



## **Grand Valley Trails Association**

### **Strategic Plan 2007-2011**

The GVTA gratefully acknowledges the support of

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TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Innovative Steam Technologies Inc.

Grand River Conservation Authority

Betty Schneider



GRAND RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

# GVTA Strategic Plan 2007-2011

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# **GVTA Strategic Plan 2007-2011**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Grand Valley Trails Association Strategic Plan provides strategic direction, over a period of five years (calendar 2007-2011), to the Grand Valley Trails Association (GVTA). It describes how the GVTA will secure, develop, manage, and maintain the Grand Valley Trail (GVT) and achieve the other purposes of the organization as set out in its Letters Patent (1973). The strategic plan will focus efforts of the GVTA on agreed priorities including the sustainability of the organization, the Grand Valley Trail, and the stewardship, protection, and public enjoyment of the natural environment and human history of the Grand River Watershed.

### **1.1 Reasons for the Plan**

As with similar organizations in Ontario, the long-term sustainability of the GVTA and the GVT are currently challenged due to changing social priorities and trends. Specific issues encountered include:

- Trail losses (with re-routes onto road)
- Inadequate relationships with landowners
- Inadequate trail maintenance
- Insurance costs rapidly rising
- Volunteer burden and turnover
- Inadequate membership base
- Lack of continuity in administration

These types of issues have been recognized by the Ontario Trails Strategy (Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion - 2005) which outlines a number of relevant goals and strategies for addressing them. However the GVTA needs to address these issues in the short-term in order to ensure its survival and avoid long-term degrading of the Grand River watershed trail system.

The GVTA Board believes that local “ownership” is a sound basis for maintaining a healthy trail system in the long term. Greater involvement and community presence for the GVT in Haldimand, Wellington, and Dufferin counties will require substantial increases in local membership.

### **1.2 Authors**

This plan was created by a Strategic Planning Committee established by the GVTA Board, including Bill McDonald (Past President , committee chair), Bruce Bjorkquist (President), Charles Whitlock (Past President), Rob Carlton (Trail Director), and Richard Boehnke (Bruce Trail Association Past President). The committee’s mandate was defined by the GVTA Renewal Project of 2005-2007, and the committee consulted frequently with the Board.

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## 2.0 MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

In adopting this plan, the GVTA adopts the following statements as brief expressions of “what we are about”.

### 2.1 Mission of the Grand Valley Trails Association

The Grand Valley Trails Association is a volunteer organization committed to establishing footpaths within Ontario’s Grand River Watershed in order to promote the protection and public enjoyment of the natural environment and human history of this Canadian Heritage River.

### 2.2 Vision for the Grand Valley Trails Association

The vision for the Grand Valley Trails Association is to offer a secure and safe public access, through a system of maintained footpaths, to the natural character, the beauty, and the history of the entire valley of the Grand River from the shore of Lake Erie to the Dundalk till plain.

(In this statement, “safe” implies that GVTA-introduced structures will be maintained in a serviceable condition, but there will be no attempt to eliminate hazards routinely encountered on a natural trail.)

## 3.0 PRIORITY ISSUES

### 3.1 Securing the trail

3.1.1 Goal: To secure the Grand Valley Trail and improve its quality.

Notes:

- “Secure” means to locate stably, free from threats to routing and treadway.
- “Quality” means off-road and conducive to enjoyment of the valley’s natural and historic features.
- The trail construction and maintenance standard is that of the Bruce Trail Association’s “Guide for Trail Workers”, which has been adopted by the GVTA.

3.1.1.1 Objective: To make **landowner relations** an effective, ongoing function that contributes to the security and quality of the GVT.

Completion: by March 31, 2009

3.1.1.1.1 Action: Establish an effective landowner relations committee, and train them in land ownership research and landowner negotiations.

Timing: by September 30, 2007

Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director

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- 3.1.1.1.2 Action: Redesign and print an updated landowner information brochure.  
Timing: by December 31, 2007  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.1.3 Action: Produce a landowner relations manual for Trail Captains and others.  
Timing: by March 31, 2008  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.1.4 Action: Establish an annual landowners update bulletin  
Timing: by June 30, 2007  
Responsibility: President or designate
- 3.1.1.1.5 Action: Make contact with every landowner and ensure agreement on permitted uses, in writing where possible, allowing only pedestrian activities where possible.  
Timing: by March 31, 2009  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.1.6 Action: Create a new database of landowners, designed to support all landowner relations needs, and populate it with existing landowner data.  
Timing: by December 31, 2007  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.1.7 Action: Establish processes to gather information about landowner changes and land development issues affecting the trail and to keep the database up to date.  
Timing: March 31, 2008  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.1.8 Action: Establish a process to supply updated landowner information to trail directors and captains.  
Timing: March 31, 2008  
Responsibility: Landowner Relations Director
- 3.1.1.2 Objective: To increase the **off-road proportion** of the main GVT opportunistically.  
Completion: As a proportion of the complete route anticipated for the end of 2011:
- End 2007: 53%
  - End 2008: 56%
  - End 2009: 59%
  - End 2010: 62%
  - End 2011: 65%
- Note: The off-road proportion of the main GVT at the time of writing this plan is understood to be 50%.

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- 3.1.1.2.1 Action: Reroute on-road portions of the main GVT, by finding and exploiting all available opportunities.  
Timing: Throughout the 2007-2011 period.  
Responsibility: Trail Directors, with assistance from Landowner Relations Directors.
- 3.1.1.2.2 Action: Measure the off-road trail proportion and report the results to the Board.  
Timing: Every six months during 2007-2011.  
Responsibility: Trail Directors.
- 3.1.1.3 Objective: To negotiate and conclude a watershed-wide **agreement with the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)** to govern GVTA access to all pertinent GRCA properties.  
Completion: By the end of 2007.
- Note: It is understood that such an agreement will not obviate the need for a separate agreement for each GRCA property. The purpose of the overall agreement is to provide a consistent framework and templates for all property agreements, and to reduce the details needed for such agreements.
- 3.1.1.3.1 Action: Negotiate and conclude the above agreement with the GRCA.  
Completion: By the end of 2007.  
Responsibility: President.
- 3.1.1.4 Objective: To reroute the main trail to a **new northern terminus** at Luther Marsh.  
Completion: By the end of 2011.
- 3.1.1.4.1 Action: Establish a partnership with the Upper Grand Trailway Association (UGT), and any other partners that may help to achieve this objective.  
Completion: By June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President.
- 3.1.1.4.2 Action: Conclude an agreement with the GRCA for trail routing into the Luther Marsh Conservation Area.  
Completion: By June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President
- 3.1.1.4.3 Action: Determine the routing to the new terminus and obtain necessary landowner agreements.  
Completion: By the end of 2008.  
Responsibility: Pinnacle Trail Director and Landowner Relations Director

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- 3.1.1.4.4 Action: Build the main trail as far as a location on the UGT and install signage.  
Completion: By December 31, 2009.  
Responsibility: Construction Team Leader and Pinnacle Trail Director
- 3.1.1.4.5 Action: Build the trail along the UGT and from the UGT to a terminus at Luther Marsh.  
Completion: By December 31, 2010.  
Responsibility: Construction Team Leader and Pinnacle Trail Director
- 3.1.1.4.6 Action: Re-sign the GVT to Alton as a side trail.  
Completion: By December 31, 2011.  
Responsibility: Pinnacle Trail Director
- 3.1.1.4.7 Action: Revise the GVTA guidebook and update the website to reflect the above changes.  
Timing: Coincidentally with actions 3.1.1.3.4 through 3.1.1.3.6.  
Responsibility: Guidebook editor
- 3.1.1.5 Objective: To define and map an **optimal route corridor** for future GVT development.  
Completion: By the end of 2011.
- Note: "Optimal route corridor" means a one kilometre wide band of land in the Grand Valley, connecting the trail termini.
- 3.1.1.5.1 Action: Appoint an ad-hoc team to define the corridor.  
Completion: By June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President
- 3.1.1.5.2 Action: Report progress to the Board of Directors.  
Timing: At least every six months until the end of 2010.  
Responsibility: Optimal route corridor team
- 3.1.1.5.3 Action: Make final recommendation of complete corridor.  
Completion: by the end of 2010.  
Responsibility: Optimal route corridor team
- 3.1.1.5.4 Action: Recommend the complete corridor to the members for approval.  
Timing: At the AGM in April 2011.  
Responsibility: President

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## 3.2 Sectional Organization

3.2.1 Goal: To establish local chapters called GVT Clubs, to handle GVTA field functions.

Notes:

Functions under consideration are expected to be divided as follows.

Central functions:

- Definition of optimum trail route corridor: GVTA
- Newsletter: GVTA, with Clubs sections as desired
- Guidebook: GVTA
- Insurance coverage: GVTA
- Membership and volunteer administration: GVTA
- Fund raising: GVTA, or Clubs for Specific delegated purposes
- Liaison with Hike Ontario and other associations: GVTA
- Publicity for GVTA overall and for central functions: GVTA

Field functions:

- Local trail routing within the corridor: Clubs
- Trail building and maintenance: Clubs with GVTA assistance as needed
- Landowner relations: Clubs with GVTA assistance as needed
- Outdoor activity programs: Clubs
- Publicity for field functions: Clubs

The Clubs are anticipated to be associated with the current four divisions of the GVT:

- Towpath, in Haldimand County
- Carolinian Crest, in Brant County and Brantford
- Black Walnut, in Waterloo Region
- Pinnacle, in Wellington, Peel, and Dufferin Counties

These geographic divisions were defined by the GVTA Board in 2004 for these reasons:

- to correspond with existing community groupings in the valley
- to facilitate work with local planning, tourism, and recreation authorities
- to give each anticipated Club a roughly equal length of trail to manage

The model for this organization will be similar to that of the Bruce Trail in which trail Clubs are creatures of and supported by the association which in turn enjoys the physical support of the Club members for all trail-related work, with a minimum of direct intervention in the local Club management.

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The ongoing operations of GVTA Clubs will be financed mainly by a share of membership fees passed on by the GVTA; this share will be negotiated from time to time by the GVTA with its Clubs. Financial controls will be established to prevent Clubs' committing the GVTA financially to an unapproved extent.

Establishment of each GVT Club should start with appointment of an initial executive. Outside of the Black Walnut division, this would start as a small **committee of volunteers to "champion"** the establishment of the Club. Initially, the membership in the Black Walnut division will probably need to assist the other GVTA divisions, because of low current local membership.

It is also expected that there will always be a need for "flying squad" assistance in some functions (on the model of Bruce Trail Association flying squads), for some GVT Clubs.

3.2.1.1 Objective: To define the **GVT Clubs' organizational structure, their role, and their relationship** with the GVTA.  
Completion: By June 30 2007.

3.2.1.1.1 Action: Appoint a volunteer to draft new bylaws.  
Completion: By January 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: President

3.2.1.1.2 Action: Draft model bylaws for GVT Clubs and revised bylaws for the GVTA.  
Completion: by April 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: Bylaw volunteer.

Note: Both sets of bylaws should prescribe Robert's Rules of Order, current edition, to govern proceedings except as otherwise provided in the bylaws. The volunteer should examine the bylaws of Bruce Trail Association and a Bruce Trail Club, and consult the Board and other GVTA members for other needs.

3.2.1.1.3 Action: Obtain the comments of an expert on parliamentary procedure on the drafts.  
Completion: by May 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Bylaw volunteer.

Note: Toastmasters International may have an Ontario member willing to provide such comments on a volunteer basis.

3.2.1.1.4 Action: Obtain legal comments on the drafts.  
Completion: by May 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Bylaw volunteer

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Note: The GVTA has at least two lawyer members, one of whom may be willing to provide such comments on a volunteer basis.

3.2.1.1.5 Action: Consider and approve the new bylaws.  
Completion: by June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: GVTA Board

3.2.1.1.6 Action: Report the historical proportions of GVTA spending on the functions to be delegated to GVT Clubs, and recommend suitable financial controls.  
Completion: by April 2007.  
Responsibility: Treasurer

Note: This completion date will allow inclusion of the complete fiscal year 2006-7, for easier comparison with other years.

3.2.1.1.7 Action: Determine the initial GVT Clubs' share of GVTA membership fees and suitable financial controls.  
Completion: by June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: Board

Notes:

- The intent is that the share be the same for all Clubs, with annual review and possible revision by the GVTA and all GVT Clubs together.
- The intent is also that GVT Clubs may apply to the GVTA Board from time to time, for additional funds for specific needs.

3.2.1.2 Objective: To **assign** all existing and new **members to** current and/or intended new **GVT Clubs**.  
Completion: By June 30, 2007.

Note: The purpose of this measure is to define segments of membership for focusing of effort to build the GVT Clubs. Members should also be encouraged to support Club-building in whichever Club their efforts are needed.

3.2.1.2.1 Action: Ask members to choose the GVT Club they wish to belong to and support, in each new or renewal application. For the first year only, ask members to choose two Clubs.  
Timing: 2007 renewals and continuing thereafter.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director

3.2.1.3 Objective: To establish the **Black Walnut GVT Club**, in Waterloo Region.  
Completion: By December 31, 2007.

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3.2.1.3.1 Action: Appoint a core team of GVTA members, to be the initial Club executive and establish Club operations.  
Completion: by June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: Vice President (or President in absence of a Vice President)

3.2.1.3.2 Action: Take over from the GVTA, the GVT Club functions for the Black Walnut division.  
Completion: by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Black Walnut GVT Club initial executive

3.2.1.4 Objective: To establish the **Pinnacle GVT Club**, in Wellington and Dufferin Counties and Peel Region.  
Completion: By December 31, 2008.

Note: Pinnacle is planned next, to help support establishment of the new northern terminus.

3.2.1.4.1 Action: Enlist a small **committee of volunteers to “champion”** the establishment of the Pinnacle GVT Club and to become the initial Club executive, along with a flying squad to provide support.  
Completion: by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Vice President (or President in absence of a Vice President)

3.2.1.4.2 Action: Take over from the GVTA, the GVT Club functions for the Pinnacle division.  
Completion: by December 31, 2008.  
Responsibility: Pinnacle GVT Club initial executive

3.2.1.5 Objective: to establish the **Carolinian Crest GVT Club**, in Brant County and Brantford.  
Completion: By December 31, 2009.

Note: Carolinian Crest is next, because it has an established membership.

3.2.1.5.1 Action: Enlist a small **committee of volunteers to “champion”** the establishment of the Carolinian Crest GVT Club and to become the initial Club executive, along with a flying squad to provide support.  
Completion: by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Vice President (or President in absence of a Vice President)

3.2.1.5.2 Action: Take over from the GVTA, the GVT Club functions for the Carolinian Crest division.  
Completion: by December 31, 2009.  
Responsibility: Carolinian Crest GVT Club initial executive

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3.2.1.6 Objective: to establish the **Towpath GVT Club**, in Haldimand County.  
Completion: By December 31, 2010.

3.2.1.6.1 Action: Enlist a small **committee of volunteers to “champion”** the establishment of the Towpath GVT Club and to become the initial Club executive, along with a flying squad to provide support.  
Completion: by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Vice President (or President in absence of a Vice President)

3.2.1.6.2 Action: Take over from the GVTA, the GVT Club functions for the Towpath division.  
Completion: by December 2010.  
Responsibility: Towpath GVT Club initial executive

## 3.3 Publicity and Membership Growth

3.3.1 Goal: To increase the GVTA’s membership and volunteer base in all areas of the Grand Valley, and to double the total membership from about 350 at the beginning of 2007 to 700 at the end of 2011.

3.3.1.1 Objective: To ensure that the GVTA’s promotional program is sound from a marketing viewpoint.  
Completion: By May 31, 2008.

3.3.1.1.1 Action: Hire a **consultant** to make recommendations for **marketing strategy**.  
Completion: by February 28, 2007.  
Responsibility: President

Notes:

The consultant’s recommendations are to ensure:

- Promotional efforts are targeted at appropriate audiences.
- Promotional materials are consistent, appealing, and suitable to the intended audiences in style, content, and media used.
- Communication channels are suitable for the intended audiences and the promotional materials used.
- Timing (promptness, season, duration, etc.) of promotional communications is appropriate to obtain maximum positive effect as soon as practicable.
- All the above aspects of promotion are consistent with each other and with the GVTA’s character and goals.

The remaining objectives and actions in this section 3.3 are supportive of the consultant’s recommendations.

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- 3.3.1.1.2 Action: Receive the consultant's marketing strategy report.  
Completion: by April 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President
- 3.3.1.1.3 Action: Approve the consultant's report, either as submitted or amended.  
Completion: by May 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Board
- 3.3.1.2 Objective: To obtain fresh insights and ideas from **university marketing students**.  
Completion: By June 30, 2007.
- 3.3.1.2.1 Action: Recruit a team of one student for each GVT Club area, from the Wilfrid Laurier University MBA program to do a study and produce recommendations for GVTA Marketing, as a supplement to the above consultant's recommendations.  
Completion: by June 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: Past President
- 3.3.1.3 Objective: To produce **new promotional materials** which target supporters of providing trails and walking opportunities to the public.  
Completion: By June 30, 2008.
- Note: These materials should include:
- GVTA vision, mission and goals
  - financial, health, learning, and other benefits that accrue to communities
- 3.3.1.3.1 Action: Produce a redesigned promotional brochure which focuses on developing the GVT.  
Completion: by July 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Publications Director
- 3.3.1.3.2 Action: Create a promotional presentation which focuses on developing the GVT as a public resource.  
Completion: by July 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: President or designate
- 3.3.1.3.3 Action: Create a promotional presentation to introduce trails and hiking to adults, school students and others.  
Completion: by September 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President or designate
- 3.3.1.3.4 Action: Create a day outings and loop hikes supplement to the guidebook, packaged so that it can also be sold alone.  
Completion: by June 30, 2008.

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Responsibility: Guidebook editor

3.3.1.4 Objective: To **broaden the distribution channels** for GVTA promotion and information.

Completion: by December 31, 2011.

Channels should include:

- the Grand River Conservation Authority.
- field naturalist, historical, cultural, and similar organizations.
- elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities.
- all trail clubs within or adjacent to the Grand River Valley.
- within each GVT Club's jurisdiction:
  - all common public communication media
  - the health units
  - municipal governments
  - all service clubs and churches

3.3.1.4.1 Action: Broaden the distribution network of the GVTA guidebook to include, throughout the valley, retailers, B&Bs, and public agencies which promote health, recreation, and tourism.

Completion: Outlets to be added after December 31, 2006: (cumulative):

- by June 30, 2007: 2 retailers, 1 B&B, 1 public agency
- by December 31, 2007: 4 retailers, 2 B&Bs, 2 public agencies
- by June 30, 2008: 6 retailers, 3 B&Bs, 3 public agencies
- by December 31, 2008: 8 retailers, 4 B&Bs, 4 public agencies

Responsibility: Publicity and Publications Directors

3.3.1.4.2 Action: Obtain and track agreements with retailers, B&Bs, and libraries, and other public centres throughout the valley to distribute promotional brochures. Train volunteers to carry this on, including maintenances of stocks at outlets.

Completion: by September 30, 2007: 10 additional retailers, 4 additional B&Bs, 10 additional libraries or other public centres.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.4.3 Action: Adjust the content, locations, and schedule of standing displays, if required to be consistent with the marketing strategy adopted after the study of section 3.3.1.

Completion: by July 31, 2007.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.4.4 Action: Develop contacts at all common public media in the GVT (such as newspapers, radio, television, and community websites) and establish regular distribution of promotional and special event information.

Completion: cumulative outlets:

- by end 2007: 2 per GVT Club area

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- by end 2008: 3 per GVT Club area
- by end 2009: 4 per GVT Club area
- by end 2010: 5 per GVT Club area
- by end 2011: 6 per GVT Club area

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.4.5 Action: Recruit and schedule volunteers to make promotional presentations.

Completion: cumulative presenting volunteers:

- by June 30, 2007: 2 per GVT Club area
- by December 31, 2007: 4 per GVT Club area

Responsibility: President or designate

3.3.1.5 Objective: To recruit **local champions** who can assist in making valuable local contacts.

Completion: Activity established by 2009, then ongoing.

3.3.1.5.1 Action: Contact the four health units in the Grand Valley to propose joint health promotion programs:

- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
- Brant County Health Unit
- Region of Waterloo Health Unit
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit

Completion: by December 31, 2008.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.5.2 Action: Contact other compatible organizations to establish similar alliances for joint programs. Possibilities include field naturalists, historians, and other organizations listed in 3.3.1.4.

Completion: one per GVT Club area per year in 2009, 2010, 2011.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.5.3 Action: Increase the GVTA profile with local decision makers by making presentations to business and community leaders.

Completion: one per GVT Club area per year in 2009, 2010, 2011.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.5.4 Action: Increase the GVTA profile with local decision makers by making presentations to municipal councils, committees, and staffs.

Completion: one per GVT Club area per year in 2009, 2010, 2011.

Responsibility: Publicity Director

3.3.1.6 Objective: To utilize the **volunteer clearing houses** in each GVT Club area (such as the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo), to help in volunteer recruitment and management.

Completion: Activity established by 2008, then ongoing.

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- 3.3.1.6.1 Action: Contact the volunteer agencies and consider joining them.  
Completion: one additional agency per GVT Club area by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director
- 3.3.1.6.2 Action: Participate in volunteer agency events to recruit volunteers.  
Completion: at least one event per year per GVT Club area in 2008-2011.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director
- 3.3.1.7 Objective: To increase the **retention ratio** of annual membership renewals from 75% in 2006 to 90% in 2011.  
Completion: As a proportion of the existing members with expiries in the year of measurement (adjusted for life members):
- End 2007: 78% renewed to 2008
  - End 2008: 81% renewed to 2009
  - End 2009: 84% renewed to 2010
  - End 2010: 87% renewed to 2011
  - End 2011: 90% renewed to 2012
- 3.3.1.7.1 Action: Within one month of application receipt, contact every new member in person or by phone, to welcome the member, determine his/her interests, and find a GVTA activity in which the member can participate as soon as possible.  
Completion: Action established by April 2007, then ongoing.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director
- 3.3.1.7.2 Action: Within one month of application receipt, contact every new or renewed member who volunteers on the application form for a new activity, to enlist the member in the activity by linking the member with a leader of the activity. For new members, this could be combined with 3.3.1.7.1.  
Completion: Action established by April 2007, then ongoing.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director
- 3.3.1.7.3 Action: Contact every member before each annual renewal, with a reminder of the upcoming renewal, in person or by phone, e-mail, or mail.  
Completion: Action established by November 2007, then ongoing.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director
- 3.3.1.7.4 Action: Investigate all available methods or technologies for making membership renewals easier, including use of credit cards and/or Internet. Third parties could be used for processing.  
Completion: Action established by November 2008, then ongoing.  
Responsibility: Membership and Volunteers Director

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## 3.4 Education

- 3.4.1 Goal: To educate GVTA members and the public about the nature and benefits of the GVT.

This education should:

- Include the basic history and character of the GVTA.
- Reflect the GVTA's top priority as the trail (before hiking).
- Convey the need to actively promote the organization.
- Foster the ethic among all GVTA members that each person is an ambassador to the world.

- 3.4.1.1 Objective: To **produce education programs** related to the trail, as a service to members and the public.  
Completion: By June 30, 2008.

- 3.4.1.1.1 Action: Appoint an Education Committee.  
Completion: by April 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: President

- 3.4.1.1.2 Action: Establish a "Trail Stewardship 101" course for new members.  
Completion: by December 31, 2007.  
Responsibility: Education Committee

Note: See Appendix A for concepts of this course.

- 3.4.1.1.3 Action: Establish a "Hiking 101" curriculum and program for adults.  
Completion: by April 30, 2007.  
Responsibility: Education Committee

Note: At time of writing this strategic plan, some work on this curriculum has already been done.

- 3.4.1.1.4 Action: Contact GVTA members and suitable outside organizations, to jointly develop other programs for GVTA sponsorship on the trail, such as history, photography, drawing, and nature study.  
Completion: by June 30, 2008.  
Responsibility: Education Committee

- 3.4.1.2 Objective: To **offer educational programs** to GVT Clubs, schools, and community groups.  
Completion: By January 31, 2008.

- 3.4.1.2.1 Action: Schedule the first presentation of the Trail Stewardship and Hiking programs within the GVTA membership.  
Completion: presentation to occur by January 31, 2008.  
Responsibility: Education Committee

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- 3.4.1.2.2 Action: Schedule the first presentation of the Trail Stewardship and Hiking programs in schools.  
Completion: presentation to occur by January 31, 2008.  
Responsibility: Education Committee

## 4.0 OTHER ISSUES

The following issues were not considered appropriate for inclusion in the objectives and actions of this plan. Depending on the issues and circumstances, the GVTA Board may choose to deal with them outside this plan, or may leave these statements to stand with no further action during the period of the plan.

### 4.1 Full-time Staff

The GVTA has no plans to hire full-time staff during the period of this strategic plan. During this time, GVTA functions will be performed by volunteers, who could be supplemented for specific projects by staff paid from temporary grants or seconded from other organizations. It is expected that full-time staff will be desirable in the long term. Before this can happen, the GVTA must clearly define the need for staff and secure stable funding to pay for it. It may be desirable to establish a Grand Valley Trails foundation, as a vehicle for funding endowment.

### 4.2 Environmental Positions

The GVTA does not engage in general activism. However, the GVTA may act to try to influence policy where such policy affects the GVTA's mission to promote appreciation of the natural environment of the Grand Valley and to build and keep trails through wild lands. To this end, the GVTA aims to be aware of public issues in the Valley. The GVTA promotes an ethic of environmental stewardship in all its activities, and encourages its members to set an example to others in this regard.

### 4.3 Access for the Disabled

The GVTA recognizes that access to trails and outdoor recreation is a very positive aspect of life for all members of the public. On portions of the Grand Valley Trail which are co-routed with multi-purpose trails that are wheelchair accessible, the GVTA should note this accessibility in its published trail information. On the remainder of the Trail, the GVTA does not control the land, cannot commit to access for the disabled, and therefore plans no specific actions to provide or assist with access for the disabled during the period of this strategic plan. In the event that the GVTA obtains land control where the terrain of the Trail may be suitable, the Board is recommended to explore opportunities to provide further wheelchair accessibility.

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## **4.4 Financial Stability**

A strategy to plan for the future must consider financial resources. To date, the Grand Valley Trail has been developed largely through private and public donations. The GVTA must secure long-term funding if it is to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of management and operation of the trail. Memberships can provide the core funding for base administration costs such as newsletters and some construction materials. It could also be valuable to consider trust funds, endowments or living gifts as a base of funding to ensure long-term stability of the organization. It is important to identify expertise within the membership that can assist with proposal writing for grant funded special projects and also administration of GVTA funds.

## **4.5 Activity Programs**

This plan makes no mention of the GVTA's hiking and social programs. These programs are important to the organization, but no major new initiative is considered necessary for them.

The major change required in the hiking program (transition to the use primarily of trained and certified leaders) has already been accomplished. The hiking program should be continued on this sound footing.

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## APPENDIX 'A' - New member training: "Trail Stewardship 101"

The Grand Valley Trails Association has established that the Grand Valley Trail is the association's top priority and main reason for existence. The 2006 issues survey of GVTA Directors suggested that very few directors have experience with landowner relations and that many are uncomfortable with attempting or undertaking this kind of work. The same issues survey report noted that maintaining the trail must be an ethic instilled in all GVTA members.

New members volunteer for maintenance more often than for all other roles combined. Yet the GVTA has not capitalized on this volunteer direction.

Clearly it is time for the GVTA to make conducting a "Trail Stewardship 101" course for new members a top priority.

The following considerations would apply:

- Target audience: all new members, all trail captains, any existing member we can persuade to take it, and also offered to the public
- Content: basic level, in both maintenance and landowner relations, with some hands-on experience (using role playing for the landowner relations).
- Location: Local to all four divisions of the Trail.
- Frequency: Several times per year.
- Cost: Reasonable for non-members, low or free for members.
- Incentives for members: Achievement certificate, feeling of inclusion, confidence in knowing what's going on and how to contribute.
- Incentives for non-members: Achievement certificate, completion earns discount on membership (perhaps completion of this course plus beginner hiking course). People like structured learning in their leisure activities.
- Publicity angle: Newsworthy, appeals to sense of environmental responsibility, helps attract members whose first priority is the trail.

