

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	Kelly Linton
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

New Conservation Authorities Act passed

On December 12, Bill 139 — Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act 2017 — received Royal Assent in the Ontario Legislature.

The new legislation includes changes to the Conservation Authorities Act. Many years in the making, this modernized legislation recognizes watershed management as a key component in dealing with issues like climate change and population growth.

New regulations will be developed and enacted as a result of the changes in the Act. This piece of legislation will help set the direction for the GRCA for many years into the future.

slated to be converted to forest has now been planted with trees.

The GRCA will now focus on converting existing plantation forests to more natural forests, which means thinning the forests. Forest thinning is carried out by the GRCA to provide the growing trees more space and sunlight, so that they stay healthy. It also brings more diversity to these forests by providing room for other tree species to establish.

Nearly 60 per cent of the land owned by the GRCA is made up of forests. Converting plantation forests into more natural forests has always been part of the GRCA's long-term forest plan.

GRCA strategic plan

With the passage of Bill 139, the GRCA is in a position to review and update its strategic plan this year.

The current strategic plan was approved in 2012 and has five objectives, each with several associated strategic priorities. A great deal has been accomplished over the past five years.

During the review process, the GRCA is taking the opportunity to review existing GRCA programs and will be incorporating changes that result from the new provincial legislation. A facilitated working session with the GRCA board will take place as part of the review process.

Winter at our Parks

After an unseasonably mild winter last year prevented most Grand River Parks from offering traditional winter activities, six parks opened on January 6.

Shade's Mills, Pinehurst Lake, Rockwood and Belwood Lake offer year-round access, providing limited winter maintenance for activities such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, where available. Guelph Lake also provides a small parking area for limited winter activities, such as hiking.

Laurel Creek Park in Waterloo will open on weekends only, beginning January 6, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Cross-country skiing and snowshoe equipment rentals are available on weekends at Shade's Mills, Laurel Creek and Pinehurst Lake, when conditions allow. To find out current trail conditions and rental availability, call the parks directly. For more information on winter programs visit www.grandriver.ca/winterprograms.

Forest management plan

The GRCA's forest management plan for 2018 to 2027 sets out a plan to manage the 115 square kilometres of forests owned by the GRCA.

Over the last 10 years, nearly 500 hectares of GRCA land has been planted with nearly 775,000 trees. The plan for the coming decade will result in a shift away from tree planting to a focus on managing the existing forests. This is because most of the GRCA-owned farmland that had been

New conservation area fees

The cost of a Grand River Parks Membership card remains \$130 in 2018, the same as it was last year, but some other park fees have increased



for 2018.

The adult admission increases from \$6.50 to \$7, while the senior rate (\$5.50) and child rate (\$3) remain the same. Admission continues to be free for children five and younger.

In 2018, all parks have the same adult entry fee, with the exception of Elora Quarry, where the rate will increase to \$10 for adults, \$7.50 for seniors and \$5 for children. Visitor attendance at Elora Quarry has increased significantly during the past few years. In 2017, a daily capacity limit of 1,300 visitors was implemented. While the capacity limit resulted in a reduced number of visitors in 2017, the number still remains high. The increased visitation has required additional staffing in order to increase public safety and enhance the visitor experience, resulting in increased operating costs at Elora Quarry. Coupled with the increase in Ontario's minimum wage, the increase in operating costs has resulted in the new fee.

The vehicle rate (with a maximum of six people) at the Shade's Mills Park's automatic gate in Cambridge increased by \$2, to \$14. This is the amount paid when the driver doesn't have a membership pass and the attendant is not on duty.

The parks are run on a break-even basis, as no taxes are used for park operations. Surpluses are put into reserves to be used to address aging infrastructure and fund new capital projects, as well as to provide a stabilization fund for years when revenue is lower.

Nightly camping fees at Grand River Parks are increasing by two per cent, and seasonal camping fees are increasing by three per cent. These increases are necessary to ensure that revenues are enough to meet the projected expenses. The new fees are posted online at www.grandriver.ca/parks.

Elora Gorge sanitary service tender

The GRCA will complete the first phase of the upgrade to sanitary servicing at Elora Gorge Park by May 1 and has hired A. Van Egmond Construction Ltd. for \$617,000 plus HST to do this.

The existing underground force main on the north side of the park will be extended and connected to the Pines Campground and the septic system will be removed. Wastewater from the campground will be



Home School Wild Wednesdays and Wild Wee Ones programs start January 17 at Shade's Mills Nature Centre in Cambridge. In addition, several nature centres are offering PD day activities this winter. Details and registration is online at www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

brought to the municipal water pollution control plant in Elora. The 35 trailers in the upper portion of this campground will be connected to the system. The GRCA board approved this upgrade at the June 2017 meeting as the first phase of this project.

A second phase is slated for completion in 2019. It will see the creation of new fully-serviced campsites in the upper section of the campground.

2017 was a wet year

Climate stations across the Grand River watershed indicate that precipitation was above normal in 2017.

Luther received the most precipitation, at nearly 1,290 mm, or 30 per cent more than normal, and it was the third wettest year at Luther since 1961.

It was also warmer than the long-term average, although the year ended with extremely cold temperatures.

Water levels in Lake Erie continue to be above the long-term average and the GRCA issued an advisory due to strong winds on Christmas day. However, this did not result in flooding.

Heavy rains and healthy soils workshop

The GRCA is hosting a free workshop about ways that farmers can protect their soils from heavy rains.

The workshop is January 16, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the St. Jacobs Lions Hall. To register, email ruralwater@grandriver.ca or call Anne Loeffler at 1-866-900-4722 x2242.

This workshop provides insight and practical information about building soil resilience and keeping soil in place. Topics include a recap of significant local rainfall events and their impacts, water quality trends in the Grand River and Lake Erie, improving soil resilience through best management practices, and resources available to help farmers manage heavy rainfalls.

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

It is a summary of the December 2017 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:

January 26 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre

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