



ROUGE PARK ALLIANCE MINUTES - MEETING #1/09 - February 6, 2009

The Rouge Park Alliance met in the Main Boardroom of the Toronto Zoo. Alan Wells, Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked Calvin White, Toronto Zoo, for hosting the meeting. The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

PRESENT

Members:

Alan Wells, Chair
Hon. Pauline Browes, Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corp.
Hon. Michael Chong, MP, Government of Canada
Councillor David Cohen, Town of Richmond Hill
Glenn De Baeremaeker, Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.
Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Region of York
Regional Councillor Bonnie Littley, Region of Durham
Councillor Ron Moeser, City of Toronto
Councillor Jennifer O'Connell, City of Pickering
Councillor Clyde Smith, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Calvin White, Toronto Zoo

Alternates:

Ian Buchanan, Region of York
Councillor Raymond Cho, City of Toronto
Brian Denney, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority
Ron Dewell, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority
Councillor Chin Lee, City of Toronto
Jim Robb, Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.
Tracy Smith, Province of Ontario

ABSENT

Members:

Councillor Paul Ainslie, City of Toronto
Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP, Province of Ontario
Gerri Lynn O'Connor, TRCA
Councillor Erin Shapero, Town of Markham

Alternates:

Nestor Chornobay, Region of Durham
Mayor Wayne Emmerson, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Tom Farrell, Province of Ontario
Adele Freeman, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority
Mark Graham, Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.
Sue Gunton, Toronto Zoo
Audrey Hollasch, Town of Richmond Hill
Councillor Logan Kanapathi, Town of Markham
Keith Laushway, Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corp.
Tom Melymuk, City of Pickering
Carolyn Woodland, TRCA

Staff:

Bob Clay, Manager, Ecological Restoration
Michelle Holmes, Communications Specialist
Doreen McCarty, Administrative Coordinator

Vicki MacDonald, Biologist
Maria Papoulias, Manager, Natural Heritage
Sheryl Santos, Stewardship Assistant
Lewis Yeager, General Manager

Observers:

Mike Adler, Scarborough Mirror
Cat Beattie, Public Participant
Tom Boudreault, City of Toronto Parks
Amiel Blajchman, Transport Canada
Gail Crossman, Transport Canada
Bob Dobbin, AECOM
Lilli Duoba, Town of Markham
John Lancaster & Crew, CBC TV

Observers (Continued...)

Wayne Green, Region of York
Dave Ireland, Toronto Zoo
Aleksandra Krause, Region of York
Sheila Lathe, Public Participant
Marvin Macaraig, U. of T. Geography
Rob MacDonald, Archaeological Services Inc.
Andy McKinnon, Public Participant
Gord MacPherson, TRCA

Observers (Continued...)

Brent Mersey, Markham EAC
Dave Monaghan, AECOM
Colin O'Neill, Friends of the Rouge Watershed

Observers (Continued ...)

Sean Spisani, AECOM
David Whelan, AECOM

MOTION: Moved by: Glenn De Baeremaeker
Res. #5/09 Seconded by: Jennifer O’Connell

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance request staff to report back on how the report “Rouge Park: A Park in Progress” upholds the spirit and intent of the Rouge Park Management Plan.
..... **CARRIED**

ACTION - Staff to report back to the Alliance on the Markham’s report.

MOTION: Moved by: Glenn De Baeremaeker
Res. #6/09 Seconded by: Jennifer O’Connell

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance request staff to report back with a recommendation that would help the Town of Markham maximize achieving the Park vision to create a “sanctuary for nature and the human spirit”.
..... **DEFEATED**

Andy McKinnon, Toronto Resident

Andy McKinnon passed around photographs of his recent finding of a deer that was killed, and three injured, and the arrowhead that was left in the body. He expressed his concerns regarding the illegal activities taking place in Rouge Park, namely deer poaching, garbage dumping, snowmobiling off trail, and would like to see some form of Park enforcement established.

MOTION: Moved by: Ron Moeser
Res. #7/09 Seconded by: Bonnie Littley

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance receive the presentation by Andy McKinnon about illegal activities in Rouge Park.
..... **CARRIED**

Tracy Smith, the alternate member for the Province of Ontario, said that the deer poaching in Rouge Park falls under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources. He circulated information on the TIPS-MNR Line (1-877-847-7667) and recommended that anyone witnessing an illegal activity, such as poaching, to call in and report the incident to the enforcement staff.

MOTION: Moved by: Ron Moeser
Res. #8/09 Seconded by: Bonnie Littley

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance request staff to explore the possibility of establishing a Park ranger program and report back to the Alliance.
..... **CARRIED**

ACTION - Staff to liaise with MOE/MNR/TRCA/Municipalities re enforcement; review issues discussed and report back to the Alliance; post contact info on website to report illegal activities.

The Town of Markham's policy document from 2002, along with more recent information is attached. The following are key points.

- Although the regulation of communications infrastructure is a federal matter, the Government of Canada consults closely with municipalities. The approval of new cell towers in the Markham portion of Rouge Park would include approval by the Town of Markham according to its applicable policy; and
- Having reviewed the Markham policy documents, there do not seem to be any conflicts between what the Town is seeking to achieve and what the recommended changes to Rouge Park's policy and possible agreements with providers would involve.

Discussions with Deputy Mayor Jack Heath have ascertained that it should be possible for Rouge Park to move forward with a potential cell tower partnership which is compatible with Markham's policies, and which would be presented to the Town in a consultative way for approval.

At the December 5, 2008 meeting, Mr. Glenn De Baeremaeker proposed that the following amendment be added to the recommendations above:

THAT any funding coming from this initiative be allocated to natural habitat restoration projects.

When discussing the potential for partnering with a cell phone provider at its November 4, 2008 meeting, the Rouge Park Policy and Administration Committee suggested that any net income from such an initiative be allocated toward implementing Rouge Park's Heritage Appreciation and Visitor Experience (HAVE) Plan which recently received Alliance approval. Since cell phone technology can provide several HAVE Plan products, this would be a suitable conceptual match. The proposed amendment which seeks to earmark such revenues for natural habitat restoration projects would not contribute to that initiative. While there are many potential sources of resources for ecological restoration among Rouge Park's member organizations, our approved HAVE Plan needs strong support at this time.

The Alliance may also wish to consider whether the practice of earmarking revenue streams for specified purposes is counter-productive for effective Park management. Each year, staff and Rouge Park's Finance Committee perform a difficult process of achieving a broad range of important initiatives with scarce resources. The Committee and staff would benefit from maintaining as much flexibility as possible regarding future allocation of funds.

Report prepared by: Lewis Yeager, General Manager, Rouge Park
For information contact: Lewis Yeager, 905-713-7374; e-mail: klyeager@rougepark.com
Date: January 28, 2009
Attachments

2. Rouge Park Winter Bird Count

KEY ISSUE

Rouge Park's 6th Annual Winter Bird Count was a great success this year. It is a popular event for the local residents and the information collected provides important data for comparing past bird populations. Continuation of this project proves to be beneficial to the ongoing monitoring of our successes in ecological restoration and management of the natural heritage of Rouge Park.

MOTION:
Res. #11/09

Moved by: Tracy Smith
Seconded by: Clyde Smith

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance receive this report.

..... **CARRIED**

BACKGROUND

Rouge Park’s 6th Annual Winter Bird Count (WBC) was held on January 11, 2009 and covered much of the publicly owned lands within the Rouge River watershed. This event expanded on the data collected by the previous Winter Bird Counts held in Rouge Park, and continues to fill an important gap in regional winter bird count records. Bird counting events promote the understanding and appreciation of conservation of wild birds and their habitats. This year, Rouge Park hosted 88 volunteers who participated in either the Park areas or in their own backyards. This is an increase from the average of 50 volunteers in previous counts.

Rouge Park volunteers recorded 67 species and over 5000 individual birds. Highlights included a **Bald Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), a provincially endangered species; **White-winged Crossbills** (*Loxia leucoptera*), which have not been seen in previous Rouge Park Winter Bird Counts; **American Pipit** (*Anthus rubescens*) who are using the park as a migratory route towards their winter range from southern United States to Central America; **Trumpeter Swans** (*Cygnus buccinator*), a species once close to extinction; **Wild Turkey** (*Meleagris gallopavo*), a species slowly repopulating its former range following its extirpation from Ontario in the early 1900’s; and the **Pileated Woodpecker** (*Dryocopus pileatus*), an area sensitive species requiring large tracts of forest.

Although long-term bird trends need 7-10 years of data to draw any significant conclusions, some short-term trends can be seen. In 2008, American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds were at record highs. This may have been due to the warmer weather experienced during those winter months. This year however, temperatures on average have been colder and standing snow has occurred since mid-November. This means food availability decreases, forcing the migrant birds to go south sooner, possibly explaining the slight decrease in numbers for these migrants in 2009.

Species that have not been seen in any of the counts before were the White-winged Crossbills and Common Ravens. These bird species are traveling to the very southern limits of their range in search of food. This could be because of complications with respect to food availability and/or habitat within their northern habitats. Another species that has not been counted before and that may be the cause of some concern, is the Brown-headed Cowbird. These birds are brood parasites and are a threat to the breeding bird population in Rouge Park.

The Winter Bird Count was well supported by the media this year; the event was highlighted on guidingstar.ca, an online source for Markham events, and by Fairchild Television, a Cantonese television network. The Markham Economist, the Richmond Hill Liberal, the Scarborough Mirror and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority all helped to promote the event. We were pleased by the number of volunteers who joined us this year. The event was well received and we look forward to having many of these volunteers join us in future Rouge Park volunteer events.

Report prepared by: Sheryl Santos, Stewardship Assistant, Rouge Park
For information contact: Sheryl Santos, 905-713-6007 - email: sheryl_santos@rougepark.com
Date: January 28, 2009

Park staff received 8 proposals from substantially the same group of proponents as in the past two years (see Tables 1 and 2). The Park's Natural Heritage Committee met on December 4, 2008 to review and evaluate the proposals and recommend funding levels to the Rouge Park Alliance (RPA). The established process for review, ranking and recommending allocations was used, as in past years. Each proponent was given 10 minutes per project to outline the proposal and an additional 5 minutes to answer questions. No individuals or agencies that made proposals were involved in ranking, evaluation or allocation decisions. Once all proponents had been heard the Committee met in-camera to discuss the proposals and to make the recommendation to the Rouge Park Alliance. The Committee recommended all proposals received for funding for a total of \$177,741. Two proposals included use of heavy equipment to excavate wetlands. The Committee noted that use of heavy construction equipment can be dangerous and so must be undertaken with extreme caution. It was also recognized that there are regulations and laws pertaining to construction sites. The Committee recognized the need for clear policies to guide the use of heavy equipment in the Park and so decided to develop a set of guidelines. The Committee decided not to recommend the funding of heavy construction related activities until those guidelines are in place and so reduced the requests by that much. All other elements of all proposals were recommended for funding as requested (Table 1).

Table 1: Projects Proposed for 2009

TOTAL SCORE	RANK	PROJECT NAME & NUMBER	ALLOCATION \$	(%)	2009 REQUEST \$	(%)
281.82	1	#1 - Little Rouge Corridor/Morningside Creek Rehabilitation – Ontario Streams	13,620	(8)	13,620	(7)
281.82	1	#5 - 20th Annual Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project - 10000 Trees for the Rouge Valley	27,500	(16)	27,500	(14)
263.64	2	#8 - Restoration of Priority Rouge Park Sites 2009 - Friends of the Rouge Watershed	80,000	(45)	105,000	(52)
260.00	3	#4 - Rouge Stream and Habitat Monitoring – Citizen Scientists	6,371	(4)	6,371	(3)
254.55	4	#3 - Farmland and Floodplain Restoration – Rouge Valley Foundation	34,205	(19)	31,000	(15)
245.45	5	#2 - Richmond Hill Headwaters Rehabilitation - Ontario Streams	12,000	(7)	12,000	(6)
218.18	6	#7 - Cover Crop and Wetland Complex - 10000 Trees for the Rouge Valley	4,000	(2)	5,000	(3)
	Not ranked	#6 - Woodland Restoration Plan - Neighbourhood Environmental Science and Technology	Included in RVF – project #3 above		3,205	(2)
		Total	177,696		203,696	

Note that the % of total Rouge Park Alliance allocation by project is presented in parentheses.

Table 2: Funding Allocated in Past 2 Years

Organization	Project	2008 K\$ (%)	2007 K\$ (%)
Rouge Valley Naturalists	Invasive Plant Inventory	None	12.8 (9)
		28.4 (19)	N/A
Toronto Zoo	Turtle Habitat Use Research	No request	15.0 (11)
	Turtle Habitat Restoration	15.6 (10)	N/A
Friends of the Rouge Watershed	Priority Sites	40.0 (27)	50.0 (35)
	Seed Collection	5.0 (3)	10.0 (7)
	Reesor Wetland	20.0 (13)	N/A
Citizen Scientists	Stream Monitoring	6.3 (4)	5.9 (4)
Ontario Streams	Rchmond Hill Headwaters	None	12.5 (9)
	Wetland Creation	None	6.0 (4)
	Little Rouge Habitat Restoration	10.0 (7)	N/A
10000 Trees	Tree Planting	25.0 (17)	25.0 (17)
Community Resource Centre	Walden Pond	N/A	6.1 (4)
Total		150.3	143.3

Note that the % of total Rouge Park Alliance allocation by project is presented in parentheses.

Recommended Projects (in order of priority)

1. Little Rouge Corridor/Morningside Creek Rehabilitation – Ontario Streams – previous cooperator.

This project proposes to continue the stream-side and in-stream habitat restoration that Ontario Streams performed in sections of Little Rouge and Morningside Creeks by focusing on new segments of creek. The proposed work is consistent with the Rouge Park Alliance (RPA) Action Plan and Rouge River Watershed Plan and Rouge Park staff has assurances from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) that actions will be consistent with the pending fisheries management plan. Recommend full funding request of \$13,620.

Deliverables include:

- a. Little Rouge Creek
 - Riparian planting of 250 m of both sides of Little Rouge Creek near Ninth Line and Donald Cousens Parkway
 - Placement of up to 3 structures in the streams
 - Monitor stream temperature and benthos
 - Habitat mapping for additional 500 m of stream in fall
- b. Morningside Creek
 - i. Riparian planting of 250 m of west side of Morningside Creek
 - ii. Placement of up to 3 structures in the streams
 - iii. Monitor stream temperature and benthos
 - iv. Habitat mapping for additional 500 m of stream in fall

Conditions:

- a. Consult with TRCA fluvio-geomorphologist (R. Ness) for final design of in-stream structures to ensure no increased erosion or flooding.
- b. Consult with TRCA aquatic staff (C. Tu) for final design.
- c. Submit final design to Rouge Park for approval before 2009 implementation.

- d. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA, Town of Markham, City of Toronto. Ensure appropriate approvals from MNR and DFO.
- e. Variances from approved design require written approval from Rouge Park.
- f. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.
- g. Permanent signage must be approved by Rouge Park.

- 2. 20th Annual Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project - 10000 Trees for the Rouge Valley – previous cooperator.** This project is a significant milestone for 10000 Trees because it is their 20th anniversary. The project proposed is for the same area as 10000 Trees has planted in the last 2 years and is consistent with the RPA Action Plan. The site was originally designated as an area to receive fill but the arrangement with the contractor fell through. The proposed project is consistent with previous 10000 Trees plantings with the exception that there is funding included for removal of an old fence that is a hazard. Recommend full funding request of \$27,500.

Deliverables include:

- a. Plant at least 6000 trees and shrubs on 3 ha, as outlined in the proposal dated November 6, 2008.
- b. Provide 3 years follow up maintenance and continue maintenance on previous years' sites as previously agreed.

Conditions:

- a. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA, Town of Markham and Region of York.
- b. Variances from approved design require written approval from Rouge Park.
- c. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.
- d. Permanent signage must be approved by Rouge Park.

- 3. Restoration of Priority Rouge Park Sites 2009 - Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW) – previous cooperator.** FRW proposed reforestation and wetland creation projects at 2 sites in the Bob Hunter Memorial Park and one at the intersection of Old Finch Avenue and Reesor Road. All 3 sites are areas that FRW has undertaken in previous projects. All plantings are consistent with the RPA Action Plan and the Natural Heritage Committee is supportive of the tree planting components of the proposal and recommends full funding of the request for that portion. The Committee was more concerned about the actual creation and construction of wetlands, for several reasons. First, use of heavy equipment is a dangerous activity and there are provincial and often municipal requirements associated with the activity and so any projects RPA undertakes must be designed and executed with considerable diligence. Second, while wetlands can be created by excavation, this approach is not ecologically natural and should only be used in rare circumstances. It is far better to create wetlands by restoration of natural hydrologic regimes through decommissioning tile drains, plugging ditches and encouraging surface runoff to pool in existing depressions. Staff is in the process of developing a set of guidelines that will help in the future. FRW requested \$105,000 and the Committee recommends \$80,000 which is full funding for the tree planting component.

In addition to the community outreach described in the proposal dated November 7, 2008, specific habitat improvement

Deliverables include:

- a. On the 3 areas covering 30 ha outlined in the proposal plant at least:
 - i. 28,000 trees and shrubs

- ii. 10,000 native wildflowers
- iii. 500 m riparian areas
- iv. 60 kg each of native tree and wildflower seed
- v. 95 kg of native grass seed
- vi. Install 20 nesting boxes and 100 log piles, 10 raptor posts
- vii. Remove 1000 m² of invasive species
- viii. Remove 100 bags of litter

Conditions:

- a. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA, Town of Markham, Region of York and City of Toronto.
- b. Adhere completely to planting designs and species composition provided by Rouge Park and TRCA for the berm area along 14th Avenue in Bob Hunter Memorial Park.
- c. Variances from approved design require written approval from Rouge Park.
- d. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.
- e. Permanent signage must be approved by Rouge Park.

- 4. Rouge Stream and Habitat Monitoring – Citizen Scientists – previous cooperator.** This project is in the 7th year of 10 years. The project will continue the water quality monitoring at the same 7 sites as previous years and data are made available to agencies for use. The group is composed entirely of volunteers and the Rouge Park funding provides for equipment, materials and volunteer training and some field support. Reports are provided to Rouge Park via newsletters, websites and final reports. Recommended full requested funding of \$6,371.

Deliverables include:

- a. Collect, analyze and store water quality, fish and benthos data for the 7 sites on the Little Rouge Creek as described in the proposal dated November 5, 2008.
- b. Make data available to MNR, TRCA and ensure data are available to Rouge Park.
- c. Provide annual report summarizing data with recommendations and observations that may need action.

Conditions:

- a. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA, Town of Markham, Region of York and MNR.
- b. Ensure that data collected are consistent with TRCA and MNR protocols.
- c. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.

- 5. Farmland and Floodplain Restoration – Rouge Valley Foundation (RVF) (including the Woodland Restoration Plan – NEST) – previous cooperator.** This project consists of 2 parts, the first is restorations at fields along 16th Avenue and Reesor Road and the second, development of a management plan for a degraded forest that is adjacent and would likely compromise the success to the reforestation of the primary area. Recommend full funding of both parts for total of \$34,205.

Part 1. RVF has proposed planting riparian areas and a roadside buffer in agricultural fields, one along 16th Avenue and a second along Reesor Road. In both cases, the plantings are designed to be successful in wetter riparian sites as well as create a fast-growing treed strip along roads. In addition, RVF proposes to plant trees that will extend the treed border of the Little Rouge Creek in an old field in the river valley on Park land, just below the Rouge Valley Mennonite Church on Reesor Road. All plantings are consistent with the Rouge Park Action Plan.

Deliverables include:

- a. Plant a mixture of 5000 and 4000 conifer and deciduous trees respectively at the 16th Avenue and Reesor Road sites according to the proposal dated November 1, 2008.

Conditions:

- a. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA, Town of Markham, Region of York and MNR.
- b. Variances from approved design require written approval from Rouge Park.
- c. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.
- d. Permanent signage must be approved by Rouge Park.

Part 2. An old Scotch pine plantation and abandoned field are adjacent to the 16th Avenue field. The pines have begun to spread into the field and the plantation is in need of management. In addition, European buckthorn has invaded the old field. The presence of both of these plants caused concern for the proposed planting so the Rouge Valley Foundation were asked to prepare a management plan for this site that might be included in a future year's proposal. RVF chose to seek advice from Neighbourhood Environmental Science and Technology to develop the proposal.

Deliverables include:

- a. Prepare a plan for management and restoration of the woodland and meadow as outlined in the proposal dated November 6, 2008.

Conditions:

- a. Adhere to all conditions required by TRCA regarding access.
- b. All data and plans prepared are property of Rouge Park Alliance.
- c. Variances from approved design require written approval from Rouge Park.
- d. Notify Rouge Park (S. Santos) two weeks before commencing implementation activities or media contacts.

- 6. Richmond Hill Headwaters Rehabilitation - Ontario Streams –previous cooperator.** Ontario Streams has proposed restoration of 4 streams in the upper reaches of Rouge River tributaries in Richmond Hill. Restoration work includes regrading and stabilization of eroded banks, riparian tree/shrub planting and removal of debris from the streambed. The proposed work is consistent with the Rouge River Watershed Plan and Rouge Park staff has assurances from the MNR that actions will be consistent with the pending fisheries management plan. Recommend full funding request of \$12,000.

Deliverables include:

- a. Plant 600 shrubs, 900 trees and 2000 live stakes in riparian areas as outlined in the proposal dated November 7, 2008.
- b. Enhance 950 m of stream by debris removal, bank stabilization and invasive marsh vegetation
- c. Monitor past projects and map habitat for future restorations

Conditions:

- a. Consult with TRCA fluvio-geomorphologist (R. Ness) for final design of in-stream structures to ensure no increased erosion or flooding.
- b. Consult with TRCA aquatic staff (C. Tu) for final design.
- c. Submit final design to Rouge Park for approval before 2009 implementation.

5. Rouge Park Alliance Meeting Schedule for 2009/2010

MOTION: Moved by: Jack Heath
Res. #15/09 Seconded by: Glenn De Baeremaeker

THAT the Rouge Park Alliance approve the following meeting dates for 2009/2010:

- Friday, April 3, 2009 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough
- Friday, May 1, 2009 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough
- *Friday, June 19, 2009 Rouge River Community Centre, 120 Rouge Bank Drive, Markham
- Friday, September 18, 2009 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough
- Friday, October 30, 2009 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough
- Friday, December 4, 2009 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough
- Friday, February 5, 2010 Main Boardroom, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave., Scarborough

..... CARRIED

DETAILS

Rouge Park Alliance meetings will commence at 9:00 a.m., at the locations indicated beside each date.

* On June 19, 2009, at 9:00 a.m., there will be a brief regular Rouge Park Alliance meeting at the Rouge River Community Centre, 120 Rouge Bank Drive, Markham. Immediately following (at approximately 10:15 a.m.) the Rouge Park Alliance Annual General Meeting will commence.

6. Forest Ecology and Restoration

KEY ISSUE

A number of forest planting thoughts have been put forward by Alliance members and others, and have been intensively reviewed by the Rouge Park Natural Heritage Committee, outside advisors, and Rouge Park ecologists. This report summarizes several issues that the Alliance may wish to consider.

MOTION: Moved by: Glenn De Baeremaeker
Res. #16/09 Seconded by: Tracy Smith

THAT Rouge Park will utilize a complete range of ecologically appropriate restoration methods suited to local site circumstances that will result in robust, diverse forest ecosystems and landscapes that provide attractive visitor experiences;

AND THAT Rouge Park continue to benefit from well supervised community volunteer groups to provide appropriate tree planting opportunities that enhance the Park’s habitats and provide connections to the Park for a diverse volunteer base;

AND FURTHER THAT Rouge Park staff endeavour to develop additional volunteer community groups with interests in working with the Park in many ways.

..... CARRIED

ACTION

- Staff to take appropriate action.

BACKGROUND

The Rouge Park Alliance recently approved its Action Plan to guide the ecological restoration of Rouge Park over the next few years. The Action Plan envisions large scale restoration, using a broad range of effective tools, to achieve the Park's goals.

It is clear that we must move in a timely manner to build the Park's forests, meadows and wetlands. Rouge Park may be completely surrounded by urban development in 20 to 30 years or less, yet mature forests take many more years to fully develop. If our forest habitats are not ready when development occurs, there will be no refuge for displaced animals and plants. One of Rouge Park's most important ecological services is to be able to provide a major reservoir of biodiversity in the Greater Toronto Area.

Attached to this report are several relevant items. One is a report prepared by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) which outlines its successes in forest restoration using mechanical planting, supplemented by hand-planting, depending upon a number of factors detailed in that report. This TRCA report was previously provided as an item of correspondence in the package for the December 5, 2008 meeting of the Rouge Park Alliance.

Two other attached items originating from Mr. Jim Robb are also attached to this report. The first of these, titled Motion - Planting Methods, was moved and seconded at the December 5th meeting, but was deferred to a future meeting because the Rouge Park Alliance had not been provided with sufficient time to circulate the information to Rouge Park Alliance members for review. Similarly, a second, titled Motion - Utilizing and Building NGO Capacity, was deferred. Both motions are now before the Alliance for consideration.

Since the December 5, 2008 meeting, Mr. Robb submitted, by e-mail, revised versions of these two motions which are also appended. The Alliance may wish to consider these revisions as amendments, should members move and second such an action. Mr. Robb has provided helpful information regarding the capabilities of NGO volunteer groups in delivering ecological restoration and his views on forest management practices along with these motions.

Rouge Park's Natural Heritage Committee has reviewed in detail a wide range of issues relating to planting methods and other ecological themes during the preparation of the Action Plan and beyond. In response to a letter written by Mr. Robb, which was referred to the Natural Heritage Committee, the Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance requested a review of this letter by staff ecologists and a summary of comments on its content. The resulting report to the Natural Heritage Committee is appended to this report.

All of these documents have useful information, and they largely agree on most issues. The following points seem to emerge and are of particular relevance to Alliance members.

Rouge Park uses a succession-based ecological strategy to build diverse forest ecosystems. Unlike planting a garden, where trees, shrubs and flowers will stay put over the short term, forest restoration depends upon planting pioneer species that can succeed in current conditions and prepare the site for successor species that will more closely resemble the forest ecosystems that once thrived in this area, termed a climax forest.

However, to provide pleasant visitor experiences and, more critically, to limit incursions of unwanted, often non-native invasive plants, we design our restorations to try to accelerate the successional process by providing a mix of native tree species that will act as seed sources.

The issue of whether hand-planting or machine planting is inherently “better” is a complete red herring. Either method can be done well or done poorly. Most successful forest restorations utilize both methods to complement each other.

Hand-planting by volunteers in Rouge Park often results in trees planted quite close together and in rows. Traditional machine planting undertaken outside the Park has often resulted in monotonous rows of Red Pine planted too close together. However, the circumstances for planting those forest were very different than those in today’s Rouge Park.

As the Natural Heritage Committee found, it would be unfortunate to eliminate any forest restoration methodology from our “toolbox”. Rather, if we do machine planting, it should be the best possible machine planting, with tree species and sources, spacing of trees, and other factors done to Rouge Park’s specifications. Our thorough monitoring of restoration sites will provide guidance for improvements in techniques. Hand-planted nodes would be provided to encourage faster development of diverse forests.

Similarly, many of our current hand-planted areas may suffer from close spacing and a row-like appearance. We may need to work more closely with our NGOs and volunteers to explore potential ways to increase the ecological value of their work.

The Park has opportunities to benefit from both hand-plantings by volunteers and staff, as well as interior area plantings provided by Rouge Park’s member organizations at no cost to the Alliance. There will always be important roles for volunteers in restoring Rouge Park. In fact, the Alliance has recognized the need for additional groups with an interest in growing Rouge Park on many previous occasions.

Hand-planting, particularly with larger trees, provides enhanced visual appeal to areas of the Park with public access. Indeed, most restoration sites benefit from a hand-planting component. As well, the volunteer activities build important connections between Rouge Park and its communities. A combination of all available tools, carefully managed and monitored, will ensure that Rouge Park becomes a reservoir of biodiversity in a timely and cost-effective manner, while providing pleasant vistas for visitors and enriching experiences for volunteers.

With respect to Mr. Robb’s motions (revised versions), the following comments may be helpful.

With regard to utilizing and building NGO capacity, it may not be appropriate to name certain NGOs while not mentioning other NGOs that have also been doing good work in the Park. Since all proposed projects receive detailed review by the Heritage Committee, all successful groups can be considered “proven”. As well, since the Alliance wishes to attract new NGOs to the process, through the Small Grants Programme and other methods, use of the word “proven” may suggest earmarking of public funds in what has been designed to be a fair technical review process.

With respect to the draft motion on planting methods, part B may be inappropriate to our need to have a full range of tools available to us as circumstances arise, as noted above. Part A, however, reflects our past, successful practices, and is an accurate reflection of the contributions volunteers can make to Rouge Park.

Report prepared by: Lewis Yeager, General Manager, Rouge Park
For information contact: Lewis Yeager, 905-713-7374 - email: klyeager@rougepark.com
Date: January 29, 2009
Attachments

MOTION: Moved by: Glenn De Baeremaeker
Res. #17/09 Seconded by: Ron Moeser

WHEREAS, mechanical plantings create linear and uniformly spaced plantations which:

- Limit natural diversity and attractiveness for people, wildlife, recreation and tourism;
- Increase vulnerability to insect, disease and fire outbreaks;
- Slow natural regeneration of native hardwoods, shrubs and wildflowers;
- Require costly and noisy thinning and maintenance;

WHEREAS, traditional mechanical plantings create “un-naturally” low diversity, high density, conifer plantations which require costly and noisy thinning by chainsaw after a few decades, contrary to the Rouge Park’s vision of creating a “sanctuary for nature and the human spirit” and contrary to Rouge Park Management Plan objective of “ensuring the health and diversity of native species, habitats, landscapes”;

WHEREAS, NGO hand plantings with trained volunteers and crews (paid for performance, per tree, like northern Ontario reforestation) can restore large areas at reasonable cost without the linearity, uniformity and low diversity of mechanical plantings;

WHEREAS, hand planting and seeding can imitate the non-linear and variably spaced clumps of diverse native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, which occur “naturally” in response to frequently changing soil, slope and moisture conditions;

WHEREAS, hand plantings can reduce transplant shock and improve survival by planting earlier in spring and later in fall when it is too wet and muddy for mechanical plantings;

WHEREAS, hand plantings can accelerate forest growth by planting larger trees which are free-to-grow before problematic grass and weed competition develops;

AND WHEREAS, hand plantings can occur on sites which are too sensitive (e.g. archaeology, existing flora and fauna, wetlands, ponds), too wet, too small, too stony or too difficult to access for mechanical plantings;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that:

(A) Rouge Park Alliance strongly supports hand planting by experienced community tree planting groups (NGOs) and well trained volunteers and planting crews;

(B) Mechanical plantings could also be supported if the capacity for hand planting by NGOs and Park partners has been fully utilized and the mechanical plantings:

- utilize site preparation to restore ponds, wetlands and natural hydrology;
- utilize native tree, shrub, wildflower and grass seeding to support biodiversity;
- avoid linear and uniform spacing to support the Park’s “natural” beauty;
- involve wide (4 m avg.) tree spacings to avoid future mechanical thinning;
- utilize a variety of hardy native trees and shrubs to support habitat diversity.

..... **CARRIED**

MOTION: Moved by: Glenn De Baeremaeker
Res. #18/09 Seconded by: Ron Moeser

WHEREAS, school, community and corporate plantings help to forge emotional bonds between the public and Rouge Park and create a sense of ownership and empowerment which will encourage good park and environmental stewardship, today and in the future;

WHEREAS, over the last decade, NGOs such as FRW and 10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley have helped Rouge Park build community awareness, involvement and support by coordinating more than 50,000 youth and community volunteers to plant more than 400,000 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to restore 160+ hectares of Rouge Park;

WHEREAS, NGOs such as FRW and 10,000 Trees have staff and volunteers with education and experience in forestry and restoration ecology and under-utilized restoration capacity;

WHEREAS, FRW and 10,000 Trees multiply the value of each dollar of Rouge Park funding by raising funding from corporate, private, federal, provincial and municipal partners;

WHEREAS, the raising of additional funding enables the planting of a greater diversity of trees, wildflowers and shrubs; the planting of seeds and larger trees to accelerate and diversity restoration; the creation of ponds, wetlands and wildflower meadows to increase habitat beauty and diversity; and the involvement, training and education of volunteers;

WHEREAS, the success and value of FRW and 10,000 Trees restoration projects has been acknowledged by awards from Rouge Park, Wildlife Habitat Canada, York Region, Markham and Toronto and letters of support from many Rouge Park Alliance members;

WHEREAS, the approved Rouge Park Natural Heritage Action Plan has an established restoration target of 688 hectares over the next 8 years (avg. of 86 ha/year);

AND WHEREAS, NGOs such as FRW and 10,000 Trees have the capacity and proven expertise to help Rouge Park achieve 50% of the aforementioned restoration target, if they receive early and reliable access to priority Rouge restoration sites and funding;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that:

(A) Rouge Park and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) will strive to continue to provide NGOs, like FRW and 10,000 Trees, with reliable, early and multi-year access to sufficient sites to fully utilize their restoration capacity.

MOTION AS AMENDED CARRIED

It was agreed to by the mover and the seconder to add in (A) above (1st line, last paragraph of the motion) the words "to continue".

ACTION - Staff to take appropriate action.

