Productions, premieres across Canada on the Discovery Channel, on Monday, January 1, 2001, at 9:30 p.m. (EST).

Great Canadian Rivers is narrated by actor/musician Tom Jackson and will profile thirteen of Canada's greatest and most interesting rivers, each representing the natural and cultural heritage of Canada. Each half-hour episode focuses on one river, while the series as a whole presents a variety of landscapes, regions and stories.

Season One of Great Canadian Rivers includes visits to British Columbia's Stikine, Fraser, and Gataga Rivers, Alberta's Red Deer and Athabasca Rivers, Saskatchewan's Churchill River, Manitoba's Hayes River, Ontario's Grand and French Rivers, Nova Scotia's Margaree River, New Brunswick's St. Croix River, plus the Coppermine River in the NWT/ Nunavut and the Yukon's Yukon River. Our own Grand River will be featured at 9:30 p.m. on March 26, 2001.

Wetlands Conference Postponed

The Wetlands Conference, scheduled for January 25, 2001, has been postponed until March. The new date will be posted as soon as possible. The conference will encourage dialogue around existing issues and policies relating to wetlands to assist the GRCA in revising its current wetland policies.

Environmental Awards

Nominations are now being sought for the Region of Waterloo Environmental Sustainability Awards. Each year individuals and organizations are recognized for their commitment to conserving our natural heritage.



The Honourable John Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources (left) and GRCA Chairman Peter Krause (right), present a GRCA Honour Roll Award to Gil Henderson of Onondaga Farms.

There are six award categories, including agriculture, business, community, education, and stewardship of a natural area. Awards will be presented on June 7, 2001, at the Kitchener City Hall. The awards are being sponsored by Region of Waterloo municipalities, business groups, the Chamber of Commerce, GRCA, and many other environmental organizations.

For nomination forms, or more information about the nomination guidelines and categories, contact Regan Bowers of the Chamber of Commerce at (519) 576-5000. And yes, it is OK to nominate yourself. The Awards Committee would like to know about your efforts.

NOW AVAILABLE

Trees for 2001

If you have a large tree-planting project in mind, the GRCA may be able to help. Tree planting assistance can be arranged for spring 2002, and trees (without planting assistance) may still be available for spring of 2001.

For a list of available nursery stock contact Brenda Armstrong at (519) 621-2763, ext. 250, or email barmstrong@grandriver.on.ca For information about assistance with your tree planting contact Martin Neumann at (519) 621-2763, ext. 258, or email mneumann@grandriver.on.ca

LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

Special Recognition

The Honourable John Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources, was the Guest of Honour at the GRCA Special Recognition Awards and Honour Roll Ceremony on November 24, 2000, at the GRCA Administration Centre. Mr. Snobelen presented the awards and brought greetings from Premier Harris.

Recipients of Grand River Watershed Conservation Awards were:

Conestogo Winterbourne Optimists - for extensive community work, and trail maintenance on trails such as the Trans Canada Trail.

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AWARDS

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Ken Hunsberger (St. Agatha) - for a wide range of conservation farming practices, and his work with numerous farm organizations.

Dr. Jean Steckle (Kitchener) - for her work to support the environment, education and heritage programs at the Steckle Heritage Homestead.

Six Nations Eco Centre (Ohsweken) - for environmental and educational programs provided by the Eco Centre.

Mike and Mary Konkle (Dunnville) - for their extensive plantings in Dunnville, and their work with the Haldimand Community Forest Initiative.

In addition a GRCA Honour Roll Award was presented to **Gil**

Henderson (of Onondaga Farms, south of Cambridge) for his lifelong support of environmental restoration, conservation farming, and education.

North American Water Trails Inc.

North American Water trails, Inc. is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to the establishment of recreational waterways on North American interior and coastal waters. Membership includes volunteer groups, public interest organizations, government agencies, private companies and dedicated individuals.

The coalition has announced a new set of eight guiding principles to address every aspect of water trail development and use from partnerships and stewardship to education and conservation. The principles are designed to better assist local water trails organizers as they develop new trails or maintain existing trails.

"These principles highlight what we believe are the best, most important aspects of modern water trails," said North American Water Trails President Brook Lenker. "We encourage water



Members of the Ancient Mariners Canoe Club of Cambridge take to the water with enthusiasm and ambition for their mini-Olympics at Shade's Mills this fall.

trails organizers on all levels in the United States and Canada to apply these guiding principles to their trail. The result will be greater care for the waters and lands along the trails and less need for official policing and regulation."

Modern water trails are recreational waterways between specific locations containing access points and day use sites. A trail might include small-boat launches, shore access and overnight campsites. The North American Water Trails Guiding Principles are:

- Partnerships - Cooperating and Sharing
- Stewardship - Leaving No Trace
- Volunteerism - Experiencing the Joy of Involvement
- Education - Learning by Experience
- Conservation - Protecting our Natural and Cultural Heritage
- Community Vitality - Connecting People and Places
- Diversity - Providing Opportunities for All
- Wellness and Wellbeing - Caring for Self and Others

For more information about North American Water Trails Inc. call Barbara Veale at (519) 621-2763, ext. 274, or email bveale@grandriver.on.ca

High Jinks at Shade's Mills

by Ron Anderson and Eric Thomlinson

The Ancient Mariners Canoe Club of Cambridge held a mini-Olympics at Shade's Mills in September. Fourteen canoes participated. The stands were filled with at least 200 gulls and numerous migrating ducks. Included in the competition were grueling events such as "bowman's bluff" where the stern paddler wears a blindfold and the bow paddler, who has no paddle, has to talk his way around the course; the "100 metre splash" where both canoeists paddle with the blade up and the shaft down; and the "roll away relay" where the buoys must be rounded stern first.

A demonstration sport was a thorough cleanup of debris on the shores of the lake. The Ancient Mariners excel at this event and practise year round while hiking and canoeing on the trails and waterways of the Grand River valley.

Medals were awarded but no one seems to remember who won. We

expect the competition will be held again in 2001. The Ancient Mariners Canoe Club, founded in 1988, is an affiliate of the Cambridge Seniors Centres and an avid supporter of the GRCA.

Chiefswood National Historic Site

Chiefswood, the mansion birthplace of Mohawk poet E. Pauline Johnson, is situated on a ridge overlooking the Grand River, on Highway 54 at Ohsweken. Chiefswood, built in 1853, symbolizes the Johnson family's role as intermediaries between aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures. The Six Nations Council received the home and 225 acre estate as a bequest from the last surviving member of the Johnson family, Miss Evelyn H. C. Johnson, in 1926.

Chiefswood has undergone several periods of restoration, completed mainly by volunteers with enormous community support and effort (*see Grand Actions, September 1998*). The restored house is open to visitors and many restoration activities continue on the land. These include landscaping improvements and regeneration of the site based on photo documentation and historical records. A meadow rehabilitation project involved the removal of the existing European-developed grass and replacement with grass native to the area. An archaeological dig has excavated hidden treasures. Six Nations students participated in the dig, which took place on the east side of the house, on the site of the old summer kitchen. Archaeologist Dr. John Triggs identified the found items and ensured they were properly catalogued.

Two thousand trees have been planted around the estate perimeter. Canada Trust Friends of the Environment, Brantford Chapter, provided \$5,114 to purchase the trees, which

were planted by local school children and Six Nations community volunteers. Other partners who helped with these projects include Grand River Employment and Training, Sweet Grass Gardens, and the Ministry of Natural Resources. This year's projects also include the reconstruction of the summer kitchen, holding a Writer's Circle and participating in a community collaborative play.

For more information about Chiefswood, call (519) 752-5005, or email: chiefs@execulink.com



DID YOU KNOW?

- When Absolom Shade, founder of Shade's Mills, later known as Galt, died in 1862, his fortune was estimated at \$300,000. No less than 60 heirs later made claims to his estate.
- The Eby and Schneider farms in Sandhills in the early 1800s encompassed what is now almost the whole

downtown Kitchener.

- The area of North and South Dumfries was bought from the Six Nations for 8,841 British pounds. It was later named by William Dickson after his native town in Scotland. Dumfries is said to be derived from "dun Fris, the Fresian's fortress".
- Phineas Varnum, first innkeeper in Sandhills in the early 1800s, allowed free use of a tiny log cabin for Mennonite immigrants coming to the country with little money. The Varnum Inn became the first official trading post for the natives of the area. Many Indian families would come to trade and sleep in the warm inn kitchen before returning home.
- From 1854 to 1855 barges carried more than 20 million feet of lumber and 400 thousand bushels of grain down the Grand River from points between Freeport, Galt and Brantford to the port of Buffalo.

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Native grasses and colourful wildflowers will welcome future visitors to Chiefswood National Historic Site in Brantford.

DID YOU KNOW?

from page seven

- James Lee, famous for the Lee Metford and Lee Enfield rifles, was born in Scotland but arrived in Galt in 1836 with his parents. His father became Galt's first watchmaker and jeweler, and James learned the trade of watchmaker in his shop.
- In 1901, Canada's first sugar beet factory was built in Berlin on Lancaster Street to process the large quantities of sugar beet grown in the area at that time.
- Kitchener was known as Sandhills, Ebytown and Berlin before being given the name Kitchener in 1916.
- In March 1916, as the Imperial Hotel in Galt burned to the ground, a fireman drenched with water was frozen to a ladder. Axes were used to chip him free and his hands and face were frozen.
- Monticello in the north of the Grand River watershed receives only 18 mm of rain in an average January, while Dunnville in the south receives 27 mm. The chances of a white Christmas are 60% in Brantford and 80% in Monticello.
- It has been estimated that a column

of air over the Grand River basin holds in summer holds an average of 22 mm of water, while in the winter it holds only 5 mm, since warm air can hold more water vapour than cold air.

- As recently as 13,000 years ago, the entire Grand River basin was covered in glacial ice. The mean annual temperature at that time was probably about -4 degrees C.
- According to University of Waterloo researchers, the 1700s had a climate similar to the present, while warmer, moister conditions prevailed in the early to mid-1800s.



THE GRAND STRATEGY CALENDAR

Watershed Forest Plan Open Houses will be held as follows:

January 31, 2001, 7 to 9 p.m., GRCA, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge.

February 5, 2001, 7 to 9 p.m., Caledonia Legion, 29 Caithness St. E., Caledonia.

February 12, 2001, 7 to 9 p.m., Drayton Arena, 68 Main Street West, Drayton.

February 13, 2001, 7 to 9 p.m., Grand Valley Community Centre, 90 Main St., Grand Valley.

For more information contact Jason Culp, (519) 621-2761, ext. 259.

The Wetlands Conference originally scheduled for January 25, 2001, has been postponed until March.

4th Annual Heritage Day Workshop, February 19, 2001, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the historic Walper Terrace Hotel, Kitchener. The theme is *Heritage makes Sense: Discover Why*. For more information contact Barbara Veale, (519) 621-2763, ext. 274, or email bveale@grandriver.on.ca

Water Managers Working Group meeting, February 22, 2001, at 1.30 p.m., at the GRCA, 400 Clyde Road, Cambridge.

Ontario's Rural Tourism Conference *Beyond the City Lights*, February 25 to 27, 2001, at Queen Landing Inn, Niagara-on-the-Lake. For further information, contact Cathy Bartolic at 1-800-668-6284, or (519) 763-3160, ext. 229. Email: bartolic@oati.com

Thank you to all who contributed to Grand Actions over the past year, and a Happy New Year to all our readers.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is produced as a communications tool 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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For newsletter submissions

Contact the Editor, Liz Leedham, c/o Barbara Veale at the above address.

Newsletter submissions must be made by the 15th of the month prior to publication, and may be subject to editorial change. Tax deductible donations and sponsorships toward the cost of producing this newsletter are always welcome.

Publications Mail

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