



STRATEGIC PLAN

2015 - 2020

A Roadmap for the Future | Sharing the Road... Sharing the Journey



Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) is leading the way in watershed innovation, adaptation and resilience.

At the GRCA, we are committed to the Ganaraska Region Watershed. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure that the special spaces and places that make the Ganaraska Region so unique remain intact for others to enjoy.

The GRCA Strategic Plan – Vision 2020 – documents our strategic organizational commitments. It builds on our legacy of conservation heritage as it charts a path forward for the next five years and beyond.

Vision 2020 illuminates important emerging areas of strategic priority and sets a course for ambitious, innovative and bold watershed management.

From All of Us at the GRCA
Staff and Board Members

AMBITION

INNOVATIVE

BOLD

STRONG | CLEAR DIRECTION | GRCA



Vision 2020 is our plan for the future. It identifies the key initiatives that GRCA will undertake to ensure that the Ganaraska Region Watershed remains a lasting legacy for years to come.

At the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority we are committed to conserving, restoring and managing the resources of the Ganaraska Region Watershed. We want current and future generations to be aware of the proud history that surrounds us.

For us at the GRCA, we believe that there is no place like the Ganaraska Region on Earth. A unique blend of urban and rural, young and old, pristine and in need of restoration, the Ganaraska Region Watershed displays its rich history and special past. It is, in truth, imprinted on each of us who live, work and recreate here and in turn, it is imprinted by all who have left their mark.

Since our inception in 1946 as one of Ontario's earliest Conservation Authorities, we have been working with our watershed municipalities, government partners, community members, organized stakeholders and individual land owners to protect people and property from flooding and erosion, improve water quality, provide advice and guidance on municipal planning matters and provide educational and recreational opportunities across local watersheds.

We are proud of our achievements and we remain committed to accomplishing more. We are home to the Ganaraska Forest Centre, a thriving and well respected outdoor educational facility that has inspired a sense of ecological understanding in our young people. The Ganaraska Forest stands as a testament to our history and the important role we played in the early days of ecological restoration in Ontario. We have come a long way since those early days. We have invested in information technology and currently offer a high standard of data collection, management and sharing – a commitment that we will continue to make. We have stewardship and monitoring programs that are valued across our watershed and beyond and, perhaps uniquely, we have staff with a generational history and personal connection to the watershed. We must remain strategic, proactive and focused on tomorrow if future generations are to experience and explore their connections to our watersheds.

Just as we invite you to find your place in the watershed, we also invite you to find your place in this Strategic Plan...imagine the possibilities...

WHY DOES IT MATTER?



The Ganaraska Region Watershed provides essential environmental benefits and is a vital economic driver for the municipalities that call the local watersheds home.

The Ganaraska Region Watershed is facing a number of challenges.

Pressures from Urbanization
Ecosystem Changes
Environmental Uncertainty
Concerns with Environmental Health, Human Health and Wellness

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority is similarly facing a number of challenges:

A Changing Watershed
Increasingly Complex Watershed Issues



Competition for Fiscal Resources **Attracting and Keeping Good Staff**

The Watershed Is Our Home. It is important to take care of the places and spaces that matter. Our health and our well-being depend on it.

GRCA has an important management role to ensure the long-term vitality and resilience of the watershed through research, partnerships, stewardship, wise decision making and leadership.

This Strategic Plan presents a strategic set of solutions to the challenges facing the watersheds and efforts to manage these challenges. It identifies a number of important actions that are needed to ensure the watershed remains a healthy and special place...for all of us.

This Strategic Plan builds a roadmap for the future – one we hope will inspire you to come along on our journey to ensure the Ganaraska Region Watershed remains vibrant, resilient and truly remarkable.



BEING THE BEST

Here at the GRCA, we are driven to be the best watershed management agency, responsible for managing the best watersheds.

Being the best means providing quality service, every day, everywhere. It means making decisions that are based on the best science and being committed to continuous improvement, innovation and learning, including learning from others and sharing our knowledge. Being the best means that the GRCA is known as a great place to work and to volunteer. It means that GRCA is a policy shaper and leader; an organization that charts a course for others to follow. Being the best means that we lead by example and inspire others to action.

As one of the founders of watershed based conservation in Ontario, our past is unique and special. So too is our future. We remain the passionate pioneers – the explorers, the learners, the leaders and the innovators, never satisfied with what is and always considering what could be.

Our ability as an organization to remain at the leading edge necessitates that we **advance science**; that we **explore and connect with others**; that we **innovate and inspire others by being the trusted watershed leader**; and that we continue to **evolve as an organization**.



Goals:

Explore | Advance Science Learn | Educate and Connect
Lead | Innovate and Inspire Evolve | Invest In Ourselves

A scenic view of a river with large rocks and autumn foliage in the background. The river flows through a rocky landscape, with water splashing over the stones. The background is filled with trees showing vibrant autumn colors in shades of yellow, orange, and red. A green horizontal band is overlaid on the top half of the image, containing white text.

A Shared Roadmap for Today, Tomorrow and Beyond.



OUR SHARED VISION

In 1992, in its first Conservation Strategy, GRCA and the watershed community developed a vision for the region. It encompassed four components: Leadership in Advocacy, Leadership in Stewardship, Partnership in Conservation Learning and Living, and Economic Self-Reliance. The vision was updated in 1999 to reflect the importance of place and community, and the important inter-relationships that we have with one another and to the natural world. Building on the 1999 vision, a new Vision has been developed.

Our new vision statement continues to draw the important connection between a healthy watershed and healthy, strong sustainable communities.

Vision Statement

Clean water healthy land for healthy communities.

OUR MISSION

Our new mission builds on and reflects the important responsibility GRCA has in enhancing and conserving local watersheds. It reflects the important roles GRCA has in serving its constituents and partners, educating communities and community members, informing and advising and promoting collaboration and partnership through engagement.

Mission Statement

To enhance and conserve across the Ganaraska Region Watershed by serving, educating, informing and engaging.

OUR SHARED VALUES

As an organization, we value knowledge, collaboration, excellence and innovation.

Explore = Knowledge

Learn = Collaboration

Lead = Excellence

Evolve = Innovation

To Explore is to Value Knowledge: Knowledge has power. We value up to date knowledge and the wisdom of our staff and others. We are committed to working with others to build knowledge through research and information sharing.

To Learn is to Value Collaboration: We value the input of others. We listen and we learn from those who have an interest in how we carry out our responsibilities. We are a solution-focused organization. We promote teamwork because we value our partners and our partnerships.

To Lead is to Value Excellence: We value honesty, openness and accountability. We will focus on being accountable to ourselves and to one another. We are committed to service and business excellence and we will be driven to earn the trust of those we serve.

To Evolve is to Value Innovation: Innovation comes from knowledge and critical thinking. Leading edge organizations are those that emphasize learning and focus on what they can do to foster a culture of innovation. We encourage innovation in order to continuously improve.





STRATEGIC POSITIONING

For our partners who are looking to the GRCA for effective and responsible watershed leadership, we will provide:

- consistent and predictable regulatory oversight;
- sound science-based information, advice and guidance to land owners, stakeholders and our partners;
- valuable and responsible advocacy on watershed-related matters of interest;
- leading edge information and knowledge about the watersheds; and,
- opportunities for watershed residents to become more directly connected to the watersheds.

We will achieve this through an organizational culture that is supported by competent staff, an enthusiastic and informed Board of Directors and engaged and inspired public.

Explore

Strengthen Science and Knowledge
Protect and Restore
Build Resilience

Goal:

To develop greater knowledge of our changing watershed landscape by:

- strengthening science, knowledge and decision making,
- valuing local watersheds through conservation and restoration,
- supporting healthy, sustainable communities, and,
- building watershed resilience.

We will...



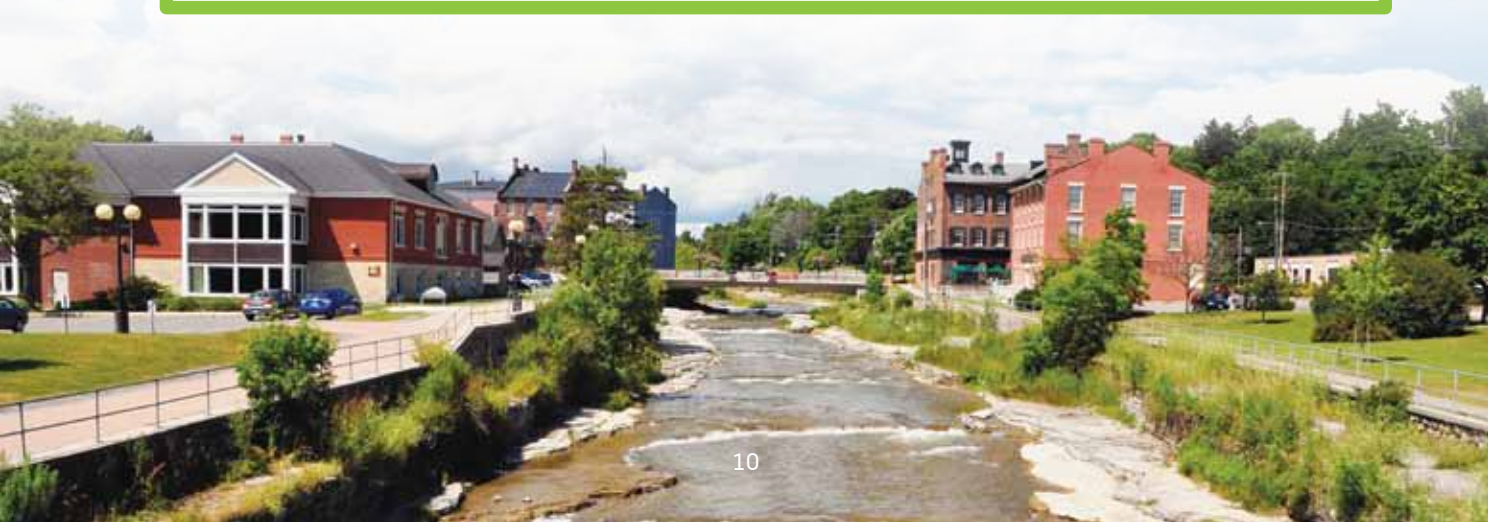
By...

Strengthen Science, Knowledge and Decision Making

- Being a learning organization, valuing science and the knowledge of others.
- Advancing science-based decision making.
- Advancing research and monitoring.
- Enhancing information management.
- Addressing our knowledge gaps.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Carry out environmental scanning and trend line analysis (trend tracking, jurisdictional good practices review);
- Address critical science-based information and knowledge gaps (e.g. groundwater, surface water, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems);
- Enhance the existing baseline of standardized watershed information to inform planning decisions and program development;
- Improve long-term datasets to evaluate trends in watershed health;
- Invest in information technology and information management systems resources to enhance current programs and share information particularly with municipal partners.



We will...



By...

Value the Watershed through Protection and Restoration

- Valuing our natural capital – natural asset value.
- Implementing watershed protection and restoration directed from management plans/strategies and monitoring data.
- Improving watershed health through restoration and conservation.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Develop a Conservation Lands Strategy;
- Develop a Lands Acquisition Strategy;
- Advance best practice watershed planning (Low Impact Development, Urban Intensification) and natural land use protection and restoration;
- Utilize management plans and monitoring data to guide conservation and restoration;
- Develop a Forest Management Strategy for the Gananaska Forest;
- Develop a Forest Recreation Strategy for the Gananaska Forest.

We will...



By...

Support Sustainable, Healthy Communities

- Minimizing risk to people and property from natural hazards.
- Aligning with community priorities.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Explore new opportunities to position GRCA programs in urbanized areas;
- Explore new opportunities to link watershed health to human health;
- Explore opportunities to improve permitting and planning approvals process with watershed municipalities;
- Actively contact watershed communities to better understand emerging issues, concerns and needs.



We will...

Build Watershed Resilience



By...

- Monitoring environmental change (climate crisis).
- Promoting mitigation and advancing innovative adaptation.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Develop and implement a Climate Change Strategy for the Ganaraska Region Watershed;
- Create and promote a climate change strategy to green GRCA Operations and leading by example;
- Implement the Terrestrial Natural Heritage Strategy.



Learn

Partnerships
Collaboration
Connections

Goal:

To create watershed-based connections and promote collaboration by:

- strengthening existing partnerships,
- build new partnership opportunities,
- sharing information and learning, and,
- creating connections.

We will...



By...

Strengthen Existing Partnerships

- Providing support to partner-led initiatives.
- Examining the application of GRCA's stewardship model to other business areas.
- Exploring our current service delivery model and consider new partnership opportunities.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Explore opportunities to enhance existing partnerships and collaborations.

We will...



By...

Build New Partner Opportunities

- Meeting with traditional and non-traditional partners to explore the possibilities for mutual gain.
- Partnering with others to deliver value-added programs.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Explore opportunities to partner with:
 - other Conservation Authorities to share resources, services, information, knowledge;
 - our municipal partners;
 - other government agencies;
 - the farming community;
 - the development sector;
 - academic institutions and Boards of Education;
 - Non-Governmental Organizations;
 - the public;
- Explore opportunities to expand the Clean Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program at the municipal level;
- Connect with partners who are advancing sustainable environmental practices;
- Explore reciprocal promotional opportunities;
- Continue to foster Municipal, Regional and County level connections.

We will...



By...

Promote Information Sharing and Learning

- Communicating and profiling good practices.
- Encouraging partners to promote GRCA programs and services.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Work with the development industry to implement good practices;
- Work with the agricultural sector to implement good practices;
- Explore reciprocal promotional opportunities.

We will...



By...

Create Connections

- Connecting people to the Ganaraska Region Watershed.
- Providing an opportunity for land owners to network.
- Supporting a culture of watershed stewards.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Launch a targeted public awareness campaign to increase the visibility and understanding of the GRCA and the Ganaraska Region Watershed;
- Pursue opportunities for community-based working groups and committees;
- Offer enhanced programming to appeal to a diversity of stakeholders and interest groups;
- Explore opportunities to market the Ganaraska Forest Centre with tourism opportunities to foster new and enhanced connections across the watershed and beyond;
- Develop a Comprehensive Volunteer Strategy and tap into the spectrum of volunteers;
- Promote behavioural change by using language that engages citizens;
- Develop communications that deliver a key message and draw connections between watershed health and human health.



Lead

Influence
Inspire
Innovate

Goal:

- To be the trusted regional watershed leader.
- To be a responsible watershed advocate, shaping policy, promoting innovation and inspiring others to action.

We will be...



By...

Responsible Watershed-Based Advocates

- Speaking for the watershed on issues that matter in a way that advances a positive contribution and accountability.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Participate in specific municipally, provincially and/or federally led planning initiatives on critical issues that affect the watershed (e.g. Oak Ridges Moraine, Environmental Assessment process review, etc.);
- Support initiatives and policies that conserve and improve the health of the Ganaraska Region Watershed;
- Identify emerging issues related to GRCA mandate and responsibilities.

We will be...



By...

Policy Shapers and Innovators

- Working with partners to enhance policy effectiveness, efficiency and value.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Work with Conservation Ontario and others to advance policy positions on critical issues of concern to the GRCA;
- Monitor policies and legislation of particular interest across the watershed.

We will...



By...

Foster Support and Improved Understanding

- Increasing general understanding of the role and value of the GRCA and the importance of the Ganaraska Region Watershed.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Communicate the overall economic, environmental and socio-cultural value of GRCA to watershed municipalities by incorporating municipal-specific benefits derived from the GRCA advocacy and program delivery;
- Communicate GRCA accomplishments including the extent of GRCA interactions with other organizations and government partners across the watershed.



Evolve

Adapt
Advance
Improve

Goal:

- To be leaders and to continue to evolve as a watershed management organization.
- To deliver top quality service and to work with others to make positive watershed-wide changes.

We will be...



By...

Adaptive, Responsive and
Organizationally Strategic

- Managing our fiscal and human resources responsibly.
- Anticipating organizational challenges and addressing these in a proactive and strategic manner.
- Being a leader in technological innovation.
- Using technology to advantage and investing in information technology.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Develop a Funding Strategy to address long term financial sustainability of the organization;
- Develop a Staff Recruitment and Retention Strategy;
- Develop a Succession Planning Strategy;
- Develop a Knowledge Transfer Strategy;
- Build internal capacity through a continued commitment to professional development, based on existing and emerging needs;
- Explore new business areas for GRCA;
- Continue to invest in technology;
- Develop an Information Management Strategy.

We will be...

Customer-Focused and Service Driven



By...

- Delivering quality service every day, everywhere.

Specific Strategic Actions

- Develop customer service standards;
- Provide opportunities for customer service feedback on GRCA programs and programming;
- Report annually on customer service levels and feedback;
- Continue to improve the GRCA website and explore the application of social media;
- Develop a comprehensive Communication Strategy to explore opportunities to enhance communication both within the organization and with our partners and clients.



GRCA...Exploring, Learning, Leading and Evolving...
The Ganaraska Region Watershed



A Roadmap for the Future
Sharing the Road...
Sharing the Journey



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We invite you to follow our progress

www.grca.on.ca