

GRAND

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

ACTIONS

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Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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Cover photo

When Brant Conservation Area opened in 1971, it was jokingly referred to as an "instant park." As soon as it opened, 30,000 people arrived for a national Campvention.



Recreation land top priority

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

While recreation areas in the Grand River watershed are plentiful today, in the past there were very few parks, trails and beautiful spots to enjoy the river and the reservoirs.

As soon as the Grand River Conservation Commission started building Shand Dam, people wanted to see how the landscape was being transformed.

"Citizens who have an idle few hours would be well advised to visit the (Shand) site and see the work which is going on," suggested the Brantford Expositor in August, 1939.

A big attraction

After the dam opened in 1942 and Belwood Lake was created, people flocked there. By the late 1950s there was a boat launch, picnic pavilion and wading pool. But the parking lot and public beach access remained small. Families would picnic at Belwood where they could watch the motor boats and water skiers. This was still a

new sport and a novelty to watch.

Admission was not charged until after a thunderstorm led to unsafe conditions. The storm descended quickly and the boaters moved toward shore to get off the lake to stay safe from lightening. At the same time, the picnickers moved in to get a better look at the boats. The result was that boaters were unable to get off the lake. A small admission fee was instituted as a way of restricting the number of visitors, so the area would be safer during storms.

When the commission constructed Luther Dam on Black Creek in 1952 and the Conestogo Dam in 1958, visitors came to these sites too, but recreation was more of a fringe benefit than a core responsibility of the commission.

Instead, it was left to the Grand Valley Conservation Authority, formed in 1948, to





Members of the Grand Valley Conservation Authority toured Elora Gorge before the park was built.

acquire land for recreation. The new agency took advantage of its ability to acquire environmentally significant land.

It started with Elora Gorge – the first conservation area in the province – which opened in 1954. The idea of the Elora Gorge park had been bandied about for decades, but initially it was expected to be a provincial park.

First conservation area

Elora resident Kay Marston lobbied to set up a network of conservation areas across the province, beginning with the Elora Gorge. This park was constructed in 16 months and was the first in this network which now has more than 250 conservation areas, including 12 active areas operated by the GRCA.

Pinehurst Lake opened in 1955 and was the second of the GVCA's conservation areas. It was quickly followed by

Byng Island (Dunnville) in 1960, Rockwood in 1964, and Laurel Creek (Waterloo) in 1970.

Brant Conservation Area near Brantford was nicknamed an “instant park” when it opened in 1971 to 30,000 visitors and their 7,000 vehicles that arrived for the National Campers and Hikers Association Campvention. It took only 18 months to complete the park.

Since 1995, the conservation areas have been self-supporting and generate enough revenue to cover operating costs. They receive more than a million paid visits annually. With more than 2,500 campsites at eight conservation areas that offer camping, the GRCA is the second largest operator of campgrounds in the province – second only to Ontario Parks.

The 1966 annual report for the authority listed 23 conservation areas,

Conservation area opening:

1942- Belwood Lake

1952- Luther Marsh

1954- Elora Gorge

1955- Pinehurst Lake

1958- Conestogo Lake

1960- Byng Island

1964- Rockwood

1970- Laurel Creek

1971- Brant

1972- Shade's Mills

1977- Elora Quarry

1979- Guelph Lake

Belwood Lake, Luther Marsh and Conestogo Lake officially became conservation areas in 1966.

many of which were passive areas, such as F.W.R. Dickson Wilderness Area south of Cambridge. Management or ownership of some conservation areas was transferred to other agencies during tough economic times in the mid 1990s such as LaFortune near Caledonia, Kiwanis Park in Kitchener, Chicopee in Kitchener and Doon Heritage Crossroads.

There is no entry fee for the passive conservation areas and there are no services such as camping, public washrooms and equipment rental are not available. But these are favourite spots for hiking and other activities.

Developed rail-trails

In the 1990s, the GRCA's four Rail-Trails were among the first in Canada and are part of the Trans Canada Trail. These abandoned railway lines were converted into trails for year-round activities such as hiking, cycling and cross country skiing. They cover almost 110 km and include the 18-km Cambridge to Paris Rail-Trail; the 10-km Paris to Brantford trail, the 32-km Brantford to Hamilton Trail and the 46-km Elora to Cataract Trail. These are only a small part of the network of trails in the watershed, and there are many other trails on GRCA land.



Tourists line up in May 1943 to see the Shand Dam.

National award for Grand fishery committee

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications specialist

It was a proud day in Ottawa when a committee from the Grand River watershed collected a national award from Gail Shea, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Grand River Management Plan Implementation Committee received this Recreational Fisheries Award on May 4. The award recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to the conservation, restoration and enhancement of Canada's recreational fisheries and their habitat.

"Through its volunteers, this committee has been able to generate over \$4 million worth of programs, projects and activities over the past eight to 10 years. The results of this work have been increased awareness and quality of the fisheries available on the Grand River and many of its tributaries," the citation for the award says.

The GRCA and the Ministry of Natural Resources co-chair the committee. The task before them seemed insurmountable at times: to come up with Ontario's first fisheries management plan to be completed on a watershed basis. Unlike other plans, it is not limited by political boundaries. The Grand River is 300 km long, but the watershed encompasses 11,000 km of streams and watercourses and the plan covers all of this.

"We took three years and held two sets of public meetings across the watershed," explained Warren Yerex, supervisor of aquatic resources. "We delivered a plan that not only met the needs of the local person interested in their own stretch of stream, but also set fish community goals that the development industry, wastewater treatment plants, municipalities, the province and federal government had to work towards."

The strength of the plan is that it provides a balanced approach, relying on

dedicated volunteers with their community ties and grass roots knowledge. This is supported by the technical expertise of the GRCA and MNR. The plan provides guidance on managing the fish resources and overall environmental health of the Grand River watershed.

Partnerships led to success

"Not all watersheds in Canada can do this, because the trust and willingness to work together is not always as well understood. We are fortunate to have built these partnerships over many years. That is the future," said Yerex.

The plan was completed in 1998 and recently celebrated 10 years of success with another set of public meetings. The plan contained a list of "best bets" – projects to enhance the fishery by improving habitat and water quality.

Over the years, dozens of projects have been undertaken, including stream rehabilitation, research on aquatic species and their habitats, improved river access points and public education



MILESTONES



Brook trout

initiatives.

Some sections of the Grand, particularly the Upper Grand reach between the Shand Dam (near Fergus) and West Montrose and the Exceptional Waters section between Paris and Brantford, have received national and international recognition for the quality of the fishing.

Larry Mellors of Brantford, a long-time member of the committee, said the group was honoured to receive the award.



With the National Recreational Fishery Award at Parliament Hill are committee members (from left): Art Timmerman, Steve May, Andrea Doherty, Al Murray, Larry Mellors, Mark Hartley, Tom MacDougall, Felix Barbetti, Warren Yerex and Archie McLarty. Committee members missing from the group photo: Jack Imhof, Silvia D'Amelio and Bill Murch.

"This plan has been applauded and held up as a shining success by many organizations across Canada," said Mellors. "The GRFMP is the volunteer's and public's plan with tremendous technical support from the GRCA, Ministry of Natural Resources and other government and academic bodies.

In an editorial, the Brantford Expositor said the plan was innovative, unique and way ahead of its time. The Expositor also urged people to support the plan.

Legions of dedicated volunteers have worked very hard for many years to carry out the "best bets" in the plan and that work continues today.



TAKING ACTION

Lifetime Heritage award for Stauch

Warren Stauch, a retired geography teacher with a passion for history, has received the Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement for the Region of Waterloo.

The award is for volunteer contributions to conserving community heritage over 25 years or more. It was given out by Lieutenant-Governor David Onley in March at Queen's Park. In 2001 he also received a GRCA Watershed Award.

Stauch is a director of the Waterloo Historical Society and is engaged in numerous community heritage initiatives. He operates Shunpiking Tours, acting as a tour guide through local communities.

Among his many accomplishments, Stauch has undertaken an inventory of historic mills. This inventory is the basis of four driving tours covering Guelph, Fergus/Elora and Elmira/St. Jacobs; the Cambridge area; Brantford and Six Nations; and Haldimand and Six Nations. The tours are entirely self-guided and are available on www.grandriver-country.com.

10,000 Trees Project ahead of schedule

This spring the 10,000 Trees Project of Waterloo was recognized with a provincial award.

On April 24, the group received one of 20 June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards from Michael Chan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This award recognizes volunteers who have shown exceptional leadership, innovation and creativity and contributed significantly to their communities and the province.

The non-profit group was created in 2000 to reforest the City of Waterloo. Its goal was to plant 10,000 trees on public land in 10 years at no cost to taxpayers. It does this by matching sponsors, volunteer tree planters and public land for planting.

The 10,000th tree was planted this spring in the new public square in Uptown Waterloo. On April 25, employees of the Conestogo Rovers planted 280 trees at Laurel Creek Conservation Area.

The GRCA has been a partner with 10,000 Trees since 2005 and many of the trees are planted at Laurel Creek Nature Centre and Laurel Creek Conservation Area.

In 2006, the group received the City Livability Award from the Canadian Urban Institute.



There were plenty of Earth Day activities in the watershed.

Above: John Pentilchuck and his daughter Indya helped plant 280 trees at Laurel Creek Conservation Area through 10,000 Trees Project.

Middle: Earth Day on Six Nations saw 1,500 trees distributed for transplanting. **Bottom:** Volunteers planted 5,000 trees in Brantford with assistance from the Brantford Tree Coalition.



Water conservation awards in Guelph

The City of Guelph has given out the first annual Water Conservation and Efficiency Awards.

A residential award went to Dr. **Khosrow Farahbakhsh**, whose family installed a rainwater harvesting system, numerous water-efficient appliances, and created xeriscape gardens. The family now maintains daily water use of 70 litres per capita. Guelph's average water use is 230 litres per capita per day.

Guelph Campus Co-op's newly renovated student residence received the group Community/Educational Award. The residence features one of very few systems in Ontario to integrate rainwater harvesting and grey water reuse. These systems, along with the installation of water-efficient toilets and washing machines, have reduced water demand in the residence by approximately 40 per cent.

Both of the winning projects serve as demonstration sites for emerging water conservation technologies, create visibility and promote the capabilities of residential rainwater harvesting and grey water reuse systems.



The GRCA's Martin Neumann and Andrew Hamilton Joseph of Los Algarrobos have become good friends after many years of exchanges between the two organizations.

Successful Argentine twinning

A conservation organization from Argentina, Los Algarrobos, is grateful to the GRCA, president Andrew Hamilton Joseph told the GRCA board.

"You have played a unique role as a catalyst, facilitator, technical advisor and honest broker," he said when he visited in April. "We have used your credibility as an internationally recognized water-



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

shed management expert to impress upon our communities and our decision makers the need to work together to improve our watersheds."

Los Algarrobos is a non-profit organization that works to improve the quality of life of people in the Andean region of Argentina. For the past 16 years, visitors from this region of Argentina have come to learn from the GRCA, while GRCA staff has also visited Argentina, sometimes at their own expense.

During this time, Los Algarrobos has become recognized nationally and internationally. It has undertaken many projects related to watershed education, tree and vegetable nurseries, sewage treatment, solid waste handling, water quality improvements, tree planting and many other areas. It is now the foremost environmental and education-oriented non-governmental organization in Latin America. This success is due to the support and mentorship of the GRCA,



A presentation by Marcel Labelle on building birch bark canoes took place at Conestogo Lake Conservation Area in May. Volunteers also cleaned up the park and planted 300 trees at the annual spring event.

Joseph told the GRCA board.

The GRCA received the International Riverprize for excellence in watershed management from the International Riverfestival in Australia in 2000. An associated organization, the International Rivers Foundation, provided funds for the five year twinning between Los Algarrobos and the GRCA. The funding is nearing the end of its term.

Joseph urged the GRCA board to continue in this relationship, because it produces a valuable "multiplier effect" throughout the entire South American region. Los Algarrobos continues to seek funding for improved watershed management and twinning. A major proposal is being considered by the World Bank's Global Environmental Fund.

Fun and learning GRCA day camps

Day camp programs at GRCA facilities offer numerous opportunities for children six to 16 years old to learn about the environment while enjoying the outdoors.

These camps are offered by nature centre staff at Guelph Lake, Rockwood and Laurel Creek conservation areas throughout the summer and also at Apps' Mill and Belwood Lake during the month of July.

The camps include opportunities such as pond studies, bug hunts and environmental games for younger kids. Older children may go on a canoe expedition, learn rowing or participate in a naturalist-in-training program. There is even a French camp at Rockwood and Guelph Lake.

For more information and a registration form, please see the nature centre section of www.grandriver.ca or call the nature centre nearest you:

- Guelph Lake, Rockwood and Belwood: (519) 836-7860
- Apps Mill: 519-752-0655
- Laurel Creek: 519-885-1368

Source Water Protection information kits to 6,000

Close to 6,000 information kits about the Clean Water Act are going out to property owners in the Lake Erie Source Protection Region.

Each kit contains a copy of a newsletter, *The Source*, which provides information on the source protection program for the four watersheds in the region: Grand River, Long Point Region, Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek. The kits also include a flyer with details on the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program, which helps landowners upgrade septic systems, cap old wells or take other action to protect groundwater from contamination.

The kits are being distributed in conjunction with municipalities in the Lake Erie Region. They are working together to support the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee which is overseeing development of a drinking water source protection plan for each of the watersheds.

The Clean Water Act was passed in

response to the Walkerton tainted water tragedy. The goal of the Act and source protection planning is to provide an additional level of security for municipal water supplies. Studies are taking place around municipal wells to determine what kind of activities could potentially threaten the water supply. The information will be used to develop a drinking water source protection plan.

Grants are available for properties closest to the wells to offset the cost of undertaking work to protect water supplies. More information, including maps showing the eligible areas, is available at the Lake Erie Region webpage at www.sourcewater.ca in the "Stewardship Program" section.

Eligible projects include:

- Decommissioning old wells, upgrading active wells or connecting to a municipal drinking water service line and decommissioning the old well.
- Upgrades and improvements for aging septic systems.
- Pollution prevention audits for small and medium-sized businesses that manufacture, handle, store, and dispose of materials into water, land, or air. The audit will identify ways to reduce environmental and business risks arising from potential threats to water.
- Farm and rural land projects for erosion control, nutrient management planning, farmyard runoff control, improved manure storage and handling and others.

People interested in the grant program should contact the Grand River: Tracey Ryan at 519-621-2763, Ext. 2269 or by e-mail at tryan@grandriver.ca

Under the Clean Water Act, the Ministry of the Environment has made \$7 million available each year, for four years, to finance the program across Ontario.



Checking a net to see what is living in the water at Rockwood.

Successful gala

The River Run Centre in Guelph was the setting for the 2009 President's Gala - A Celebration of Youth and Conservation, on March 24, 2009.

The event featured a presentation by Severn Cullis-Suzuki, a prominent young environmentalist gaining acclaim worldwide for her approach to "intergenerational justice" — the idea that adults have a responsibility to young people to leave our natural world intact and even improved for future generations. An activist for the natural world we all share since the age of nine, Cullis-



Severn Cullis-Suzuki

Suzuki came to prominence when she challenged delegates at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to change their ways and ensure a better future for children like her.

During the day, Cullis-Suzuki visited two GRCA Nature Centres and met with students in Grades 2 to 11. Highlights included a presentation on energy in air and water with Grade 2 students at Shade's Mills Nature Centre, inspiring Grade 11 students to environmental action, and a visit to the chickadee trees with Grade 8 students at Guelph Lake. Grade 3 students at Guelph Lake also planted a tree in honour of Cullis-Suzuki and her baby, due later this year.

Joining her at the President's Gala were emcee Phil Andrews of the Guelph Mercury and Guelph Lake Nature Centre graduates Todd Frizley and Eva Szecsenyi who shared their stories about why they were inspired to take up environmentally related careers as a result of the environmental lessons they learned as children.

The support of the many gala sponsors and ticket buyers led to more than \$7,000 raised for high priority conservation projects in the Grand River watershed.



Rain in the Upper Grand River resulted in heavy flows near Grand Valley on Mother's Day for members of the Waterloo-Wellington Canoe Club. They are canoeing the entire Grand River this summer.

Summer programs at three parks

Three conservation areas offer outdoor nature programs that are ideal for families during the summer months.

These are offered at Laurel Creek in Waterloo, Rockwood, east of Guelph and now also at Pinehurst Lake near Ayr. Each program is run a little differently, but all are led by nature centre interpreters.

They offer campers and day use visitors to the conservation areas the opportunity to go for a hike, explore pond life, see a crazy critter show or learn about caves or frogs. The programs are free with park admission.

For a small fee, companies, groups and families having large picnics can also book special nature programs tailored to their group's interest.

These programs are all listed in the Calendar on www.grandriver.ca (it is in the far left column) or call the conservation area for more information:

- Rockwood 519-856-9543
- Laurel Creek 519-884-6620
- Pinehurst Lake 519-442-4721



NOW AVAILABLE

Caring for nature in the Carolinian zone

A new series of 12 fact sheets about the Carolinian Life Zone is being distributed by the Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC).

Almost 200,000 copies of the eight-page Caring for Nature fact sheets have been printed. This is an informative guide for rural landowners looking to improve and maintain natural areas.

Stretching from Toronto to Windsor, the Carolinian Life Zone of southwestern Ontario is among North America's most vibrant and fragile ecoregions. Explore www.carolinian.org or call 519-433-7077 for more information.

"The fact sheets contain a wealth of information about what to consider when you plan restoration or conservation projects on your land," says Nikki May, project coordinator.

Natural areas provide many benefits



Eastern Redbud, a Carolinian tree, in spring and summer.

About Grand Actions

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly by the Grand River Conservation Authority on behalf of the partners in *The Grand Strategy*. Current and back issues are available online at: www.grandriver.ca.

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Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be edited for length or style.

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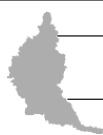


for people and wildlife alike. It is important to the health of the Carolinian Zone to create a network of large and small natural areas.

The fact sheets highlight private and public habitat projects undertaken by community groups and rural landowners in areas including the Grand River Forest, Beverly Swamp, Ojibway Prairie and Dunnville Marshes. They tell stories of dedicated landowners who have put buffers along waterways, or restored woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. These landowners have worked with conservation partners such as the GRCA, Ducks

Unlimited Canada, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Haldimand Stewardship Council.

"Many best practices for safe drinking water, clean air, outdoor recreation, sustainable timber harvesting and agriculture also benefit wildlife," notes Michelle Kanter, CCC executive director. This organization brings together diverse sectors, people and governments to steward southwestern Ontario's unique Carolinian habitat. This is done by developing green infrastructure to support natural and human communities to live in harmony.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Family hike, Ruthven Park National Historic Site, Cayuga, Saturday, June 6, 1 p.m. Celebrate the Grand River Conservation Authority's 75th anniversary along with members of the Grand Valley Trails Association by participating in a 5 km hike which will incorporate sections of the Grand Valley Trail as well as Ruthven Park trails. Another hike will take place **June 20 at Snyder's Flats, Kitchener**. Visit www.gvta.on.ca for information or preregister by calling 519-576-6156.

30th Speed River Clean Up, Royal City Park, Guelph, Saturday, June 13. Clean up the Speed River with a barbeque afterwards for volunteers. Sign In at 8:45 a.m. Kids activities from the Children's Water Education Council are new this year. There will be a volunteer BBQ hosted by Re/Max after the event. Bring weather appropriate gear and hip waders if you want to get in the water. Contact OPIRG for a complete schedule and volunteer opportunities, at www.opirgguelph.org or 519-824-2091.

The 6th Canadian River Heritage Conference, "Our Living Rivers: Linking Nature, People and Places through Time," Government of Canada Conference Centre, Ottawa, Ontario, June 14-17. Hosted by Parks Canada and various partners, the conference celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) – Canada's national river conservation and education program. The Grand River is a Canadian Heritage River.

Great Lakes ~ Great Links: A Grand Connection, the 9th Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum, GRCA, 400 Clyde Rd., Cambridge, Friday, Sept. 18th, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This year's forum will explore the impact of the Great Lakes on watersheds and how innovation and change can positively affect watershed health in the Grand River watershed. To learn more and to register, please check the conferences section of www.grandriver.ca or contact Sonia Morgan at 519-621- 2763, ext. 2315 or smorgan@grandriver.ca

Note: A complete listing of events in the GRCA's conservation areas and nature centres is available on www.grandriver.ca in the Calendar section. This includes GVTA hikes and other events planned for the GRCA's 75th anniversary.