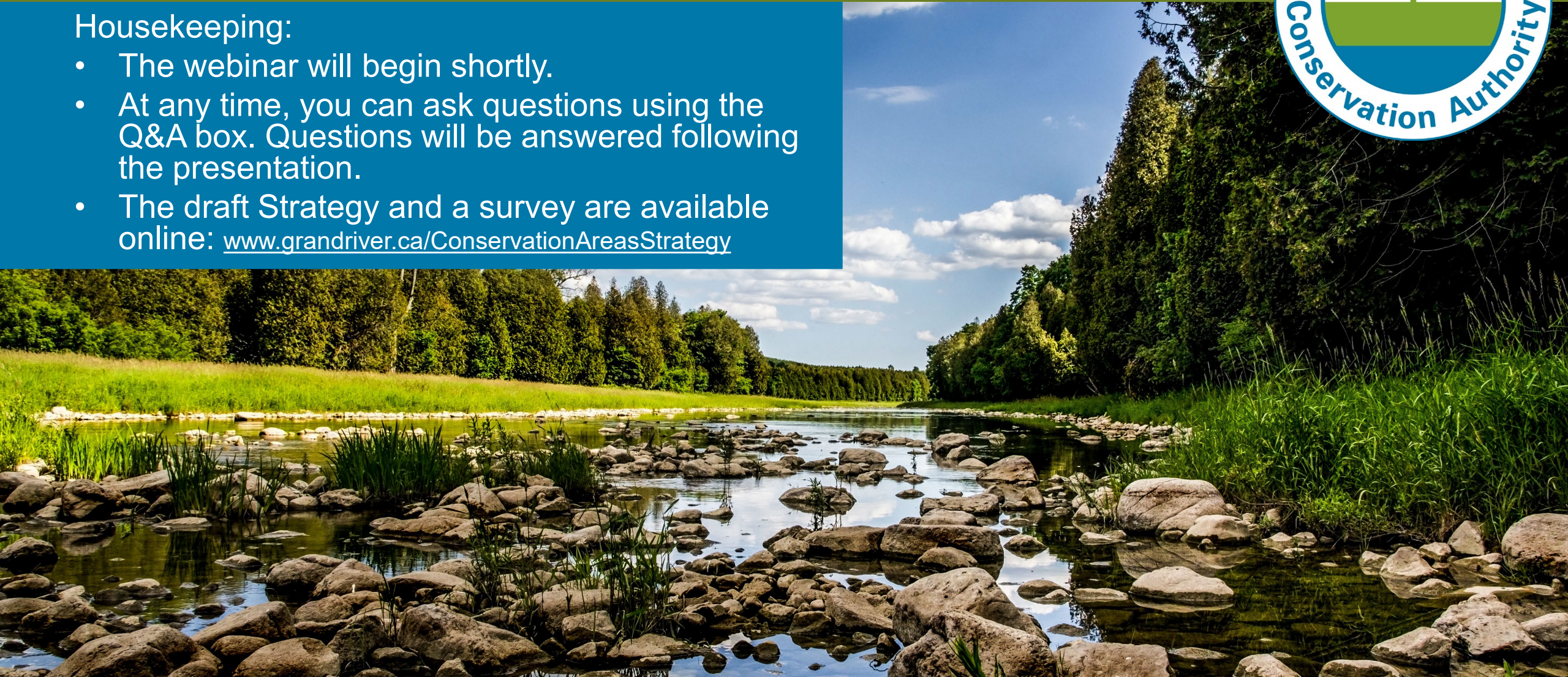


The GRCA's Conservation Areas Strategy



Housekeeping:

- The webinar will begin shortly.
- At any time, you can ask questions using the Q&A box. Questions will be answered following the presentation.
- The draft Strategy and a survey are available online: www.grandriver.ca/ConservationAreasStrategy



Outline

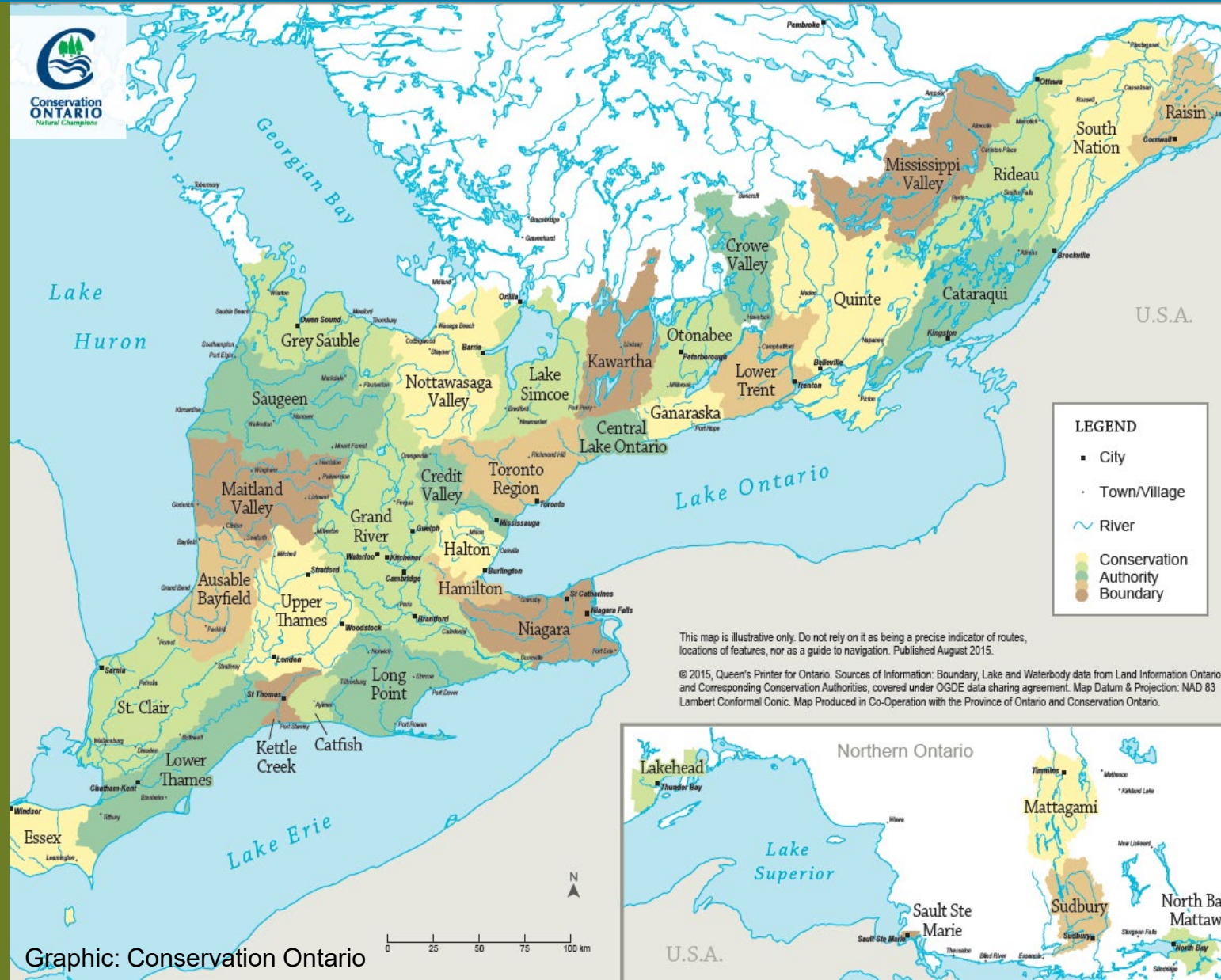
- About conservation authorities
- About the Grand River watershed
- About GRCA Lands
- Conservation Areas Strategy
- Land Use Categories
- Objectives
- Looking forward
- Sharing your feedback



About Conservation Authorities

Conservation Authorities Act

- 36 conservation authorities in Ontario
- Local agencies organized on a watershed basis
- Guided by Boards of Directors appointed by member municipalities



The Grand River Watershed Today

- Largest watershed in southern Ontario, about 6,800 square km
- River flows from Dundalk to Port Maitland on Lake Erie
- 38 municipalities
- 2 First Nations
- Population of about 1 million
- Canadian Heritage River



History of the GRCA and Land Acquisition

Mid 1930s: Grand River Conservation Commission

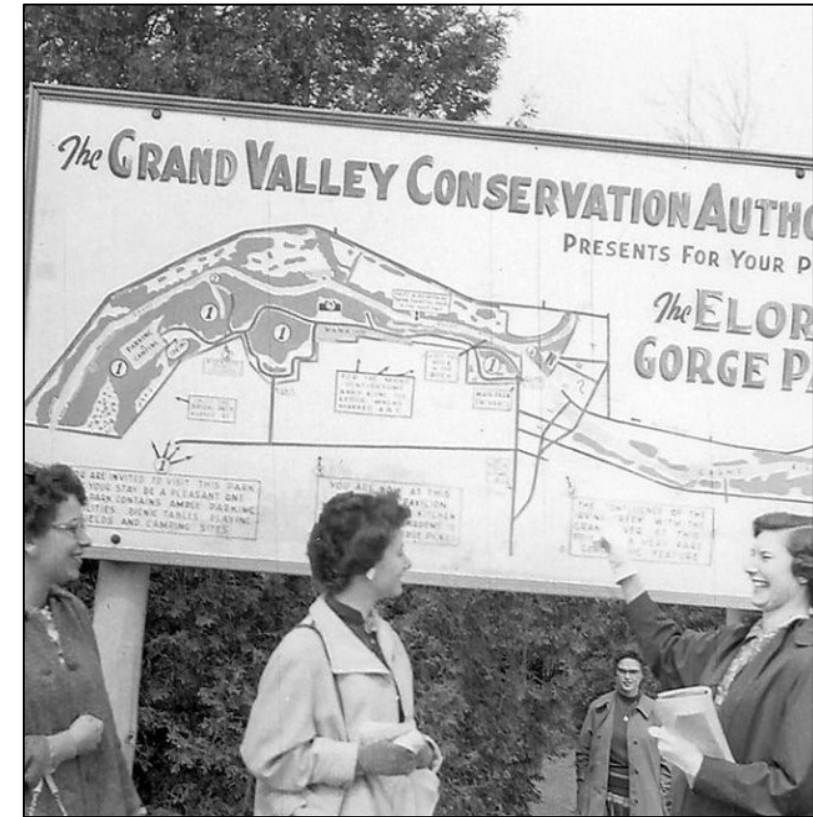
- Lands suitable for reservoir development
-

1948: Grand Valley Conservation Authority

- Lands to conserve and restore environments from impacts of development
 - Also included natural hazard lands and recreation lands
-

1966: Grand River Conservation Authority

- Continued acquiring land for reservoirs, water management projects and recreation



GRCA Landholdings

- The GRCA owns approximately 50,000 acres
- Used to support the GRCA's programs and services:
 - lands for water control infrastructure
 - outdoor recreation
 - environmental education
 - natural areas
 - agricultural and commercial leases
 - rental properties
 - lands under maintenance agreements



Why are we developing a new Strategy?

- Direct programs and resources on all GRCA landholdings
- High-level framework that helps guide and inform decision making on GRCA-owned lands
- Provides future direction and actions to meet objectives
- Satisfy Provincial Regulations



Photo: GRCA/S. Rhodes

Land Use Categories

1. Water Management
2. Conservation Areas
3. Conservation Lands
4. Controlled or Limited Access Area



GRCA Properties

Grand River Conservation Areas:

- Belwood Lake (year-round)
- Brant
- Byng Island
- Conestogo Lake
- Elora Gorge
- Elora Quarry
- Guelph Lake (year-round)
- Laurel Creek (year-round)
- Luther Marsh WMA
- Pinehurst Lake (year-round)
- Rockwood (year-round)
- Shade's Mills (year-round)

Grand River Conservation Lands:

- Dumfries
- FWR Dickson Wilderness Area
- Starkey Hill
- Taquanyah
- Snyder's Flats
- Puslinch Tract
- Woolwich Reservoir
- Elora Cataract Rail Trail
- Brantford to Hamilton Rail Trail
- Cambridge to Paris Rail Trail



GRCA Lands Overview

7 major reservoirs

9.5% in urban boundaries

21 small dams

1200 ac parkland under maintenance agreement

37% used for water management

125 km Conservation Land Trails

75 km of rail trail

22% not open to the public

Objectives of the Strategy

1

Manage GRCA landholdings in compliance with relevant Federal, Provincial and Municipal regulations, policies, and guidelines.

2

Consider ecosystem health and resilience when making land management decisions.

3

Provide sustainable outdoor recreational and educational opportunities and connections with the natural environment.

4

Enhance community partnerships on GRCA properties.

5

Manage GRCA landholdings in a strategic, fiscally responsible, and sustainable way.

Objective 1

Manage GRCA landholdings in compliance with relevant Federal, Provincial and Municipal regulations, policies, and guidelines.

- The GRCA is committed to compliance with regulatory requirements from all levels of government
- Collaborative effort to update processes, integrate changes, and meet timelines
- Review existing procedures and practices to ensure compliance and identify gaps



Objective 2

Consider ecosystem health and resilience when making land management decisions.

- Consider both natural heritage, natural hazards and land for water infrastructure
- Integrates watershed science and ecosystem health
- Adaptive and resilient to climate change and other disturbances

Action items:

- Natural Heritage Restoration Strategy
- Maintenance & Management Plans
- Natural Hazard Infrastructure Asset Management Plan



Objective 3

Provide sustainable outdoor recreational and educational opportunities and connections with the natural environment.

- Connect visitors with the environment and foster an appreciation for nature
- Programs help celebrate ecological diversity of the watershed and experience the benefits of being outdoors
- Environmental + fiscal sustainability

Action Items

- Trail Standards Strategy
- Signage Strategy
- GRCA property asset management plan
- Conservation Area Standard Operating Procedures
- Canadian Heritage River Reporting



Objective 4

Enhance community partnerships on GRCA properties.

- Partnerships that support mutual benefits and alignment with goals and priorities
- Synergistic, collaborative and effective relationships with like-minded organizations
- Increased access to greenspace, economic development and fulfillment of service gaps

Action Items

- Agreement Standards
- Research Permit Process
- Engagement Guidelines



Objective 5

Manage GRCA landholdings in a strategic, fiscally responsible, and sustainable way.

- Rapid land acquisitions throughout 1930-1980s
- Strategic priorities & programs and services have changed overtime
- Land portfolio adapts to changes and evolution of programs
- Priorities set out in GRCA's policies for acquisition and disposition

Action Items

- Residential Tenancy Winddown
- Conservation Area Enforcement Manual
- Conservation Lands Strategy



Looking Forward

- Public and stakeholder consultation
 - Public survey – opportunity for public to provide written comments on the draft strategy
 - 2 webinars – opportunity for the public to hear an overview of the draft strategy and ask questions
- Future: Conservation Areas Strategy to be reviewed every 5 years



Would you like to read or comment on the Strategy?

Survey open until October 4, 2024

www.grandriver.ca/ConservationAreasStrategy

Webinar will also be posted on the website

