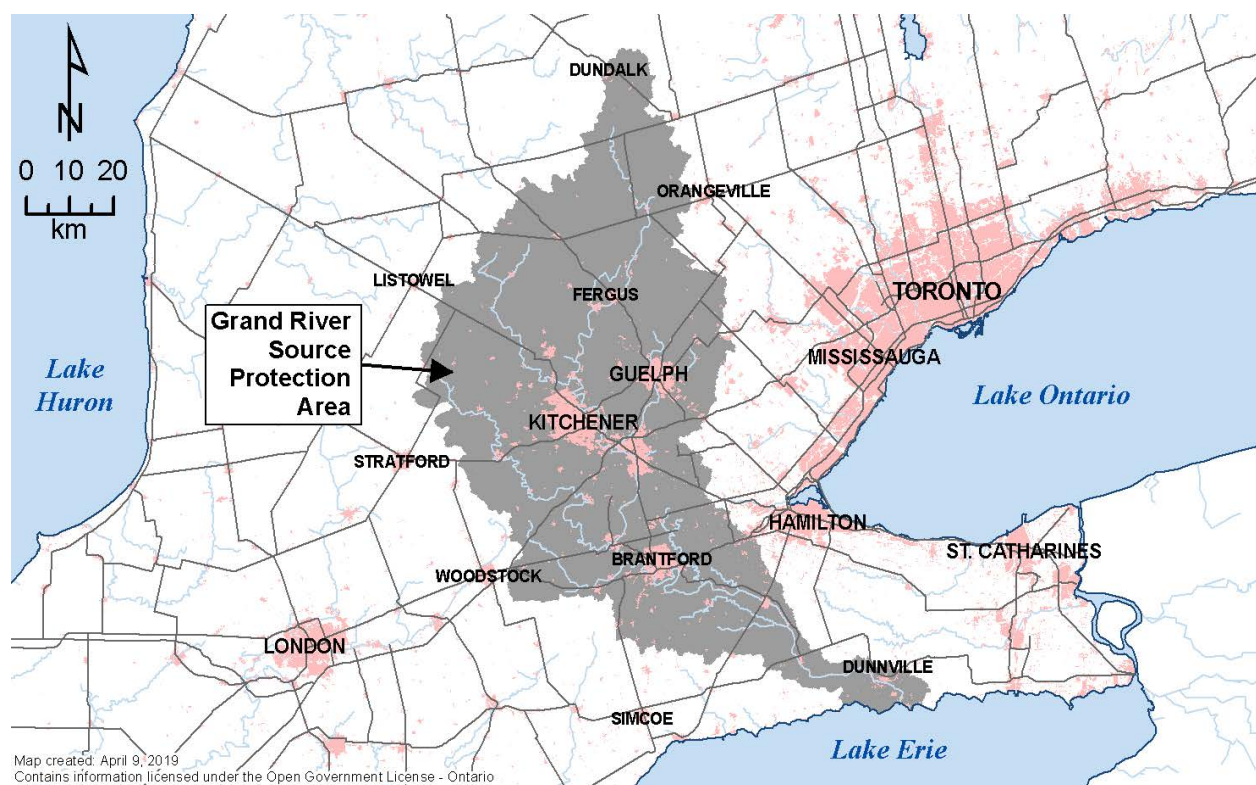


# Source Protection Annual Progress Report

## I. Introduction

This annual progress report outlines the progress made in implementing the source protection plan for the Grand River Source Protection Area, as required by the Clean Water Act and regulations.

We acknowledge and recognize the tremendous efforts made by our local municipalities, stakeholders and Source Protection Committee in the development of the Source Protection Plan and implementation of Source Protection policies.



## II. A message from your local Source Protection Committee

**PS: Progressing Well / Short of Target – Implementation of the source protection plan is progressing well but remains short of target in achieving the plan's objectives.**

11,266 significant drinking water threats have been identified in the Grand River Source Protection Area since the original source protection plan approval or approval of amendments that include new or revised protection zones. The percentage of overall progress made in addressing threats is 26%; this is comparable to the 2020 annual reporting period (27%) and an improvement over 2019 (21%). 98% percent of legally binding plan policies that address significant drinking water threats are implemented, in progress, or implemented because policy outcome(s) have been evaluated and it is determined that no further action(s) is required.

Progress addressing significant drinking water threats has been impacted by several factors outside of the control of implementing bodies. This includes recent source protection plan updates in 2020 and 2021 that substantially increased the number of significant drinking water threats (approximately 15%), a large increase in the number of development reviews in 2020 and 2021 that subsequently increased the workload for municipalities, and most significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing bodies have reported that COVID-19 public health restrictions impeded their ability to address significant drinking water threats in the 2020 and 2021 annual reporting periods, including septic system inspections and establishing risk management plans. The extent to which the objectives of the source protection plan have been achieved during this reporting period has been amended from "Progressing Well / On Target" to "Progressing Well / Short of Target", to reflect the influence of these factors. Implementation of the source protection plan is progressing well but remains short of target in achieving the plan's objectives regarding the number of septic system inspections and the development of risk management plans.

## III. Our Watershed

To learn more, please read our Grand River Assessment Report and Source Protection Plan.

The Grand River Source Protection Area (watershed) covers an area of approximately 6,800 square kilometres, and contains 39 upper, lower and single-tier municipalities and two First Nations bands.

The residents of the Grand River watershed receive drinking water supplies from both private and municipal supplies. 50 municipal systems and one First Nation system provide water to 865,538 residents (as of 2016) in the watershed.

## IV. At a Glance: Progress on Source Protection Plan Implementation

### 1. Source Protection Plan Policies

P: Progressing Well/On Target

For implementing bodies that have submitted a status update / annual report to the source protection authority, the vast majority (98%) of legally binding plan policies that address significant drinking water threats are implemented, in progress, or implemented because policy outcome(s) have been evaluated and it is determined that no further action(s) is required.

### 2. Municipal Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

22 municipalities in the Grand River Source Protection Area have vulnerable areas where policies addressing significant drinking water threats apply.

P: Progressing Well/On Target

31 upper and lower-tier municipalities in the Grand River Source Protection Area are required to review and update their Official Plan to ensure it conforms with the Grand River Source Protection Plan the next time they undertake an Official Plan review under the Planning Act. Five Official Plan amendments have been completed, 12 are in progress/updates underway, eight need updating to reflect source protection plan amendments, five have not been started and one is completed but under appeal.

### 3. Septic Inspections

PS: Progressing Well / Short of Target

1564 on-site sewage systems in the Grand River Source Protection Area require inspections in accordance with the Ontario Building Code every five years. 17% of the systems that were due to be inspected in the 2021 annual reporting were actually inspected (187 out of 1075 systems). Inspection results found five percent required minor maintenance work, e.g., pump out, etc., and eight percent required major maintenance work, e.g., tank replacement, etc.

COVID-19 public health measures significantly impacted progress on the number of systems inspected in the 2021 and in the previous 2020 annual reporting periods. Risk Management Officials were not able to inspect some septic systems that were due for inspection, and subsequently delayed those inspections to a future annual reporting period. As a result, the progress on septic system inspections during this reporting period has been amended from

"Progressing Well / On Target" to "Progressing Well / Short of Target", to reflect the impact of public health measures.

## 4. Risk Management Plans

PS: Progress Well / Short of Target

98 risk management plans were established in the 2021 annual reporting period. Since the Grand River Source Protection Plan took effect, 292 risk management plans have been established in the Grand River Source Protection Area. Four percent of risk management plans have been established to date in relation to the ones still needed/pending to manage existing significant drinking water threat activities. 464 inspections have been conducted by a Risk Management Official / Inspector for prohibited or regulated activities in 2021. No inspections were in contravention with section 57 or 58 of the Clean Water Act (i.e., person engaging in a drinking water threat activity without a risk management plan as required by the source protection plan), and no inspections were in non-compliance with the contents of a risk management plan.

The relatively low percentage of risk management plans that have been established to date in relation to the ones still needed / pending is a reflection of the very large number of significant drinking water threats (3,509) on the landscape that still require a risk management plan, increased threat numbers as a result of recent source protection plan updates, limited staff resources and the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 public health measures significantly impacted progress on the number of risk managements plans established in the 2021 and in the previous 2020 annual reporting periods. Risk Management Officials had to delay risk management plan negotiations with property owners to a future annual reporting period. As a result, the grading for progress on risk management plan policy implementation during this reporting period has been amended from "Progressing Well / On Target" to "Progressing Well / Short of Target", to reflect the impact of public health measures.

## 5. Provincial Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

P: Progressing Well/On Target

Ontario ministries are reviewing applications for new or amended and previously issued provincial approvals (e.g., Environmental compliance approvals issued under the Environmental Protection Act) where they have been identified as a tool in the Grand River Source Protection Plan to address activities that pose a significant risk to source water. The provincial approvals are either being issued, denied, amended, or revoked, where necessary, to conform with plan policies. Grand River Source Protection Plan policies set out a time line of 3 years to complete the review and make any necessary changes to previously issued

approvals, the timeline for new or amended PIs has been in effect since the approval date of our plan. Thus, while ministries are implementing a review protocol to screen all (100%) applicable approval applications, they have completed this for 99% of previously issued provincial approvals in the Grand River Source Protection Area.

## 6. Source Protection Awareness and Change in Behaviour

340 Drinking Water Protection Zones signs have been installed in the Grand River Source Protection Area since the Source Protection Plan took effect.

The following positive outcomes have been reported by municipalities in the Grand River Source Protection Area:

- increased awareness of the Source Protection Program (Program) where threats verification inspections have been completed;
- landowners are generally more open to participating in the Program, including agreeing to the Risk Management Plan process, when they understand the reasons and importance of source protection plan policies; promotes a sense of engagement;
- members of the public and real estate agents contact Risk Management Officials for information about the Program;
- greater integration of the Program within municipal frameworks and processes; and
- progressive reduction in per capita consumption of water.

## 7. Source Protection Plan Policies: Summary of Delays

Delays in implementing some source protection plan policies have been noted for the Cities of Brantford, Hamilton, and Guelph, the Townships of Southgate, Melancthon, Amaranth and East Garafraxa, Halton Region, the Counties of Oxford, Perth, Wellington, Haldimand and Brant, the Town of Grand Valley, and the Region of Waterloo. The majority of these delays are for a non-legally binding liquid hydrocarbon pipeline policy that includes the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) as one of its implementing bodies. Lake Erie Source Protection Region staff are currently working with liquid hydrocarbon pipeline regulators, including the OEB, to ensure implementation of the policies moving forward.

The reasons for policy implementation delays include an implementing body not yet formally integrating source protection into their organizational procedures or creating a plan to implement a particular policy, threats verification and inspections for different types of properties, e.g., commercial, industrial and agricultural, prioritized over others due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and a lack of eligible properties that can receive municipal incentives. To ensure



implementation progress in the 2022 annual reporting period, implementing bodies will develop a process to formally link the Source Protection Program to their organization's internal processes and discuss options to implement policies with local boards and committees, increase threats verification work for existing threat activities that may be taking place on properties as COVID-19 public health measures allow, and continue to evaluate the requirements of the local incentive program and implement policies as warranted.

## 8. Source Water Quality: Monitoring and Actions

Municipalities have monitoring and treatment systems in place to ensure that municipal drinking water meets the requirements under Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002. At the end of 2021, there were 17 drinking water systems or wellfields in the Grand River Source Protection Area with identified drinking water issues. 15 of those 17 systems have an Issue Contributing Area(s) (ICA). The majority of the systems report increasing concentrations / trends or no change in concentration / trends. One system (Wilmot Centre, Region of Waterloo) reported decreasing concentrations / trends. For those systems or wellfields where there are no improvements, municipalities will continue to collect data to monitor the issues.

## 9. Science-based Assessment Reports: Work Plans

A s.36 order was received from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in June 2020 regarding updates to the Grand River Assessment Report and Source Protection Plan. Examples of tasks that are included in the proposed Section 36 workplan:

- growth and infrastructure changes, e.g., new drinking water supply well(s) to be brought online; and
- results of environmental monitoring programs, e.g., review of monitoring data to evaluate existing or the potential for Issues identified at municipal drinking water wells.

Work has begun on tasks identified in the s.36 workplan. The work will be incorporated into a future s.36 Grand River Source Protection Plan update. The plan update is expected to be completed and submitted to the Ministry for review and approval in 2025.

## 10. More from the Watershed

To learn more about the Grand River Source Protection Area, visit the [Lake Erie Source Protection Region website](#).