



Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

INSIDE

Feature

CREW award 1

What's Happening

Water Forum 2011 3

66 litres per day 4

Demand management
workshop 5

Look Who's Taking Action

Kitchener award 5

What's Happening

Grand poetry boat 6

Source Water Protection
update 6

Online water survey 7

Woolwich Reservoir 7

Calendar 8

Cover photo

*A volunteer stocks fish
in the Conestogo River.
Fish are provided by
MNR and the stocking is
organized by CREW.*



CREW nets award for Conestogo River trout fishery

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

A half dozen volunteers joined together to help create a brown trout tailwater fishery on the Conestogo River in 2003 and they've been dedicated to that task ever since.

The Conestogo River Enhancement Workgroup (CREW), a committee of the Friends of the Grand River, received a 2011 Watershed Award from The Grand River Conservation Authority for their work on Sept. 15.

CREW formed the first time trout were stocked in the river near Macton. Now they have helped the Ministry of Natural Resources stock 300,000 brown trout and have undertaken many river improvement projects.

"There was an obvious need for a hands-on group to work with MNR, the GRCA, river users and landowners," explains Archie McLarty, who leads CREW. He is a retired MOE biologist who lives in Brantford and has a special soft spot for

the Conestogo River. He says it has been much abused, because there are not many trees along its banks, wetlands have been removed in the upper areas and many creeks that feed into the river have been straightened. The riverbanks in some areas have been used as a dumping ground. Despite all of these challenges, the Conestogo River has remained a popular spot for fishing — now more than ever.

The Conestogo Dam was constructed in 1958 and it releases cold water from the bottom of the reservoir that cools down the river for about 15 kilometres downstream. This has been enough to create a brown trout fishery which was one of the 42 "best bets" recommended by the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan. An Environmental Assessment process was undertaken before the brown trout fishery was created.

"Respect for private land ownership and doing good deeds for the river were selected as CREW's primary guiding principles," McLarty



From left, CREW members Brian Primeau, Brad Knarr and Archie McLarty with the 2011 Grand River Watershed Award and a certificate from MP Michael Chong.

says. CREW is particularly proud of the progress made in the area of public access and landowner liability.

“Two generous landowners offered their property — just on a handshake — for parking lots at new access points,” McLarty says. They were concerned because cars would park on both sides of the road and the parking lots are safer for everyone. “I enjoy meeting and talking to landowners. It’s fantastic the support they’ve given us. It has been a treat to be involved,” he says.

There are now four access points with information kiosks and garbage bins. These are cleaned out regularly and help reduce the waste along the banks of the river. Each year the river clean up results in less waste collected. As people see there is less garbage around, they are more likely to leave their waste in the bins or take it home with them, McLarty says.

Anglers can access the trout fishery at the lower part of Conestogo Lake Conservation Area, Glen Allan, Macton Bridge, Regional Road 86 bridge just outside Wallenstein and at bridge crossings.

There are seven members of CREW — Brad Knarr, Todd Loree, Paul

Melanson, Brian Primeau and McLarty have been part of the group from the start, while Bill Wong and Dusan Cizman have joined them more recently. They hold river clean up days, tree planting days and organize fish stocking. They draw volunteers from the local communities and the Friends of the Grand River so that 10 to 30 people turn out on work days.

CREW invites students from Linwood and Lutherwood Public Schools to help stock fish and they explain the program to instill a strong environmental ethic among the young people. Over the years, they have partnered with 19 groups.

At first they thought they would become their own organization but they later opted to be a committee of the Friends of the Grand River, which already had charitable status.

“They are an enthusiastic and hard working group. They work through all kinds of weather and they have really made a big difference to this fishery,” says Anne Loeffler, who nominated them after seeing how well they work with local landowners.

See the video on www.youtube.com/grandriverca.

Four more award winners

Four other 2011 Grand River Conservation Awards were also given out Sept. 15. They went to Barbara Kidd, Jim Phillips, the Fergus Lions Club and Cambridge WATERS. Stories on these award recipients will be featured in *Grand Actions* over the coming months.



DID YOU KNOW?

Why brown trout are stocked

The brown trout stocked in the Grand and Conestogo rivers are not a native fish, but are a European species.

Brook trout are native to the Grand, and some still live in local waterways.

Rainbow trout are native to Canada, but not Ontario. They are from British Columbia, where they are called steelhead. They were stocked 100 years ago and are reproducing locally in some areas, so they are a naturalized species in the Grand River.

An Environmental Assessment done before **brown trout** stocking began in the tailwater fisheries below the Conestogo and the Belwood dams included water quality and biological research. This found that brown trout would be the most suitable, because they can tolerate varied water conditions.

Brown trout now reproduce in Whitemans Creek and Mill Creek, but not yet the Grand River tailwater fishery, which is still relatively new.



Brown trout are identified by orange and red spots on the side, a creamy belly and few or no black spots on the tail.

Photo by Steve May

Sustainability attracts an attentive audience

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Get ready to be part of a big shift — for your grandchildren, even if you don't yet have any.

"A sustainable watershed: Can we get there from here?" was the question that kept about 300 people glued to their seats at the 11th Annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum Sept. 16. A dozen speakers and two moderators weighed in on this topic and they all agreed — we need to change the way we live before it is too late.

Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and an annual speaker, noted that it is fitting that his first grandchild was due to be born any day and like many, he was keenly aware that we need to keep in mind the world we leave to our grandchildren.

The day opened with a presentation by York University professor Peter Victor, a founder of the emerging discipline of ecological economics and the author of *Managing Without Growth: Slower by Design, Not Disaster*. He presented an array of graphs about resource use that show a dramatic escalation in extraction of natural resources in recent decades and increasing water use that is leading to depletion in some parts of the world. This is putting an excessive burden on the environment that is not sustainable, he said.

Victor created a computer model that incorporated data to find the answer to this question: Can we change how we live so that we have full employment, no poverty, fiscal balance and decrease greenhouse gas emissions without relying on economic growth?

"You bet" is the answer. This would mean using less of the world's resources and working less — a big slowdown. He

suggested that instead of taking the financial savings of owning a more fuel efficient car and flying off to Spain, we need to re-jig our thinking and save for the future and not for consumer items.

University of Guelph professor John Fitzgibbon said sustainability means doing things differently. "We've lost sight of our next generation. Are our kids going to be as well off as we are? How do you want them to look back on you? As the wastrels of the planet? The environment can become a cesspit. We have choices to make, values to change."

A bottom up process

He said it will likely be a bottom-up process, where individuals take action.

"How do you want your grandchildren to live? Think about it — that is a commitment to the future," he said. "It is about people, not the environment. The environment doesn't have a problem, people do. The environment will live on beyond us no matter what we do."

Steve Hounsell, president and chair of the board of Trees Ontario, said Ontarians use about 8.5 hectares of resources per person, and that means each year watershed residents use the



WATER FORUM

equivalent of 12 Grand River watersheds. This is not sustainable living.



Steve Hounsell

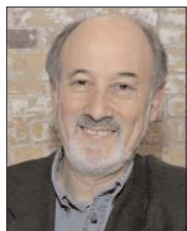
Some comes from developing economies so we are "robbing others of their own sustainability." He said we need to aggressively move toward a conservator type society instead.

The vision of the Grand River Conservation Authority is "a healthy and sustainable natural environment in the Grand River watershed" so the topic is fundamental to the future of the organization as well.

The afternoon speakers continued by discussing water resources in the Grand River watershed.

Moderator Barbara Veale said she remembers similar discussion when she was a young student 30 years ago.

"I almost feel like we're mice on a



Peter Victor



From left Bob Gibson, Kirk Stinchcombe and Oliver Brandes during Water Forum.

wheel and that wheel keeps going around and around and around. How do we get off that wheel?" she asked.

The suggestions were broad ranging — from breaking our dependence on cars, to providing more access to the river so it is easier for people to connect with nature, to encouraging brownfield development. There are many successful changes in human history — the Berlin wall came down, apartheid ended, pesticide use has decreased 60 per cent in the last 20 years.

"There are openings for subversive change all over the place," said Bob Gibson, University of Waterloo professor. He recalled two decades ago when Laurel Creek was saved from having a paved bottom, now known to be an environmentally unsound practice, by anti-tax people and retired residents who wanted to feed the ducks.

Monique Dubé, science director at the Canadian Rivers Institute, spoke about the importance of monitoring cause and effect relationships to understand the health of the system. A new Internet site she worked on shows the relationship between health of species and the changes in water. She hopes the website, THREATS, will someday become the "water weather station."

The water pipeline

The afternoon panel discussion was about water resource sustainability in the Grand River watershed, which anticipates high population growth and urban and rural intensification over the coming decades.

It included discussion about the sustainability of a water pipeline from Lake Erie for Grand River watershed communities including Waterloo Region. This would use an existing water intake at Lake Erie built in the 1970s.

A water pipeline "means we've outstripped the local limits of the environment" said Tony Maas, freshwater director for World Wildlife Fund-Canada.

Thomas Schmidt, environmental commissioner for Waterloo Region, said

the region has a water supply and



Tony Maas

has been growing, water demand has been dropping. Some newer companies, such as Research In Motion, don't use as much water as other manufactures. The large Toyota plant in Cambridge has dropped water consumption by two-thirds. But demand for water is expected to grow within the next three or four years, he said.

"Having a pipeline is a possibility, it is not what is necessarily going to happen," Thomas Schmidt, the commissioner for Waterloo region. "I believe within this watershed what these municipalities are doing is sustainable for water, but not wastewater. I hope by the time I leave my position as commissioner, the quality of the treated effluent will be better than the quality of water in the receiving river."

It is challenging to change our own behavior about water, but we need to find ways to modify the system that delivers it and supports that behavior of over consumption of water, said Kirk Stinchcombe, an expert in water efficiency from Victoria, B.C.

At the end of the day Gord Miller noted that "Waterloo Region has the best water conservation programs in the province bar none," and he agreed that if the communities along the Grand River do end up bringing water from Lake Erie they have outstripped their supply.

Other speakers were:

- ◆ Joe Farwell, GRCA CAO, who presented the Grand River Watershed Report
- ◆ Lorrie Minshall, who spoke about the Grand River Water

Management Plan

- ◆ Murray Gamble, who spoke about development and innovations in urban design
- ◆ James Etienne, Senior Water Resources Engineer with the GRCA who spoke about sustainable water supplies

In addition to the presentations and panels, there were displays and exhibits highlighting innovative water technologies and services, as well as the environmental programs of business, government agencies and environmental organizations.

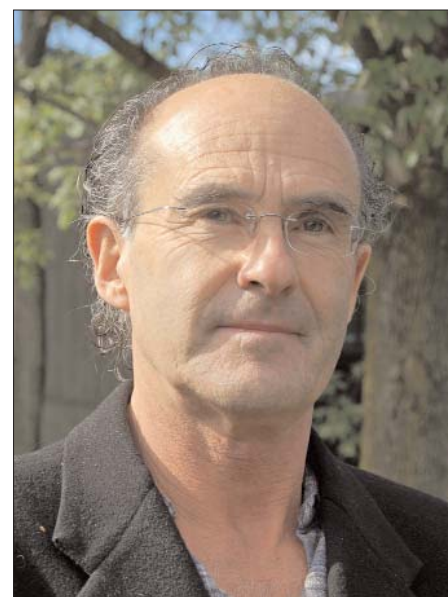
66 litres per day

Mike Darmon is motivated to do what the rest of us could be doing.

The Guelph resident stood up to ask a question at Water Forum and noted that he has cut his household water use down to about 66 litres per person per day — less than a third of the Ontario average.

He and his partner are home all day — so they aren't cutting water use by using water at another location. He is a retired plumber and even though he uses a third or a quarter less water than the rest of us, he says there is still more he can do.

"I have a six litre toilet, and I could get a three litre one. These are available now," Darmon said.



Mike Darmon

His home is part of the pilot grey water reuse project in Guelph, so water from showers and the bath is filtered and then used to flush the toilet. This pilot program was introduced in 2009 and it provides a \$1,500 incentive for installing a grey water system in new and existing homes.

While grey water systems are new and not yet feasible for many people, most of what Darmon does can be accomplished by anyone. It is the result of many small decisions he makes before he turns on the tap each day. Here is some of what he does:

- ◆ He uses several water barrels to collect rainwater for a huge garden.
- ◆ He doesn't have a dishwasher and is careful about water while doing the dishes
- ◆ He doesn't take a daily shower
- ◆ He measures the water before he makes tea, rather than filling up the kettle and then dumping it out again once he has filled up the tea pot — this saves energy too

The best part is that his water and wastewater bills are about \$20 every month.

"I don't feel I'm experiencing hardship as a result of these changes," Darmon said. "I see the problems that are happening and everyone is all doom and gloom. I'd like to show what is possible by example."

Workshop on water supply and demand management

How do you get a whole town full of people to cut back on the quantity of water they use every day?

This was one of the topics of a workshop held at the GRCA headquarters in Cambridge on Sept. 15. Called the Water Supply and Demand Management Workshop, representatives of about two-thirds of the municipal drinking water systems within the Grand River watershed came to share their ideas. They

were joined by water conservation and water policy experts.

Water demand management (WDM) means adopting policies, programs and technologies that encourage reduced water use. This includes toilet rebate programs, higher water billing at certain times of the day and new ways to get residents motivated to use less water. It may also include new technologies and eliminating leaks in the water delivery system. The group talked about the barriers that stop people from cutting their water use and municipal strategies that look promising.

Presentations challenged workshop participants to consider the next generation of tools and then everyone talked about water delivery technology and operations, economics, community engagement, regulations and implementation.

Ideas gathered at the workshop will be used by the municipalities to develop their own strategies that will then be incorporated into the GRCA's Water Management Plan.

If less water is used, it will help existing water supplies go further, avoid the

need to expand costly infrastructure and it will protect the ecological integrity. There are many compelling reasons to change what we do and consume less water.

A copy of the discussion paper prepared for the workshop can be found on www.grandriver.ca/WMP.



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

Kitchener receives award for storm water management

The City of Kitchener has received the P.J. Marshall Plaque Award for its innovative program that transferred storm water management funding from property taxes to a user-fee program based on the amount of impervious area on a property.

"Our city's residents identify environmental issues as one of the most significant problems we face," said Berry Vrbancic, City of Kitchener Councillor.



Work begins this fall to improve the lake at Victoria Park in Kitchener. The project is being funded through the stormwater management user fee program.

“With the storm water management project, the City of Kitchener is taking another step toward becoming one of the most sustainable communities in Canada.”

The award was given out by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Storm water runoff flows across land and is routed into drainage systems and ultimately natural areas such as creeks, lakes and wetlands. Developed areas with houses, roads, businesses and parking lots limit the amount of storm water that can be absorbed into the ground.

Areas that are more impervious create more runoff and pollutant loading from the property and consequently pose a greater burden on the city’s storm water management system. In 2010, Kitchener adopted a utility structure using an impervious area calculation to set the rate structure. This structure provides full, sustainable and dedicated funding for its critical storm water management.

Rates are assessed to each parcel of land based on usage of the drainage system. As a result, some property owners are adopting best practices such as vegetated swales to reduce the amount of impervious area. The city is now exploring a way to provide rate credits for property owners who want to make changes that reduce the runoff from their property.

The P.J. Marshall Award is an annual competitive process organized by AMO. Awards acknowledge municipalities who have demonstrated leadership and innovation in public-private partnerships. Submissions by Ontario municipalities are judged by a panel on their creativity and success in implementing new, innovative ways of serving the public. This year, two plaque awards and two certificates of merit were awarded.

Kitchener’s innovative plan was supported by the GRCA. The City of Waterloo council has approved a similar plan, while other Grand River watershed municipalities are watching closely.



Calling themselves Fish Quill Poetry Boat, poets from across Canada paddled the Grand River and stopped along the way to camp and read their poetry.

Paddling Canadian poets make second Grand tour

By Leigh Kotsilidis

A group of poets from across Canada came together in August for a canoe-camping trip down the Grand River.

Pitching their tents at Elora, the West Montrose Kissing Bridge, Kitchener, Cambridge, Paris, Brantford and at E. Pauline Johnson’s historic home at the Chiefswood National Historic Site, the band of poets, who call themselves the Fish Quill Poetry Boat, read poems to interested crowds along the river.

This year’s tour was the second such trek and included Linda Besner, Asa Boxer, Gabe Foreman, Helen Guri, Leigh Kotsilidis, Daniel Kincade Renton, Nick Thran, and singer-songwriter Abigail Lapell.

Along the way, local writers met the group and read alongside them at a few venues. Poet and actor Roy Lewis joined them at the Waterloo Region Museum. Fiction writer Antonio Michael Downing appeared at O’Keefe’s Cottage Café and Ice Cream Parlour in Cambridge. Poet Laureate of Brantford and Norfolk County, John B. Lee, added his voice to theirs at the Brantford Arts Block and

Shelley Clark read with them at Chiefswood.

The brainchild of Linda Besner and Leigh Kotsilidis, the Fish Quill Poetry Boat is a kind of poetry camp, extracting writers from their usually hectic urban environments and bringing them together for 10 intensive days of bonding that only a vigorous camping experience can provide.

Poetry retreats are generally places for seclusion or mentorship, where the goal is either to complete a writing project or to learn from critical feedback. What makes the Fish Quill group a unique gang is that their time is mostly spent labouring for each other rather than for themselves. And though there is some shoptalk, the writers learn from each other by observation (and perhaps by osmosis) rather than through official guidance. Arguably, this kind of living on the Grand in mutual support allows poets to inspire one another more effectively than they would in an institutionalized setting.

After ten days of paddling and camping, battling exhaustion, the Fish Quillers were sorry to part company on Aug. 14. Since returning to the city, all

have complained of “post-paddling depression,” as Daniel Kincade Renton has dubbed it. They plan to return next year.

The canoes that make this trip possible are donated annually by Treks in the Wild. Andy Tonkin, the company’s owner, clearly has a soft spot for these poets. He joined them for a day on the river, giving them pointers on canoeing techniques and showing them how to grub up wild edibles. Tonkin has also helped the group with logistics and publicity wherever possible.

Leigh Kotsilidis is a poet living in Montreal.

Source protection plan to be complete by August 2012

The water tragedy at Walkerton in 2000 showed the importance of protecting the sources of municipal drinking water. Seven people died and thousands became ill when bacteria polluted a municipal well.

In 2006, Ontario government passed the Clean Water Act to protect the wells, rivers and lakes that are sources of municipal water. Under the Act, Source Protection Plans will provide an additional layer of protection to municipal water supplies.

The final phase of the project has now started. A Source Protection Plan for the Grand River watershed is scheduled to be completed by August 2012.

The draft plan will be the subject of public consultation in coming months before it is submitted to the Ministry of the Environment for approval.

About 770,000 people are served by 50 municipal and First Nations water systems in the Grand River watershed. They get their water from close to 200 wells, four river intakes and one Lake Erie intake.

During the past two years information on those water sources and potential threats to water quality have been identified. That information is contained in the

Assessment Report for the Grand River Watershed.

The vulnerable areas around the wells have been identified as well as significant threats – the human activities with the greatest potential to cause harm to the water sources.

The Source Protection Plan will outline the policies and programs that will be needed to reduce the risk posed by those activities.

The responsibility to develop the plan rests with the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee. The committee also has the task of overseeing development of plans for the Long Point Region, Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek watersheds.

The committee and source protection staff are working closely with municipalities throughout the Grand River watershed to identify the best collection of policies and programs to protect drinking water sources.

In the next few months, some municipalities will hold public meetings or open houses to present draft policies to the residents of their communities.

By late 2011 or early 2012, municipalities will report to the Source Protection Committee on their preferred collection of policies. Then it will be up to the committee and staff members to pull all of the recommendations together into one Source Protection Plan for the Grand River watershed.

Copies posted in spring

When the complete document is ready – probably in spring – it will be available for public comment. Copies will be posted online and at municipal offices throughout the watershed. A series of public meetings will be held to give people a chance to learn more about the plan and to make comments.

Those comments will be used to fine tune the draft version of the plan before it is sent to the MOE.

More information on source protection planning, including copies of documents and reports can be found at www.sourcewater.ca.

If you care about water, complete an online survey

Ask a room full of people what they want the future Grand River watershed to look like and you will get as many answers as there are ways to travel downstream.

To make sure that the many uses, needs and values associated with ground and surface water are considered in the update of the Grand River Watershed Plan, the GRCA is launching a survey in October to gain a hawk eye view on these perspectives.

The survey will be posted on the GRCA website. Anyone with an interest in watershed issues is encouraged to complete it.

“We want the plan to ensure that these uses, needs and values will continue to be met in the future,” says Lorrie Minshall, Director of the Water Management Plan. “The survey is just one of the ways we are working to get public input from across the watershed, recognizing that there are so many different interests that need to be considered.”

Where to find the survey

Both the survey and its results will be posted on the www.grandriver.ca/wmp.



Fishing at Woolwich Reservoir

Woolwich Reservoir's 7 kilometre trail

The Elmira Lions Trail is seven kilometres around the Woolwich Reservoir and is one of the Grand River watershed's many beautiful places.

The reservoir was constructed in 1973 on Canagagigue Creek. There is a parking lot off off Reid Woods Drive and the trail starts at the dam. The trail passes through GRCA and private property (see photo at right).

It was developed in 1980 by the Elmira Lions Club and is a favourite spot for cycling, hiking, fishing and for a picnic.



About Grand Actions

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Do you want to subscribe or change your subscription?

If you would like to receive this newsletter either by mail or e-mail please send your contact information. There is no cost to subscribe. Please ensure your contact information is complete and up-to-date.

Do you want to search for a past article?

Current and back issues are available online at www.grandriver.ca.

Do you want to submit to Grand Actions?

Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be edited for length or style. Photos and event information is also welcome. We do our best to publish items, but we are not able to guarantee publication.

Contact information:

Janet Baine, *Grand Actions* editor
Phone: 519-621-2763, Ext. 2302
E-mail: jbaine@grandriver.ca

This publication is printed on Rolland Enviro100, an FSC certified, environmentally-friendly paper. The paper is manufactured using 100% post-consumer fibre and is processed chlorine-free using biogas energy.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Forest Fest 2011, Shade's Mills Conservation Area, Cambridge, Oct. 15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is a free event for the whole family to celebrate International Year of Forests. Activities include forest walks, bug hunts, tree harvesting demonstrations, saw mill demonstrations, tree planting, critters creatures and creepy crawlies, guided bird walks and horse drawn wagon rides through the forest, as well as other forest displays and activities.

Geodashing, Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Oct. 16, 2 p.m. People new to geocaching can learn the basic functions of GPS before heading out on a high tech treasure hunt. Cost is \$5; call 519-836-7096 to pre-register.

Ecological Flow Requirements: Integrating Current Science into Practical Management of River Systems, Cambridge, Oct. 27, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This workshop is for natural resource management staff who are interested in doing ecological flow requirements work and the fee is \$30. To register call 519-621-2763 ext. 2275 or e-mail awong@grandriver.ca.

The Best Dam Tour, Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Nov. 13, 2 p.m. Tour the Guelph Lake Dam. Cost is \$5; call 519-836-7096 to pre-register.

Winter Trees, Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Dec. 11, 2 p.m. Learn how to identify trees by using the three "bs" branches, bark and buds. Cost is \$5; call 519-836-7096 to pre-register.

15th Annual Heritage Day Workshop, Feb. 17, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., South Dumfries Community Centre, St. George. The workshop will explore the influence of the Grand River in shaping military strategies during the War of 1812-14 and registration information will be posted on www.grandriver.ca by mid October.

Note: Events at the GRCA's conservation areas and nature centres are posted in the calendar on www.grandriver.ca.



YouTube



Twitter



Facebook



Flickr

Follow us on: