

Grand River Conservation Authority

Report number: GM-03-25-23

Date: March 28, 2025

To: Members of the Grand River Conservation Authority

Subject: Canadian Heritage River Report 2014-2024

Recommendation:

THAT Report Number GM-03-25-23 – Canadian Heritage River Report 2014-2024 be received as information;

AND THAT the 2014-2024 Monitoring Report for the Grand River be submitted to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board for review.

Summary:

The Grand River Conservation Authority has prepared a 10-year monitoring report for submission to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. The report describes how management and celebration of the Grand River's cultural heritage, natural heritage, and river-based recreation are evolving. While the GRCA's actions and activities are included, the reports are broad, documenting available information from many organizations and sources. Submission of the report is required to maintain the Canadian Heritage River designation.

Report:

The naming of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River was a collaborative achievement of the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), federal and provincial agencies, municipalities, Six Nations of the Grand River, community groups, and notable heritage property owners and river outfitters.

To maintain the designation, every 10 years the GRCA submits a monitoring report to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board (CHRB). The report describes how management and celebration of the Grand River's cultural heritage, natural heritage, and river-based recreation are evolving. While the GRCA's actions and activities are included, the reports are broad, documenting available information from many organizations and sources. Previous 10-year monitoring reports were submitted in 2004 and 2014.

The monitoring report follows a template prescribed by the CHRB. The report was developed with input from individuals, municipalities, First Nations, and nongovernmental organizations that work to steward the Grand River. Information was gathered at workshops and meetings and from websites, reports, an online survey, and annual monitoring reports prepared by the GRCA.

The GRCA also partnered with the University of Waterloo's interdisciplinary Collaborative Water Program to help identify changes, trends, and threats to the river's heritage. Nineteen graduate students from engineering to economics programs synthesized information from academic and other sources to comment on heritage values. The students were joined in a café style forum on October 30, 2024, by more than twenty experts from conservation authorities, academia, regional tourism organizations, trails organizations, cultural groups, and First Nations communities.

The report is included as Appendix A and will be submitted for CHRB review by March 31, 2025. As the largest watershed in Southern Ontario, spanning parts of 38 municipalities and two First Nations, there are countless actions taken by individuals and organizations each year that

contribute to understanding, interpreting, celebrating, and conserving the heritage of the Grand River and its tributaries. The report describes new directions and milestones over the past decade, including growing Indigenous cultural awareness, enhancements in recreational infrastructure and user experiences, and recognition of milestone anniversaries of seminal flooding events in the Grand River, including the 70th anniversary of Hurricane Hazel and 50th anniversary of the 1974 Great Flood.

Heritage Plaques

On September 26, 1994, a plaque was unveiled in Cambridge to commemorate the designation. Other plaques were installed in communities along the tributaries: Conestogo River (St. Jacobs), Nith River (New Hamburg), Speed River (Guelph) and Eramosa River (Township of Guelph-Eramosa). The Speed and Eramosa plaques have since been lost due to theft.

The GRCA has worked with Six Nations of the Grand River, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board to update the English version of the plaque text and translate it into French, Mohawk, and Ojibwe. New plaques with all four languages are being fabricated to replace the missing Speed River and Eramosa River plaques and are expected to be installed in 2025.

Financial Implications:

Maintenance of the Canadian Heritage River designation is a Category 3 (non-mandatory) program. Preparation of the monitoring report was supported by a \$5,000 grant from the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and deferred funds from previous years' heritage river activities. The CHRB is having the new plaques fabricated at its expense.

Other Department Considerations:

Staff from the Water Resources, Strategic Communications, Conservation Lands and Conservation Areas departments contributed to the monitoring report.

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Approved by:

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