



Leading the Way

A Roadmap to the Future



Vision 2020 - A Review that Illuminates the Future Summary of Accomplishments 2015-2020





Where We've Come From



In 2015, the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) published its *Strategic Plan – Vision 2020*. The Plan documents our strategic organizational commitments and builds on our legacy of conservation and watershed managers while charting a path forward over five years (2015-2020) and beyond. The Strategic Plan was created over two years and involved a comprehensive consultation process with the GRCA Board of Directors, GRCA staff, member municipalities, partners, stakeholders and the public.

This implementation report summarizes our accomplishments and will allow for reflection while determining how to continue this momentum into the future, while at the same time navigating the uncertainty imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following summary identifies the four values and their accompanying goals stated in the Strategic Plan and celebrates the accomplishments across all departments of the GRCA under the leadership of the GRCA Board of Directors.

Thank you for taking this journey with us and we look forward to sharing the path forward.

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CAO/Secretary-Treasurer
Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority

Jeff Lees
Chair
GRCA Board of Directors

Vision

Clean water, healthy land for healthy communities.

Mission

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



Explore

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



Goal 1: We Will Strengthen Science and Knowledge and Decision Making

- Continue to advance watershed monitoring programming for all scientific disciplines by working towards full implementation of and reporting on the *Ganaraska Region Watershed Monitoring Plan, 2014*. This work includes conducting climate projections up to the year 2100 using an ensemble model approach.
- Published the *Ganaraska Monitoring Report* and the *Ganaraska Watershed Report Card, 2018*.
- Undertook various flood management and storm water projects with member municipalities, including the Clarington Flood Risk Assessment, Clarington Flood Damage Reduction Study, and the Cobourg Storm Sewer Capacity Analysis.
- Updated the *Lake Ontario Shoreline Management Plan* which is to be completed in 2020.
- Created and will continue to create various web based Geographic Information System (GIS) applications for all GRCA departments. These tools allow key decision-making using GIS data layers and imagery that is easily and readily available to GRCA staff.
- To support the web based GIS applications, the development of a data model to allow for automated data storage, staff expert review and verification, and display of data in the applications is underway.
- To support GRCA land management, ongoing development of a forest management database and applications that informs and supports multi-use forest management strategies and decision-making is underway.
- Completed multi-year flood management pilot projects funded by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Works published and presented at Provincial technical transfer conferences and workshops, including *Automated Building Base Elevation Extraction for Assessing Risk*, *Laser Scanning For Shoreline Erosion*, and *The Fabric Approach: Assess and Advance Large Scale Base Mapping Processes*.

Goal 2: We Will Value the Watershed through Protection and Restoration

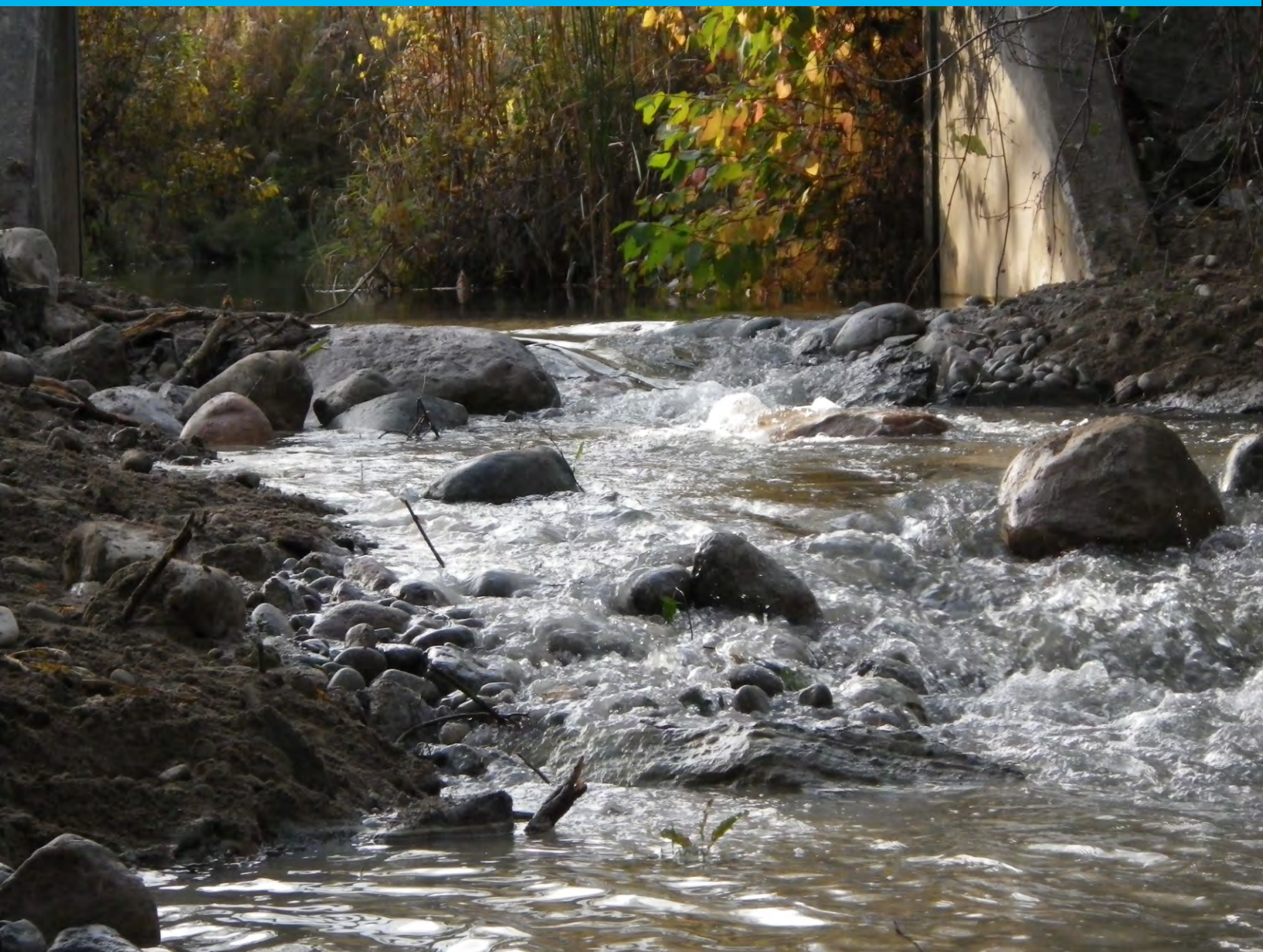
- Updated the *Ganaraska Forest Management Plan* in 2017 which included a forest recreation component.
- Undertook a *Conservation Areas Review* in 2016 with implementation actions such as invasive species removal (phragmites and wild parsnip) and forest management in conservation areas.
- Ongoing implementation of the Clean Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program to enhance, protect and restore local watersheds in partnership with residents and community groups. During this 5-year period, 191 projects were supported throughout local watersheds.
- Continue to promote the use and implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) in development applications, municipal projects and on private property. Staff continually educating themselves on LID techniques.

Goal 3: We Will Support Sustainable, Healthy Communities

- The GRCA is continually improving the Clean Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program to better support stewardship in urban areas.
- Under the scope of Drinking Water Source Protection, ongoing messaging of the importance of healthy watersheds and their relationship to sustainable and quality drinking water occurs.
- The GRCA continues to work in partnership with member municipalities to enhance natural features in public spaces, as well as promote active lifestyles within these greenspaces.

Goal 4: We Will Build Watershed Resilience

- In 2016, GRCA staff assisted in the creation of the *Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan*. Staff actively participate in its implementation through various taskforces established by the Regional Municipality of Durham.
- In order to better understand our carbon footprint, the GRCA undertook a corporate *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory* in 2020.
- The GRCA continues to implement actions contained in the *GRCA Climate Change Strategy, 2014* while also supporting member municipalities in their climate change initiatives.
- Landscape restoration through tree planting and habitat enhancement is ongoing and follows recommendations contained in the *GRCA Terrestrial Natural Heritage Strategy, 2013*. During this 5-year period over 280,000 trees were planted within local watersheds and beyond; equivalent to 404 acres of newly planted land.
- GRCA forest and recreation management projects are continually implemented to build resilience within the Ganaraska Forest. Projects such as underplanting in forest compartments, invasive species management, tallgrass prairie restoration and headwater stream protection have occurred.





Learn

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.



Goal 1: We Will Strengthen Existing Partnerships

- Continue to build existing partnerships with member municipalities and Conservation Authorities to undertake mutual benefiting projects related to GIS and remote sensing, climate change initiatives, asset management, and hazard mapping related to the Lake Ontario shoreline and riverine floodplains.
- Increased collaboration with existing stewardship partnerships and, where possible, created Memorandum of Understandings in order to foster increased participation and accountability.
- Ongoing relationship building with the academic community in effort to promote increased undergraduate and graduate studies involving local watersheds and to the benefit of scientific and empirical understanding.
- Continue to build and foster relationships with private organizations and non-governmental organizations to improve watershed management and education programming.
- Continue to work with Federal and Provincial departments and ministries to collect data and deliver watershed monitoring programs.
- Various land management partnership agreements have been renewed or developed allowing for collaborative and resource sharing partnership opportunities to manage GRCA lands, enhance recreational opportunities and learn from one another.
- Continue to expand partnerships with various Provincial, Federal, and municipal governments through ongoing committee work pertaining to flood management, geospatial modeling and data acquisition.

Goal 2: We Will Build New Partnership Opportunities

- The GRCA entered into a new partnership with the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks and academics institutions to increase monitoring on Gages Creek as part of a Multi-Watershed Nutrient Study.
- Assisted in the establishment of a new Stewardship Collaborative in 2019 – Quinte Farm Research and Stewardship Collaborative - to advance farm environmental research and stewardship activities within the GRCA and the east-central region.
- Established a new partnership with the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign, whereby their staff person works out of the GRCA and provides extra support to the tree planning division of the Clean Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program.
- GRCA staff participated in the Natural Environment Climate Change Collaborative and Flooding Group established through the implementation phase of the *Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan*.
- New partnerships are being fostered through Kawartha – Peterborough Seed Strategy and other tree seed initiatives with the Forest Gene Conservation Association in order to utilize seed from the Ganaraska Forest for tree stock development.
- The Ganaraska Forest Centre Outdoor Education Program developed a new partnership with local school boards to offer the Specialized High Skill Major program (SHSM) to secondary school students.
- The Ganaraska Forest Recreational Program established a new partnership with Universal Protection Agency to assist in education and enforcing forest use regulations.
- A new ESRI ArcGIS Online Organization was implemented to support GIS/GPS technology use in programming offered through the Ganaraska Forest Centre Outdoor Education Program.
- Established strategic partnerships with Provincial and municipal governments to facilitate cost effective remote sensing large scale data acquisition to support shared core business areas.

Goal 3: We Will Promote Information Sharing and Learning

- Improved messaging when issuing flood bulletins and low water advisories to residents. This included the adoption of new Lake Ontario flood message terminology that is consistent with partners and neighbouring Conservation Authorities.
- Ongoing education and engagement with private landowners through the GRCA Clean Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program.
- Engagement with the real-estate community to provide information on wells, septics, source water protection and regulations.
- Ongoing engagement with stewardship partners to promote two-way sharing of information on social media platforms.
- Continually entering into a new partnerships with recreational user groups to provide education regarding recreational uses in the Ganaraska Forest.
- Through GRCA information management improvements, staff have the ability to share data with partners and the public as client to web services. This approach allows access to the most up to date information, as well as reducing the staff time necessary to respond to data requests.
- The GRCA GIS department continues to work with the local interest groups to support grassroots programs that provide technology and data access to local high school students so they can provide potential solutions to local issues such as food security.
- Conducted technical knowledge transfer of GIS and remote sensing work at various Provincial and Federal conferences and workshops.
- Completed focused in-house GIS and surveying training with other Conservation Authorities and Provincial entities.
- Assisted multiple Conservation Authorities in modernizing and building capacity around GIS and geospatial information management
- Assisted multiple Conservation Authorities in setting up and implementing flood mapping programs.

Goal 4: We Will Create Connections

- The GRCA created a *Volunteer Strategy, 2019* and formalized the volunteer enrolment and engagement process.
- GRCA staff actively participate in collaborative workshops, tours and webinars to broaden engagement opportunities with stakeholders and the public. This includes attending or hosting working group meetings with member municipalities to encourage knowledge and resource sharing.
- In order to advance geomatics and remote sensing programming, relationships continue to be fostered with province-wide academic institutions.
- Create connections with industry leaders in remote sensing data acquisition and advanced geospatial analysis.





Lead

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 will be driven to earn the trust of those we serve.



Goal 1: We Will Be Responsible Watershed-Based Advocates

- The GRCA Clean-Water-Healthy Land Stewardship Program actively promotes or supports regional, Provincial and Federal initiatives that benefit the local watersheds and residents.
- The GRCA collaborates with local, Provincial, and Federal organizations for the benefit of increased watershed management opportunities.
- Ongoing collaboration occurs with member municipalities when those municipalities undertake official plan reviews and amendments, most recently Northumberland County's Official Plan and Envision Durham.
- Incorporated efficiency practices into GRCA buildings and maintenance in 2020 through the Hydro One LED lighting and refrigeration programs.

Goal 2: We Will Be Policy Shapers and Innovators

- GRCA frequently comments on postings to the Environmental Registry of Ontario as facilitated by Conservation Ontario.
- In order to advance hazard management locally, GRCA staff worked with the Federal government on Natural Disaster Mitigation Program policies and procedures.
- The GRCA also worked with the Provincial government on behalf of Conservation Ontario to provide input into the advancement of geospatial sciences by way of developing data handling guidelines, as well as assessing and mitigating flooding risk and resiliency.

Goal 3: We Will Foster Support and Improve Understanding

- Worked closely with member municipalities to advise on development related issues (e.g., flooding and erosion hazards, natural heritage, stormwater management).





Evolve

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 continually improve.



Goal 1: We Will Be Adaptive, Responsive and Organizationally Strategic

- Maintain the importance of training and development to build staff capacity.
- Developed and implemented a *Capital Asset Replacement Plan* and created a revenue stream to fund the Plan.
- Continue to implement an Information Management System (IMS) to support accountable data and information storage and retrieval.
- In preparation of moving forward with an information technology strategy, implemented a high availability server infrastructure and full off-site backup system that protects GRCA data and applications from ongoing security threats, as well as provides support to the disaster recovery plan in regards to access of data to maintain business continuity.
- Continue to address organizational challenges, and manage the organization responsibly both fiscally and through human resources, which is required during COVID-19.
- Developed Nature Nuts School as a new business area during COVID-19 to meet the needs of the local community.

Goal 2: We Will Be Customer- Focused and Service Driven

- Continue to be customer service driven and communicate effectively with the public by ensuring the website is updated, regular newsletters are produced, and social media accounts are monitored regularly.
- Improved planning and regulation department processes to meet timeline standards during permit and application review. This included GRCA staff taking customer service training offered to all Conservation Authorities for increased consistency across the province.
- Enhanced the online Ganaraska Forest membership program to make it easier for customers and to ensure limited contact.
- Automated gatehouse at the Ganaraska Forest Centre to meet customer needs during COVID-19 and in the future.
- To communicate all aspects of GRCA programs and services with members of the public through various social media channels.
- Continue to participate in and provide input into Open Data Systems for Conservation Authorities and member municipalities.
- Drafted GRCA Open Data Policy and Open Data Portal to be implemented in 2021.
- Continue to support municipal partners in applying modern GIS and remote sensing approaches to support specific and unique business requirements.





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