

GRCA General Membership

Chair	Helen Jowett
Vice-Chair	Chris White
Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon and Southgate and Town of Grand Valley	Guy Gardhouse
Townships of Mapleton and Wellington North	Pat Salter
Township of Centre Wellington	Kirk McElwain
Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch	Chris White
City of Guelph	Bob Bell, Mike Salisbury
Region of Waterloo	Les Armstrong, Elizabeth Clarke, Sue Foxtan, Helen Jowett, Geoff Lorentz, Jane Mitchell, Joe Nowak, Wayne Roth, Sandy Shantz, Warren Stauch
Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East	George Wicke
Halton Region	Cindy Lunau
City of Hamilton	George Stojanovic
Oxford County	Bruce Banbury
County of Brant	Brian Coleman, Shirley Simons
City of Brantford	Dave Neumann, Vic Prendergast
Haldimand and Norfolk Counties	Bernie Corbett, Fred Morison

Students break ground for new nature centre

It may not be a typical groundbreaking ceremony, but students from the Conestoga College Heavy Construction Equipment Operation program had plenty to celebrate when they began working on the grounds of the future Guelph Lake Nature Centre May 22.

Approximately 40 students are working on the site using a range of heavy equipment to construct an access road, parking lot and school bus turning circle. These features will serve as the future entrance to the facility, expected to open in the fall of 2020.

This unique partnership between the GRCA and Conestoga College provides the students with an opportunity to gain real-life construction experience, while providing a substantial donation of in-kind labour toward the project. It has saved \$30,000 in site development costs, bringing the Grand River Conservation Foundation closer to its \$2.5 million fundraising target for the new nature centre.

Emergency exercise at Rockwood Park

An emergency training exercise took place at Rockwood Park on May 28 for staff and emergency responders.

This involved many GRCA staff members, including some who were acting as victims and park visitors impacted by a serious crash. In the scenario, a speeding truck crashed through a fence into the park from Guelph Line. It toppled over, leaving the driver unconscious and the passenger injured. The truck happened to be carrying hazardous material that then spilled into the water, so an emergency spill cleanup also had to take place. If that was not enough, two fishing rods were found unattended, and this was the last known location of two young children whose mother was frantic to find them.

GRCA summer staff receive extensive training, but this hands-on test brought it all to life. This exercise was undertaken in order to verify the effectiveness of emergency procedures at the park, to improve communications and to prepare summer staff for a potential emergency situation.

Participants in the training included Dufferin Emergency Search and Rescue (DESAR), 22 members of the Guelph/Eramosa Volunteer Fire Department and staff from Wellington and Dufferin counties. This exercise helped prepare for a situation that could arise at the park and is a way to develop a co-operative approach to emergency planning.

Warm and windy weather

May was very warm with a significant wind storm.

Rainfall was close to normal across most of the watershed, and most rain was delivered by widespread storm systems. These types of systems are ideal for recharge and they don't produce much runoff. Most of the GRCA reservoirs are at the normal operating level for this time of year and some are slightly above average.

A wind event on May 4 resulted in closure of parks and trails and caused significant tree damage. High wind also resulted in a wind warning for Lake Erie, due to a surge along the shoreline, but the high level of the lake at the mouth of Port Maitland didn't last very long. There were tornado-force winds in Waterloo-Wellington as well as Dufferin County and other parts of southern Ontario, so this event had a widespread impact.

Some natural areas closed

The aftermath of a severe wind storm across the Grand River watershed on May 4 is still being felt by the GRCA.

It resulted in many downed trees blocking trails and roadways. All GRCA trails, parks and properties were closed.

Within a few days all Grand River Parks reopened, and toward the end of the month the rail trails along the Grand River also reopened. But many GRCA natural areas remained closed at the end of May.



The natural areas that have reopened include Chesney Wilderness Area, Dumfries Conservation Area, Puslinch Tract, Starkey Hill, FWR Dickson Wilderness Area and Dryden Tract. These are now clear of damage.

Hazard tree management has been a big expense for the GRCA in recent years due to storm damage and diseases. As a result, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has approved a request to use GRCA land sale reserves to augment the hazard tree management budget. Up to \$1.8 million can be applied to hazard tree management between 2018 and 2020.

For their own safety, hikers and visitors to GRCA properties should not go into a GRCA natural area during or immediately after a storm. Stay on trails, respect yellow and black warning tape, fencing and signs that indicate the need to stay away from specific areas. While GRCA staff inspect the properties that are open to the public on a regular basis, hazards can occur at any time. When visiting natural areas be aware of your surroundings and don't forget to look up. Check the service disruptions page for updated information including closures at www.grandriver.ca/servicedisruptions.

Hunters fined \$19,000 for shooting a swan

Hunters are reminded that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry conservation officers monitor hunting on GRCA land.

On May 16, 2018, three hunters were sentenced in the Ontario Court of Justice after pleading guilty to one count each of hunting a trumpeter swan during a closed season at Luther Marsh Wildlife Area in the northern part of the Grand River watershed. The infraction was discovered in September 2017 during a routine patrol of waterfowl hunters. A dead swan was floating in the water near the hunters. This was contrary to the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994.

Combined fines of \$19,000 will be directed to the Environmental Damages Fund. There is no open season in Canada for hunting trumpeter swans. A release about this is on the Environment Canada website.

Farmers share their stories online

A new web application called Stories from



A mock emergency exercise took place at Rockwood Park May 28 to help GRCA staff and emergency responders plan for the worst. Assisting a victim was one of several scenarios that were underway in the park in the wake of a serious truck accident.

the Field has been developed by the GRCA to help bring even more farmers to the Rural Water Quality Program.

Thousands of farmers in the Grand River watershed work to improve and protect water quality on their land for all those who live downstream. These projects also benefit the property owners.

Local landowner stories about the projects that have been completed to improve water quality are shared using photos, videos and a map. This application can be viewed online at www.grandriver.ca/ruralwater.

Warning booms installed at dams

The GRCA has installed warning booms or white buoys upstream of GRCA dams to warn paddlers, anglers and boaters to stay away from the dams.

These were installed by early May as one of many safety procedures developed by the GRCA to reduce the risk for people who enjoy water activities on rivers. The hazards around dams can cause serious trouble and the risk of death if warning signs are ignored. Not all dams are owned by the

GRCA, so some do not have warning booms and buoys. The booms are made of plastic floats joined together by a chain.

The buoys and booms are installed each spring and removed in the fall before winter freeze-up.

This issue of *GRCA Current* was published in June, 2018.

It is a summary of the May, 2018 business conducted by the Grand River Conservation Authority board and committees, as well as other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest.

The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes distribution, photocopying and forwarding of *GRCA Current*.

Next board meeting:

June 22 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre

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