



September 18, 2024

**Community Leaders**

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Jan Liggett, Mayor  
City of Cambridge  
Joe Nowak, Mayor  
Wellesley Township  
Karen Redman, Chair  
Region of Waterloo  
Sandy Shantz, Mayor  
Woolwich Township  
Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor  
City of Kitchener  
Chris White, Mayor  
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**Governance**

David Beatty

**Ambassadors**

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Michael Barnstijn  
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David Buckland  
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Geneviève Caron  
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Dear GRCA Board of Directors,

The **rare Charitable Research Reserve** is an urban land trust and environmental institute in Waterloo Region/Wellington. formed in 2001 after the acquisition of 900+ acres of lands from the University of Guelph. Three properties located along the Grand River in the village of Blair and Township of North Dumfries comprise **rare's** original holdings. The organization now protects more than 1250 acres on eight properties across the Region of Waterloo and Wellington County, including several kilometers of shoreline on the Grand, Speed, and Eramosa Rivers. Furthermore, we steward a large area of Grand River floodplain, which provides numerous benefits to wildlife and to human settlements in terms of water storage, flood control, carbon sequestration, water quality, and much more.

As responsible property stewards committed to conservation, **rare** is continuously battling invasive species. Giant Hogweed is one of our focal species, due to its invasive properties and its ability to cause serious injury to humans that have contact with its sap. Furthermore, Giant Hogweed can crowd out native species and spread rapidly via water in floodplain habitats. Plants that are allowed to go to seed can produce thousands of seeds, which are carried by winter and spring flows downstream to new areas. The plant also has a tendency to sprout in unexpected places near the river where recreational users may come in contact with it and be injured.

Giant Hogweed began to appear on the **rare** floodplains in Cambridge and North Dumfries in increasing numbers in 2014 and 2015, which are our first years of record keeping. In 2015, 422 plants were removed from our floodplain areas, and a concerted effort each year gradually reduced those numbers, until only 16 plants were discovered and removed in 2020. However, since that time there have been dramatic year-over-year increases in Giant Hogweed populations on our property, with 730 plants removed in 2021, 994 in 2022, and 807 in 2023. A doubling of this three-year average was seen in 2024, with 1,485 plants removed by **rare** staff. The continued strain on staff and resources to address Giant Hogweed

infestation on our property cannot continue, particularly when easily observed plants on adjacent properties are left to flower and go to seed but for the efforts of John Kemp and his generous volunteers. Mr. Kemp has documented similar precipitous increases in Giant Hogweed populations in the Grand River basin downstream of the Region of Waterloo.

We encourage the GRCA, as the primary body protecting environmental integrity in the Grand River watershed, to

- Improve monitoring and control of Giant Hogweed on its own riparian properties. Not to do so is a false economy, as uncontrolled populations increase through seed production, and export seed downstream to other properties.
- Provide advisory assistance to other public bodies, such as municipalities, that own land with floodplains, to identify and control Giant Hogweed.
- Provide advisory assistance to private landowners to identify and control Giant Hogweed in the floodplain areas of their properties.

It should not be left to private citizens and volunteers such as Mr. Kemp to organize and lead the watershed response to Giant Hogweed, nor should property owners with finite resources to commit to stewardship be expected to address an increasing problem year after year. We would be delighted to see a collaborative watershed-wide effort bringing together the various affected parties such as municipalities, environmental organizations, landowners etc. to come up with a comprehensive strategy to address Giant Hogweed in the short and long term through both response and preventative measures. We are happy to have further conversations or to host a meeting at *rare* to explore how this could be best facilitated and what resources are needed.

Sincerely,

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