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Grand River Source Protection Plan approved

A plan to protect the sources of municipal drinking water in the Grand River watershed has been approved by the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) announced today.

The Grand River Source Protection Plan was approved by Minister Glen Murray on November 26, 2015 and will take effect July 1, 2016. The plan and its associated documents are available at www.sourcewater.ca.

The source protection planning process began in 2006, when the Ontario government passed the Clean Water Act to protect the sources of municipal drinking water throughout the province, and is based on technical studies, collaborative policy development, and extensive public consultation.

The process was guided by the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee, which is made up of representatives from municipalities, business, industry, farmers, landowners, and other stakeholders. The committee also developed plans for the Catfish Creek, Kettle Creek and Long Point Region watersheds.

“Formal approval of the Grand River Source Protection Plan is a major milestone in the Committee’s work with its community, agriculture, industry, conservation authority, municipal and provincial partners to protect and enhance municipal drinking water supplies,” says Wendy Wright Cascaden, Acting Chair, Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee. “We look forward to measuring and monitoring the Plan’s future success.”

She also commended Craig Ashbaugh, former chair of the Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee, as well as staff of the Grand River Conservation Authority. “I wish to formally recognize Craig for his leadership in bringing together all of the partners, shaping the decisions and guiding the planning process over the last eight years,” says Wright Cascaden. “The Source Protection Committee also received excellent support and guidance from the former Program Director, Lorrie Minshall, as well as Martin Keller, Source Protection Program Manager, and their staff. They made significant contributions to the development of an attainable plan and will play a key role in the successful implementation of the Plan in the future. The approved Grand River Source Protection Plan is a considerable achievement that will benefit generations to come.”

The Lake Erie Region Source Protection Committee is continuing its work to address risks to water quantity. These components will be included in a future update to the Grand River Source Protection Plan.

With the approval of the Grand River Source Protection Plan, all 22 source protection plans are now in place across Ontario. Source protection plans are local science-based plans designed to protect the water quality of the lakes, rivers and sources of underground water that supply municipal drinking water systems. The plans set out actions to eliminate, manage or reduce potential risks to drinking water sources.

Policies in the Source Protection Plans include a variety of approaches to manage and prevent risks to municipal drinking water. These approaches include education and outreach, the development of risk management plans, land use planning, and monitoring. The policies are designed to keep contaminants out of rivers, lakes and groundwater aquifers that are sources of municipal drinking water.

The source protection planning process is directed and funded by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change in conjunction with municipalities. Local conservation authorities provide additional technical, communications and administrative support for the source protection planning process.

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