



Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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Jason Adams (left) and Kristina MacPhee, students at Guelph Collegiate, join Doug Crane, health, safety and environment co-ordinator for McNeil Consumer Health Care of Guelph in planting a tree during the launch of a new Trees for Guelph project.



Plant project taking root

Groups spruce up Guelph industrial area

By Kathleen Elliott
Guelph Mercury Staff Writer

Heiti Jaason knows there's strength in numbers and, if all goes as planned, those numbers will be booming in the next five years - the

number of people, the number of trees and the number of dollars being poured into a new project.

As president of Trees for Guelph, an initiative that serves to beautify the city's industrial areas, Jaason is involved in a relatively new project

aimed at sprucing up the Edinburgh Road North area, from Woodlawn to London roads and a few points east and west.

Jaason has been driving along Edinburgh Road for a number years and has always noticed its lack of greenery due mainly to the many industrial lands, railway corridor and hydro lines.

“We now want to ‘boulevardize’ Edinburgh Road environmentally and aesthetically,” he said, pausing for a moment to wonder if he’d just created a new word.

“We want to get away from manicured lawns and lollipop trees.”

The first phase of the project will see the planting of more than 500 plants in a demo site on Edinburgh Road, across from Blount Canada, which is one of a number of project partners.

The demo site will be maintained by Trees for Guelph, Blount and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Over the next three years, a nursery near the demonstration site will be established. Plants will be taken as they mature and be distributed throughout the project area.

Between 20,000 and 30,000 plants are expected to be grown in the nursery,



Heiti Jaason of Trees for Guelph

with 6,000 of them being planted this year alone.

“This way rather than paying \$1 a piece for the plants, they will cost zero,” explained Jaason.

Many of the plants will be perennials and low vegetation, which survive well in poor soil, and require little maintenance and care.

“Over a five-year period we expect to

plant about 2,000 saplings and more than 100,000 plants and plugs and shrubs” in the Edinburgh Road area, explained Jaason.

With a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the group has been able to secure \$50,000 to hire a co-ordinator who will research, develop and oversee the project for one year.

If all goes as planned Jaason is confident the project will continue on through 2008.

“Partners are adopting various areas and we’re now getting ownership for this five-year time frame,” he explained.

On March 30 the Trillium grant expires. Jaason expects to have a new proposal ready for submission the following day. With the support the project has already received and the number of partners on board this year – more than 15 – he doesn’t foresee any problems in securing the grant for an additional four years.

“If it doesn’t get approval for the next four years though,” he cautioned, “this project is in jeopardy.”

For a three-week period in the spring, seven area high schools from both the public and Catholic boards will have students helping plant trees along the corridor.

“This train is moving and it’s not going to slow down,” said Jaason.

This is Trees for Guelph’s biggest project to date. Typically the group plants about 5,000 trees each year with the help of high school students.

Since its inception in 1990, about 72,000 trees have been planted throughout the city.

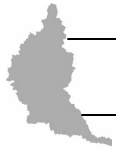
“Our niche is to focus on the property no one else is focusing on,” said Jaason.

For more information about the project contact Martin Neumann at the GRCA at (519) 621-2763 ext. 259 or via e-mail at mneumann@grandriver.ca

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Jason Culp (left), the Trees for Guelph co-ordinator, and Martin Neumann, GRCA Supervisor of Terrestrial Resources, take part in tree planting.



MILESTONES

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

Brown trout find a new home in Conestogo River

When more than 350 brown trout were released in the Conestogo River in November, it was the start of a grand experiment that could change the river far into the future.

The trout were the first of thousands that will be released over the next five years in an effort to create a new trout fishery along a 26 kilometre stretch of the Conestogo, from the Conestogo Dam, near Glen Allan, to St. Jacobs.

But the importance of the event goes far beyond its obvious interest to the rod-and-reel set. The fact that the river was determined to be suitable for the trout is a tribute to years of work by volunteers, government and other agencies to improve water quality throughout the Grand River watershed.

Craig Selby, district manager for the Ministry of Natural Resources, pointed out that the stocking project was identified as one of the “best bets” in the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan, which was approved in 1998.

The stocking was a “great accomplishment” for the fisheries management committee, he added.

The plan was developed by a broad partnership including the ministry, the GRCA, Six Nations of the Grand, fishing groups, environmental organizations and others. The plan provides direction on how the Grand River fishery can be improved, recognizing that water quality issues are often resolved by changing land use practices.

The Conestogo River flows through some of the most intensely farmed land in the watershed, which has had a signif-



Craig Selby, district manager for the Ministry of Natural Resources, releases a brown trout into the Conestogo River. The ministry is providing the fish for a five-year program to create a brown trout fishery along the river.

icant impact on water quality. Farm runoff, which often carries eroded soils and nutrients (phosphorous and nitrates) from fertilizers and manure, made 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 has had a noticeable impact on water quality in recent years.

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.

In fact, the trout stocking took place on a farm that has benefited from the Rural Water Quality Program. John Weber's farm sits on a hill overlooking the Conestogo River on Wellington County Road 12, north of Macton.

He helped with the stocking, as did representatives of fishing groups, township councils and other organizations that are supporting the project.

But water quality is only half of the equation when it comes to providing trout with a place to live. They also prefer cool water, which is where the GRCA's Conestogo Dam comes into the picture.

The 46-year-old dam, which is located just upstream of the community of Glen Allan, stores water in the spring from melting snow and spring rains. The water is released gradually through the summer to maintain minimum flow levels in the Grand system.

The water is drawn from the bottom of Conestogo Lake and is generally cooler than the surface water. That provides the trout with the temperatures they prefer.

The same principles are at work on the Grand River downstream from the Shand Dam, near Fergus. The stretch of the river between Fergus and West Montrose has been stocked with trout for years, and that area has developed into one of the premier fly-fishing rivers in eastern North America.

While it is too early to tell the outcome of the Conestogo River experiment, conditions seem to favour a repeat of the Grand River experience.

Before this fish stocking took place, there was an eight-month environmental assessment study. That was necessary because the brown trout is not a native species to the river.

The study included gathering information on water quality, temperature, habitat and the possible impact on existing species.

As well, there were meetings with landowners to get their views on issues such as trespassing, littering, crop damage and other factors. While the landowners acknowledged that a small number of users already create difficulties, most landowners agreed that it was important to provide increased recreational opportunities to the majority of conscientious river users.

The new trout and the existing pike, bass and walleye will probably compete for habitat and food, with the pike having the upper hand. Stocking large numbers of trout will be necessary to maintain the trout fishery.

But it's hoped that the trout will be successful enough to grow into healthy adults of about three kilograms (seven pounds) suitable for taking by avid anglers. The trout released in November were all about four years old, weighing about 2kg.

But come spring, the ministry will stock about 13,000 yearlings and 40,000 fry.

After five years of stocking, the program will be evaluated to see if it has been successful enough to continue. The evaluation will include an analysis of the biological impact of the project, as well as the economic impacts, such as the growth in recreational fishing, impacts on landowners, the creation of new business opportunities and angler satisfaction.

Heritage River feedback sought

In 1994, the Grand River and its major tributaries were declared a Canadian Heritage River based on the outstanding human heritage features and the excellence of its river-related recreation opportunities. In order to maintain this status, a 10-Year Monitoring Report must be prepared. The report will assess the status of these features and opportunities and outline a collaborative plan to strengthen planning, management and decision-making capacities around them.

In June, eight public forums were held in various communities throughout the watershed. The purpose of these forums was to solicit input in order to reaffirm and update the watershed vision, values, principles, goals and objectives contained in *The Grand Strategy*, the management plan that was tabled with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board in 1994 as part of the designation. The public was also asked for opinions regarding heritage and recreation issues, opportunities and challenges for managing outstanding human heritage features and river-related recreation.

About 75 people participated in the discussions providing a wide range of perspectives regarding a variety of environmental, recreational and heritage issues.

When asked about the most important accomplishments with respect to human heritage and recreational resources to be realized in the next ten years, participants most often mentioned environmen-

tal quality/water quality, effective monitoring and enforcement of regulations for the protection of the resources, and public education and involvement. The most significant obstacles to achieving these accomplishments were considered to be lack of resources and lack of political will, leadership and coordination.

The key themes identified by the participants to be addressed in future actions related to heritage and recreation resources included:

- sustainability
- stewardship
- environmental quality
- community ownership
- awareness, education and interpretation

If you would like to provide your views there is still an opportunity. Please take a few moments to complete the survey at www.grandriver.ca by Dec. 31.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your ideas rather than filling out the questionnaire, contact Barbara Veale at (519) 621-2763 ext. 274 or Sonia Morgan at ext. 279.



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

Luther Marsh project aims to reduce crop damage from wildlife

By Nancy Tilt
Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Soybeans into wheat into corn: it's a favoured rotation with crop producers. It's also a favoured food source for wildlife. With wildlife damage to agricultural crops on the increase, what better place than a publicly owned wildlife management area to try different methods of mitigating wildlife-induced crop damage.

"We have a perfect opportunity to mesh the needs of both wildlife and agricultural production on this property,"

according to Robert Bell, Superintendent of the Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA), in talking about the Monticello Project within the Area's northeast corner.

Straddling the border between Wellington and Dufferin Counties, Luther Marsh WMA encompasses 5,200 ha (13,000 acres) of open marsh, low-land swamp, bogs, plantations, natural forest, fields and cropland. The Monticello Project, initially established to create wetland habitat, is a collaborative effort among several government and non-government agencies, including the Grand River Conservation Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Ontario Wildlife Foundation and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

In 2000, under Ducks Unlimited direction, the construction of five kilometres (three miles) of dikes to flood low lying areas created 107 ha (265 acres) of wetland habitat. With approximately 80 ha (200 acres) of adjacent upland currently in crop production, it was a natural step to continue that production with an eye towards mitigating potential crop depredation by waterfowl.

"Next spring we will lease about half the 200 acres to a local farmer to start a soybean-wheat-corn rotation using no-tillage," reports Bell. "Another 27 acres will be devoted to buffers (17 natural and 10 planted), 27 acres to 'delayed' hay and 58 acres to native tallgrass



A plastic snow fence provides a barrier to Canada geese.



The Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area is the scene of an experiment using buffer areas to reduce crop damage from wildlife. (Photo by Carl Hiebert)

prairie."

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agricultural Environment Stewardship Initiative (AESI) is providing funding for the planted buffers through the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA). The AESI is administered in Ontario by the Agricultural Adaptation Council and the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition.

A soybean-wheat-corn rotation offers several benefits, both for crop production and wildlife use. A Round-up Ready soybean crop helps reduce weed competition. Fall wheat, with an understory of red clover offers fall grazing for deer, spring nesting habitat for songbirds, and a fall food lure crop from grain lost during harvest. Chisel-ploughed late in the season, the clover adds nitrogen and organic matter to the soil in preparation for corn the following year. Grain corn lost during harvest again provides a fall and winter food source for a variety of wildlife.

"We've found that no-till benefits both soil and wildlife," observes Bell. "There's no comparison between the amount of winter wildlife activity on no-tilled versus ploughed fields. Wildlife use no-till fields far more for winter food and cover."

GPS technology will map crop yields

to track losses to wildlife, allow comparison with yields in other areas and guide the best cropping strategy for these fields.

A portion of the rotation fields lies immediately adjacent to the wetland. Bell notes, "We anticipate springtime grazing by Canada Geese and their goslings as the main source of crop damage. We'll plant a 2.5-acre buffer



Robert Bell

strip, 50-60 feet wide, along this portion of the field to provide a lure crop to distract geese from feeding on emerging crops."

Management strategies for the buffer strip include a grass mixture suitable for grazing and periodic mowing to keep it fresh, green and succulent.

The opposite side of these crop fields is bordered by woodland. Row crops next to a forest edge generally produce lower yields. Competition from the trees themselves at the forest edge as well as crop damage by wildlife, such as deer and raccoon, are major factors. A 7.5-acre grass buffer strip about 30 feet wide next to the woodland offers several advantages. The lack of cover deters

some wildlife from crossing to the adjacent crops, at the same time offering a lure crop for grazing wildlife such as deer. It can also be harvested for hay.

The fields at the north end of the wetland are slated for delayed hay. A grass mixture such as timothy, fescue and trefoil, suitable for first cut around mid-July, offers both a hay crop and wildlife habitat. By mid-July, nesting waterfowl and songbirds have hatched their young and are able to evade harvest equipment, which will be outfitted with a flushing bar. Lying next to the wetland, these fields provide close access to water for hatched ducklings.

Over 50 acres of native tallgrass prairie next to another part of the wetland will provide additional buffer to the cropped land. Native grasses mature later than the introduced cool-weather grasses now dominating our grasslands. With competition from existing seed banks a major factor, these acres were planted this year with Round-up Ready soybeans to try to reduce some of that competition.

Native grass takes about three years to get its roots down, so patience will be a factor. The seeds of the proposed mixture, including big and little bluestem and wheatgrass, vary in size, requiring a seeding strategy yet to be decided. While establishing native prairie is not an easy task, once established its benefits are considerable. Tallgrass prairie provides good winter cover for wildlife. It also produces an abundance of seeds and insects, offering again an alternative food source for wildlife.

Elsewhere at Luther Marsh, another initiative through the AESI project offers a partial solution to Canada Goose depredation on row crops next to the marsh. Bell and his staff constructed a simple barrier of black plastic snow fence staked with iron T-bars along the portion of marsh next to the field. While yearling geese can fly over the fence, adult geese will not leave their flightless goslings. Bell reports, "The barrier has proven effective in keeping at least

adults and broods out of the crops. By the time the goslings are able to fly, the crop is too high for them to want to be in it."

"The Monticello site is developing into a fabulous piece of habitat restoration," Bell notes. "We recognized the need to pay more attention to the upland component, especially the needs of agriculture. With this property as a demonstration site, we hope to give farmers ideas for coexisting with wildlife and alleviating crop damage on their own properties."

Home Depot helps outdoor education

Staff members from the Waterloo Home Depot store were out in force on Oct. 30, as part of a national initiative to celebrate the opening of Home Depot's 100th store.

Each store in Canada donated 100 employee hours to a worthwhile community project, and the Laurel Creek

Nature Centre was chosen as the site of the Waterloo store's donation.

A team of Home Depot employees visited the nature centre and replaced wood planking on the interpretive trail boardwalks, cleaned up wood and debris in the maple syrup program teaching area, built a Chickadee feeding station, and constructed a firewood shelter used to house wood used for special school, group and community programs.

Home Depot suppliers also contributed to the work. Wood for the boardwalk refurbishing was donated by Dynamic Lumber, while the firewood shelter building was donated by Spacemaker.

The GRCA, Grand River Conservation Foundation, Waterloo Region and Waterloo Catholic District School Boards wish to thank Home Depot for their efforts, contributing toward better Outdoor Education programming for local school children, as part of Foundation's *Living Classroom - Campaign for Outdoor Education*.



Staff from the Waterloo Home Depot store join Laurel Creek Nature Centre interpreters in construction of a firewood shed. Taking part were Sean McCammon (left), an interpreter with the Waterloo Region District School board; Shawn Duxbury and Frank MacDougall of Home Depot; Mary-Anne Cain, interpreter with the GRCA; Ryan Strachan and Melissa Richards of Home Depot.

A new grove at Laurel Creek

Students from two Waterloo schools took part in a special tree planting day at Laurel Creek Nature Centre on Wednesday thanks to the generosity of a group of area residents.

The Friends of Laurel Creek donated \$7,500 to enhance facilities at the Waterloo nature centre. The money will be used to establish an arboretum of native trees which will be studied by children taking part in outdoor education programs at the nature centre.

About 200 saplings and 100 seedlings were planted by Grade 6 students from Northlake Woods School and St. Nicholas School.

The Friends of Laurel Creek was created earlier this year by a group of people who were concerned about the GRCA's plans to sell some land on the edges of the nature centre property. When the GRCA and the City of



Kelsey Hergott and Natalie Buttinger from St. Nicholas School in Waterloo took part in a tree-planting project at the Laurel Creek Nature Centre.

Waterloo worked out an agreement to protect the land, the Friends of Laurel Creek decided to donate the money it had raised to *The Living Classroom-Campaign for Outdoor Education*.

The campaign is an effort of the Grand River Conservation Foundation to raise \$2.2 million to support outdoor education programs throughout the Grand River watershed. Some of the campaign proceeds are being invested in facility improvements and upgrades at GRCA outdoor education facilities, including Laurel Creek.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Heritage workshop will focus on industrial history

For six years, the Grand River Conservation Authority and its partners on the Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group have hosted successful heritage workshops for watershed residents.

Participants learn about the river's fascinating history and the issues related to the conservation and interpretation of heritage resources. By highlighting successful case studies and providing opportunities for people to interact, these workshops have helped them to better manage, plan and make decisions about their local heritage.

Plans are well under way for the Seventh Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration. The theme is "Grand Legacies: Boom, Bust and Beyond." A roster of knowledgeable speakers will provide insights about our industrial past and its importance to shaping settlement within the Grand River watershed.

The workshop is sponsored by the City of Brantford, County of Brant and Grand River Conservation Authority and hosted by the Grand Strategy Heritage Working Group.

The Heritage Working Group has representatives from Ontario Ministry of Culture, Laurier Brantford, Brantford Heritage Committee, Princeton Museum, City of Guelph, University of Guelph, Ruthven National Historic Park, the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo, City of Cambridge, Woodside National Historic Site, Heritage Cambridge, the GRCA and members of the interested public. The working group has as its goal "to conserve heritage and a sense of place" and to ensure that the human heritage resources for which the Grand River was recognized as a Canadian Heritage River are "conserved and interpreted."

The workshop will be held at the Paris Fairgrounds, Paris, Ont. on Heritage Day, Monday, Feb. 16 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Registration for the workshop is free but is limited to 300 on a first-come, first-served basis. Registrations will be accepted until Monday, February 9, 2004.

To register contact John Quinn, City of Brantford, 100 Wellington Square, City Hall, Brantford, Ontario N3T 2M3 Fax: 519-752-6977. Phone: (519) 759-4150 or e-mail: jquinn@brantford.ca

Heritage River cleanup day planned

The GRCA is co-ordinating a Heritage River Cleanup Day in May as part of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.

The GRCA will co-ordinate efforts with watershed municipalities and interested groups. It will offer volunteers an opportunity to take part in a project that will visibly improve river areas, increase awareness of the river system and attract public attention to the anniversary.

To register an event contact Sonia Morgan of the GRCA. She can be reached at (519) 621-2761, Ext. 279.

Submissions sought for Registry

The Grand Actions Registry is compiled every year by the GRCA to recognize efforts to increase heritage appreciation, improve watershed health and celebrate the Grand River.

Contributions to the registry are voluntary and all actions and activities, both large and small are welcome. Our collective efforts are essential to ensure a unique "sense of place" and a healthy watershed for the future.

In 2002, 301 entries were submitted, representing thousands of actions by individuals, groups, businesses, agen-

cies, municipalities and schools.

The 2002 Registry can be seen on the GRCA web site at www.grandriver.ca. Limited hard copies of the Registry are also available by request.

The Grand River Conservation Authority is now compiling submissions for the 2003 edition. You are invited to submit a description of your achievements by completing the form found on the GRCA website by June 30. If you are aware of others that have undertaken activities, encourage them to submit as well.

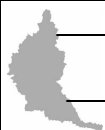
Contact Barbara Veale at (519) 621-2763 ext. 274; fax: (519) 621-4945; e-mail: bveale@grandriver.ca



DID YOU KNOW?

• When cold air is inhaled, the blood veins or capillaries in the nose constrict. After a short period of constriction the capillaries dilate or expand again naturally. This process encourages the release of mucous from adjacent glands and we end up with a runny nose.

• In February 1857, a severe flood destroyed about ten major pedestrian and vehicle bridges on the Grand River, and severely damaged at least five others. However the railway bridges were unharmed.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Heritage Planning Workshop. Mondays from Jan. 5 to March 29, 4:30 p.m. to 7:20 p.m. A course offered by the School of Planning and the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo. The program is geared to students, planning professionals, teachers, members of heritage groups and citizens involved in heritage work. Principal instructor is Prof. Robert Shipley. Regular university fees apply for registered students. Fees for practicing planners and others are \$250. For more information contact the Heritage Resource Centre at the university at (519) 888-4567, Ext. 6921; fax: (519) 746-2031 or e-mail hrc@fes.waterloo.ca.

Effective Pollution Prevention Planning for Your Facility: How You Can Create and Maintain a Plan that Works. – Thursday, Feb. 12, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Holiday Inn, Fairway Rd. S., Kitchener. \$75 includes GST, lunch & workshop manual (A higher fee will be charged for businesses from outside Waterloo Region.) This workshop, sponsored by the Region of Waterloo, will provide the knowledge and tools needed to create and maintain an effective Pollution Prevention plan for your facility. To register, please contact Joanna Smedes, Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement at 519-821-5787.

Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration: "Grand Legacies: Boom, Bust and Beyond." Monday, Feb. 16. Paris Fairgrounds, Paris Ont., Monday, Feb. 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. A roster of knowledgeable speakers will provide insights about the industrial past and its importance to shaping settlement within the Grand River watershed. Registration for the workshop is free but is limited to 300 on a first-come, first-served basis. Register by Monday, Feb. 9. Contact John Quinn, City of Brantford, 100 Wellington Square, City Hall, Brantford, Ontario N3T 2M3 Fax: 519-752-6977. Phone: (519) 759-4150 or e-mail: jquinn@brantford.ca

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.ca

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Newsletter submissions must be made by the 15th of the month prior to publication and may be subject to editing for length or style. Tax deductible donations and sponsorships toward the cost of producing this newsletter are always welcome.

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