



Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROUGE PARK AWARDS GIVEN TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Markham – Each year, the Rouge Park Award is given to a member or members of the community who have made outstanding contributions to North America’s largest natural environment park in an urban setting. This evening, at the 7th annual Rouge Park awards ceremony, eight individuals and one group were recognized for their work to benefit the Park.

2004 Rouge Park Award winner, the Park’s former General Manager, Gord Weeden, was an enthusiastic recipient and reminded everyone of the importance of partnership in making this unique park a great success. Weeden was the inaugural GM for Rouge Park, serving from 1995, when the Park was established, until 2001. Gord brought with him many years of experience with provincial parks.

Ron Christie, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, the decision-making board for the Park, reflected on Mr. Weeden’s contributions: “It was not easy to be the pioneering staff at a newly formed, and in many ways experimental, park when Gord started at Rouge Park in 1995. His ability to work with people was a key factor for Rouge Park’s success in gaining support from many local groups and individuals, all four levels of government, and the private sector. In the early days of Rouge Park, Gord fostered those relationships to raise awareness about Rouge Park and the many tasks that needed to be done.”

Awards were given to private land owners of residential and corporate properties who have demonstrated good stewardship by implementing environmental Best Management Practices. These land owners, who have demonstrated a commitment to protecting the environment on their lands for the long term were recognized as Rouge River Keepers. This year’s two winners are Kelly Carrick, a resident of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and Station Creek Golf Club, also in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

In addition, Heritage Awards were given to six individuals who have each made a significant contribution to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural ecosystems of the Park by ensuring the health and diversity of its native species, habitats, landscapes and ecological processes. The six 2004 winners are two staff from the City of Toronto: Tom Boudreault and Chris Hope; one staff from the Town of Markham, Lilli Duoba; Mike Fenning of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority; and two staff from the provincial government, Garry Pringle of Ontario Realty Corporation and Steve Varga of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

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Backgrounder

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Rouge Park Awards

What is Rouge Park?

Rouge Park is one of the largest natural environment parks in an urban setting in North America. In response to public concerns about the future of the Rouge River valley, the Province of Ontario announced its intention to create a park in the Rouge in 1990. In 1994, the *Rouge Park Management Plan* was approved by the Province, and in 1995 Rouge Park was launched. It contains some of the largest and best examples of meadow, interior forest habitat and coastal wetlands in the Greater Toronto Area.

Rouge Park Awards

Each year, the Rouge Park Alliance recognizes individuals or groups who have made an outstanding contribution to Rouge Park. Groups or individuals that meet one or more of the following criteria will be considered:

- contributed to the establishment, development, promotion of Rouge Park
- shown commitment and made an outstanding contribution to our Vision, Goals and Objectives
- exhibited leadership and promoted community involvement in Rouge Park
- encouraged natural and cultural heritage by example
- made any other outstanding contributions to Rouge Park

Awards for work in the categories of Education, Natural and Cultural Heritage and private land stewardship are also given out.

Heritage Award winners have made a significant contribution to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural ecosystems of the Park by ensuring the health and diversity of its native species, habitats, landscapes and ecological processes. If emphasizing the human values of the Park, they identify, protect and conserve the cultural heritage features of the Park for their inherent value and depiction of the long-term human use and occupancy of the area.

Education Award winners have helped to promote knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural values of the Park, their protection and management requirements, and their significance, sensitivities and interrelationships to the general public.

Private land owners, whether residential, agricultural or corporate, who use environmental best management practices on their properties are eligible for recognition as *Rouge River Keepers*. These land owners must demonstrate a commitment to protecting the environment, or restoring it where necessary, on their lands for the long term.

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Past Rouge Park Award winners

1998	
Main Rouge Park Award	Hon. Pauline Browes, former MP
1999	
Main Rouge Park Award	Lois James, local environmental activist
Education Award	Murray Johnston, Rouge Valley Foundation
Heritage Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenn De Baeremaeker, Save the Rouge Valley System, Inc. • Jim Robb, Friends of the Rouge Watershed • Colin Creasey, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley • Mark Heaton, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
2000	
Main Rouge Park Award	Joyce Trimmer, former Scarborough mayor
Education Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Marshall, Save the Rouge Valley System, Inc. • Bill Lewis, Rouge Valley Foundation
Heritage Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenn Harrington, Harrington & Hoyle • Ken Dion, Ontario Streams
Rouge River Keepers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lorne Smith, resident • Lynn Westaway, Westaway Farms • Willowgrove Farms • Dr. Terry O'Connor, Tockomo Farms
2001	
Main Rouge Park Award	Jim Robb and Cathy Gregorio-Robb, environmental activists
Education Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Gahbauer, Rouge Valley Foundation • Terry Tamblyn, teacher
Heritage Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim MacDonald, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley • Jim Bamford, Parkview Golf Club
Rouge River Keepers	Bruce's Mill Conservation Area, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

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Past Rouge Park Award winners, cont'd...

2002	
Main Rouge Park Award	Save the Rouge Valley System, Inc
Education Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Carrick, film maker and bird breeder • Fleming Public School, Toronto • Heather Forfar, teacher • Green Thumbs Club, Toronto • David Grey Eagle, environmental activist
Heritage Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Boniface, Town of Markham • Marshall Buchanan, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley • Ron Dewell, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority • Doug Forder, Ontario Streams • Dan Olding, Town of Richmond Hill • Lesley Price, Milne Park Conservation Association • Bruce Tisdale, City of Toronto
Rouge River Keepers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBM Software Lab, Markham • Emerald Hills Golf Club, Markham • Markham Green Golf Club, Markham • Pride in Preston Lake, Whitchurch-Stouffville • Al and Joan Johnston, residents
2003	
Main Rouge Park Award	Hon. David Crombie, former MP and former Toronto mayor, urban environmental advocate
Education Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Evans, Rouge Valley Foundation • Hillside Outdoor Education School, Toronto • Tazmeen Jajbhay, teacher • West Rouge Junior Public School, Toronto
Heritage Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rob Johnson, Friends of the Rouge Watershed • Rob Messervey, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources • Toronto Zoo • Tupper Wheatley, Milne Park Conservation Association
Rouge River Keepers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cedar Brae Golf Club, Toronto • L'Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill • Sim Pjsileman, resident

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