

From: [Hugh R. Whiteley](#)
To: [Megan Kitchen](#)
Subject: Comments on GRCA Draft Conservation Areas Strategy
Date: October 4, 2024 4:03:25 PM
Attachments: [COMMENTS ON GRCA DRAFT CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY.docx](#)
[1970 Guelph Valley Land Project Agreement.pdf](#)
[Table 7.1 Hanlon Creek Conservation Area Master Plan.pdf](#)
[1978 Master Plan for Niska Lands \(pages 88-90\).pdf](#)
[1979 CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN.pdf](#)
[1986 LETTER TO MNR ON HCCA MASTER PLAN.pdf](#)

Greetings:

I attach my comments on the Draft Conservation Areas Strategy

To supplement my comment that the absence of a commitment to complete the establishment of the Hanlon Creek Conservation Area is a major defect in the Strategy I also attach the following documents that identify past commitments regarding the HCCA.

1. The 1970 Agreement of the City of Guelph and GRCA to establish the HCCA.
2. Table 7.1 of the HCCA Master Plan that lists the two purchases forming the Niska Lands as part of the HCCA
3. The section of the HCCA Master Plan that specifies the future use of the Niska Lands and specifically identifies the upland cultivated fields as part of the future zoological park.
4. The announcement of the adoption of the HCCA Master Plan by the GRCA and the City of Guelph with a twenty year completion target.
5. A 1986 letter confirming continued interest by GRCA and City of Guelph in the HCCA.

If any of the information I provide is judged by the GRCA to be inaccurate or incomplete I would like to know which information is disputed and what is the reason for the dispute.

Best regards

Hugh Whiteley

Waynell



Appendix E
Guelph

ONTARIO • CANADA

City Hall • Telephone 822-1260

January 20, 1970.

Mr. G. M. Coutts,
General Manager,
Grand River Conservation Authority,
P. O. Box 729,
Galt, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

At a meeting of the Guelph City Council held last evening, the following resolution was passed:-

- "THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority be requested to undertake a conservation project for the Hanlon Creek Watershed with particular consideration to be given to the following objectives:
- a) THAT the conservation zone comprise approximately 845 acres, of which 770 acres are located in the City of Guelph and 75 acres in the Township of Puslinch as generally set out in the preliminary report made to the Authority by Kilborn Engineering, Limited, in February of 1968.
 - b) THAT provision be made to receive all major flows of storm water into sedimentation ponds strategically designed and located so that maximum recharge of the ground water aquifer results and so that fluctuation of run-off from the watershed is minimized in so far as is possible.
 - c) THAT consideration be given to the development of ponds and small lakes through spot mining of gravel as a method of making such excavations economically feasible.
 - d) THAT, in addition to giving full consideration to conservation objectives, consideration also be given to utilization of a proportion of the existing open space for area park and recreation needs.
 - e) THAT the location of the Ontario Waterfowl Research Foundation premises at the lower end of the Watershed be recognized and that the water requirements of this use be considered in the plans made for water conservation.
 - f) THAT the conservation project be so designed that land acquisitions and construction of facilities can readily be planned and staged in conjunction with related urban land development of the surrounding area, but without prohibiting earlier acquisition of lands which may become available anywhere in the Watershed, at realistic prices.
 - g) THAT there be consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee for the Hanlon Expressway with regard to the pedestrian underpass now planned at Hanlon Creek and with regard to the drainage from the Expressway which will occur both during and after construction, in order that any problem relating to the proposed project may be recognized in advance of specific design and construction.
 - h) THAT the direct City of Guelph share of the cost not exceed forty per cent of the total cost with the City to receive the benefit of such more favourable proportioning of cost as may be established from year to year.

Yours truly,

W. G. Hall,
City Clerk.

TABLE 7.1

80.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

DATE PURCHASED	VENDOR	ACREAGE	LOCATION	COST
1971	Estate of Henry H. Hanlon	42.44	Parts of Lots 14, 15, Con. 6, City of Guelph, Wellington County	\$120,000.00
1972	Guelph Woodlands Limited	92.96	Lots, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 Plan 74, Con. 7 City of Guelph and part of lot 9, Con 7, City of Guelph, Wellington County	\$219,923.25
1973	Estate of Margaret Ann McCurdy	98.15	Part of N.E. Part of Lot 6, City of Guelph Wellington County	\$245,382.50
1973	Grant B. Howitt et al	104.28	Front or S.W. part of Lot 5, Con 7, City of Guelph Wellington County	\$281,550.60
1974	Quinten Van de Vrie	25.80	Part of Lot 8, Con 7, City of Guelph, Wellington County	\$ 64,510.00
1976	University Village (Guelph) Ltd.	10.00	Block B, Reg. Plan 657, City of Guelph, Wellington County	\$ 36,000.00
1976	Hanlon Park Development Ltd.	65.22	Part of S.W. or Front Parts of Lots 3 & 4 Part of S.E. or Front Part of Lot 4, Con 7, City of Guelph, Wellington County	\$195,669.00
1977	Ontario Waterfowl Research Foundation	116.	Parts of Lots, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, & 11, Plan 61R1483 City of Guelph and Puslinch Township Wellington County	\$300,000.00
1977	Major Holdings & Developments Limited	68.67	Part of the front or S.W. part of lots 6 and 7, Con 7 designated as part of Ref. Plan 61-R-1644, City of Guelph Wellington County	\$206,028.00
1977	Major Holdings & Developments Limited	2.48	Part of the front or S.W. part of Lot 8, Con 7 City of Guelph designated as part 2 Reg. Plan 61-R-1644, Wellington County	\$ 7,434.00
1980	George & Sam Galineas	9.84	Part of front or S.W. part of Lot 2, Con. 7, City of Guelph	\$ 25,000.00
	TOTAL ACCUMULATED ACREAGE	635.90	TOTAL	\$1,701,497.35

Appendix E

be simple and maintenance free. (i.e.) vault-toilets, picnic tables, firepits and simple shelters of indigenous materials.

The future of Kortright Waterfowl Park is of a major concern to the Conservation Authority at this time. Located at the confluence of Hanlon Creek and the Speed River its function is very important with regard to other activities planned for the watershed.

The objectives of Kortright Park and the research facilities located there are admirable in their own right, however, the actual physical facilities as well as the current financial situation of the waterfowl foundation leave something to be desired. There is no question as to the value of such a facility to the municipality in terms of both education and recreation.

Except for the water resources in the area it cannot be stated that it is an ideal habitat for waterfowl propagation. In terms of ideal habitats, the area is poor or fair at best. Recognizing these facts, it is proposed that the area come under a new concept for its use and management. The concept envisioned is one of a zoological park. The natural features in the area range from

cedar swamps to cultivated upland fields. Due to this variety in landscape and vegetation, it is quite conceivable to establish and maintain an area that would function with a greater variety of species than now exists.

The City of Guelph may or may not see a zoo as part of their recreational and cultural activities, however, if the proposal is adopted in principle, the "Zoological park" idea should be maintained and limited to species that are relatively native to Ontario.

Furthermore, such a facility should be designed to ensure a "naturalistics" setting for both wildlife and people. Many of the features embodied in the Metro Toronto Zoo could be applied on a mini-scale to this site.

As stated previously, waterfowl propagation is an admirable endeavour, however, the provision of adequate habitat is much closer to the natural scheme of things. Given this, an area has been designated as waterfowl habitat in the open marshy area east of the central woodlands. The area is envisioned only as a migratory stopover point which would be used by waterfowl to feed and rest in the spring and fall. At least 2 ponds exist in

the area now and others could be dug which would not be part of the Hanlon Creek system. In addition, adjacent areas can be planted in lure crops each year and this would be the extent of any management programs.

The area north of Kortright Road which includes the golf-course lands, and the esker and kettle formations has been designated as municipal parkland. This area provides a logical transition zone between the existing built-up areas and the university lands and the conservation area. Its existing semi-manicured state will allow for easy development as parkland and in addition, the glacial formations in the area, if properly used, can be a tremendous visual asset. At the northern end of this section there is a natural amphitheatre formed by the eskers in that area. This feature could be taken advantage of with the creation of an outdoor theatre for various cultural events including films, live theatre, and concerts. This type of activity, along with activities designed especially for young people falls into the "unmet needs" category as a result of the 1971 survey. In addition, portions of this area are suitable for use by greater numbers of people than much of the conservation zone.

Master plan is unveiled by the GRCA and gets O.K.

18/9/79
66/6/81

City council approved in principle the master plan for the Hanlon Creek Conservation Area unveiled by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) Monday.

The entire area will take about 20 years to develop as a passive recreational area, a GRCA spokesman said.

Prior to 1978 the GRCA purchased 626 acres or about one half of the development. The authority intends to acquire 490 acres either through purchases or land trades.

The entire Hanlon Creek basin consists of 7,300 acres.

Proposed for the development are two major day use areas. One 30-acre complex will be located at the south end which will contain 160 picnic areas. Access will be via the Clair Road extension.

The other one will be located near the Kortright Waterfowl park and will contain 250 picnic sites.

Also at the south end are three large forest areas which act as buffer zones. A reforestation project in the conservation area will be ongoing.

The area will also contain a network of trails for summer and winter use.



Grand River Conservation Authority

January 6, 1986.

[Handwritten initials]

Appendix E

Administration Office:
400 Clyde Road
Box 729 Cambridge Ontario
N1R 5W6
Telephone 621-2761
Area Code 519

[Handwritten signature]

Ministry of Natural Resources
RECEIVED

JAN 9 1986

Mr. J. J. McFadden,
Regional Conservation Authorities Programme Co-ordinator,
Ministry of Natural Resources,
Central Region,
10670 Yonge Street North,
RICHMOND HILL, Ontario. L4C 3C9

CENTRAL REGION

Dear Jack:

Re: Hanlon's Creek Master Plan

Thank you very much for your letter of December 20, 1985 concerning the above matter, which just arrived today.

In view of this project having a long-standing high priority with the City of Guelph, and that there is still land to be purchased as it comes on the market, we are most anxious to have you proceed with obtaining a Master Plan approval.

I would hereby authorize you to make a reduction in the amount of approval requested for land acquisition. In the intervening years since this plan was prepared, we have purchased one major property at a cost of some \$250,000.00. The revised breakdown of costs should now be:

Capital Development	\$	350,600	Recreation
Land Acquisition		<u>335,400</u>	<u>Water</u> - <i>can this be justified?</i>
		686,000	
<hr/>			
<u>Cost Sharing Arrangement</u>			
Province of Ontario 50% Grant		175,300	
Province of Ontario 55% Grant		<u>184,470</u>	
		359,770	
Grand River Conservation Authority		<u>326,230</u>	
		686,000	

Please find enclosed a revised Map 9.1, which indicates the property that has been purchased since our original application.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Yours very truly,




[Handwritten signature of Ronald D. Fox]

Ronald D. Fox,
Secretary-Treasurer,
Grand River Conservation Authority.

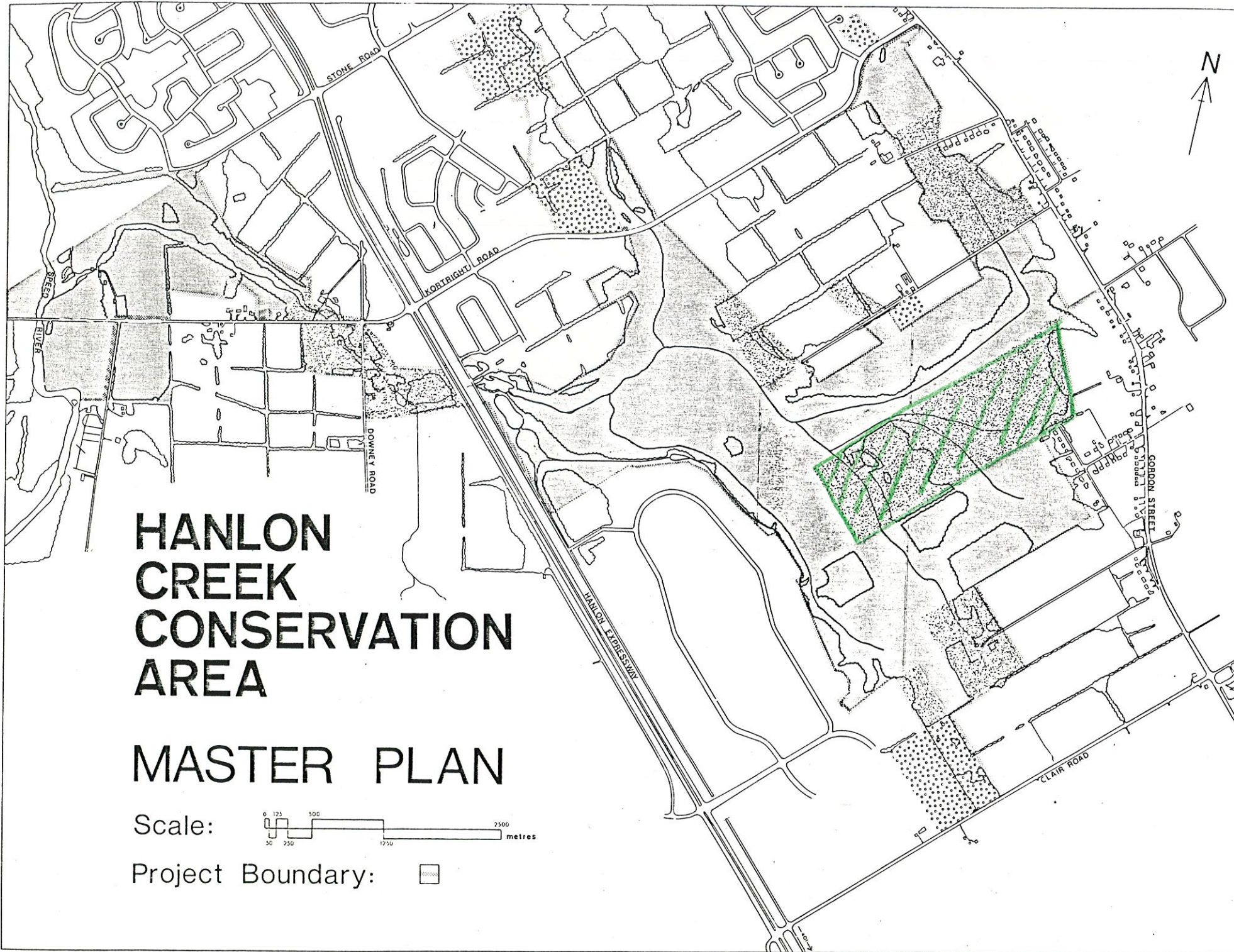
Enclosure

RDF/ph

Proposed land acquisition

-  To be acquired
-  G.R.C.A. property
-  City property

In a program of wetland and open space acquisition, the unprotected lands necessary to the project, totalling 79 ha, will be purchased or obtained through land exchanges and open space dedications associated with urban development. The estimated cost of land acquisition is \$585,390.



COMMENTS ON GRCA DRAFT CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY

Hugh Whiteley October 4 2024

Importance of conservation lands in providing access to nature

One of the Mandatory Programs and Services that the GRCA is required to conduct is to provide the public with locations for nature-based recreation.

The importance of contact with nature to the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals and communities is increasingly recognized on the international, national, provincial and municipal scale.

Internationally the World Health Organization has published a study on the beneficial impact of easy access to green and blue spaces on mental health (Green and Blue Spaces and Mental Health – WMO 2021).

The December 2022 Montreal Conference of Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity agreed on the Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework which includes, in Target 12, the objective “improving human health and well-being and connection to nature” through “Significant increase (in) the area and quality and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely-populated areas”.

Nationally, Parks Canada has plans for eleven new urban parks “to conserve and restore nature in cities, help protect cities from the impacts of climate change, provide access to nature close to where people live, conserve and share cultural heritage, and advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.”

In Ontario the provinces’ first provincial urban nature park was opened July 1 2024. The Minister of Environment Conservation and Parks stated that “With 83 per cent of Ontario’s growing population located in urban centres, it is imperative that we build more provincial parks closer to home..... I look forward to working with our partners to protect and expand green spaces for future generations to enjoy”

Defects in Draft Conservation Areas Strategy

The current draft has three large defects. First it fails to emphasize the current consensus among all levels of government of the need for expanding the area and

accessibility of green and blue areas in or near urban municipalities. Secondly it fails to mention how the GRCA will co-ordinate its conservation lands strategy with similar efforts at the municipal provincial and federal level. (It is noteworthy that while ten other Conservation Authorities benefitted from provincial grants under the \$31 million provincial Wetlands Conservation Partner Program the GRCA did not participate).

Thirdly the Draft Strategy fails to mention the status of the multi million dollar Hanlon Creek Conservation Area – a joint GRCA-City of Guelph project that was intended to provide access to nature over 845 acres of river valleyland and is, instead, currently abandoned by both the City and the GRCA.

Corrections needed in Draft Conservation Areas Strategy

- (1) The strategy should emphasize more clearly the importance of contact with nature as the health giving basis of outdoor recreation. Several places in the draft there is mention of “outdoor recreation”. This phrase should not appear by itself but always be accompanied by “in natural settings”.
- (2) The Strategy must include a commitment of the GRCA to organize a watershed-wide consultation process to set targets for the provision of lands giving access to nature and to allocate responsibility for meeting these targets among all stakeholders. The model for this form of target setting is the process used to establish the management
- (3) plan for protecting water quality in the Grand River Waters.
- (4) The Strategy should clearly state that the criteria for identifying land suitable for nature-based recreation is different from the criteria used to identify land units for Natural Heritage designation. The suitability of land for nature-based recreation is determined largely by its attractiveness, a criterion that is not considered in determining Natural Heritage designation. Natural Heritage Designation depends on the presence of undisturbed natural features and appearance is not considered. People access nature through beauty and find beauty in many more settings than qualify for Natural Heritage Designation.
- (5) The Strategy must include a commitment to complete the establishment of the Hanlon Creek Conservation Area as a joint City of Guelph-GRCA project

with the Niska Lands restored as the core property of the HCCA as set out in the adopted Master Plan for the HCCA.