

## **ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT CONSERVATION AREAS STRATEGY**

**Submission to GRCA Board by Hugh Whiteley Oct 25 2024**

**The Conservation Areas Strategy being considered for approval by the Board correctly notes that one of the Mandatory obligations the GRCA must meet is to obtain and maintain properties that provide access to nature.**

**The importance of opportunities to experience nature to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of individuals, and society as a whole, is widely recognized on an international, national, provincial and municipal scale as I documented in my submission to GRCA staff.**

**As an indication of the importance attached by the provincial government to expanding access to nature the Minister of Environment Conservation and Parks recently 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”.**

**While the draft Conservation Areas Strategy recognizes the need for the GRCA to provide expanding opportunities for connections to nature as the watershed population continues to increase the Strategy does not include a target for the amount of increase needed. In contrast the TRCA’s Strategy calls for an average addition of 80 ha per year of green and blue spaces for the 5 million population in the TRCA watersheds. An appropriate target for the GRCA would be 20 ha/y.**

**In addition to having an annual target the GRCA should provide suitable recognition of the urgent need to expand access to nature on Conservation Lands by including a commitment to complete within two years the formal designation of, and full access to, the 766 acres of the Hanlon Creek Conservation Lands already owned by the GRCA and defined in the GRCA Ledger FP14 FLOOD PLAIN -GUELPH Hanlon Creek lands (as attached).**

**Thank you for your attention to this submission.**