

ROUGE REPORTER

Beare Wetland Grand Opening

A new wetland is taking shape in Rouge Park. A barren aggregate pit is now home to over 40 ponds and many regionally rare birds, amphibians, mammals and plants.

The Beare Wetland is minutes from the Toronto Zoo overpass at Meadowvale Road.

From the east side of the overpass, walk east down the road leading over the Little Rouge River and towards the Beare Hill (a closed landfill). Before the railway line, head north on the trail that loops around the wetland ponds. Come to the official opening of this site on June 3, from 10-12am....**learn about the restoration on page 4**



Rare Blandings turtle at the Beare Wetland.

Forest, Meadow and Wetland Regeneration

Community-based projects that protect and restore forests, meadows and wetlands are a major focus of FRW's activity. They help reconnect Environmentally Sensitive Areas of Rouge Park.

Every year, FRW involves 2,500 youth and volunteers in planting

up to 20,000 native trees and wildflowers on 10 hectares of priority Rouge Park sites. Volunteers come from schools, Guides and Scouts, church and community groups and local businesses.

For dates and times, check the Events Calendar on page 7.

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Did you know:

- ◆ FRW began in 1992.
- ◆ Over 250,000 native trees have been planted by FRW and 25,000 volunteers in the past 10 years.
- ◆ FRW regularly comments on issues that affect the ecological integrity of the Rouge.

Issues Affecting the Rouge River Watershed

With the provincial Greenbelt Plan, Clean Water Act and Rouge Watershed Plan, government officials are finally acknowledging what citizens have known for years. Urban sprawl is unsustainable. It is paving over irreplaceable farmland and greenspace and polluting water, air, land and our bodies.

FRW is working with the Greenbelt Alliance, Ontario Nature, the Ontario Smart Growth Network and the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition (RDGC) to protect greenspace and farmland and halt urban sprawl. Over the last decade we have made progress on the creation of a large Rouge Duffins Greenbelt Link between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine in the eastern GTA.

The Big Pipe

York Region plans to build a huge (two metre diameter) pipe to convey human sewage from communities as far away as Newmarket all the way to Lake Ontario in Pickering. Designed to accommodate 30 more years of urban sprawl, this pipe will convey 700 million litres of York Region sewage every day to Lake Ontario, our drinking water source. To make matters worse, this pipe is being foolishly built through major drinking water aquifers. Groundwater removal for the construction of the 16th Avenue section of the pipe in Markham has already lowered groundwater levels over an area of more than 200 square kilometers. Hundreds of rural wells have run dry and trout streams and wetlands have been harmed without federal Fisheries Act authorizations or a proper environmental assessment. A Coalition Against the Pipe (CAP) has formed to demand a comprehensive federal environmental assessment of

the overall Big Pipe project before impacts to groundwater and surface water spread further.

North Pickering–DRAP and Seaton

The RDGC and its many allies were successful in convincing Premier McGuinty to add the 3,000 hectare Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve to the GTA Greenbelt. In addition, Bill 16 was enacted to restore the Agricultural Easements on these lands and counter-act the ongoing attempts to develop these lands by influential developers and Pickering Council.

FRW commends Premier McGuinty and his government for the protection of the DRAP and the creation of the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. Premier McGuinty has also promised to add 2/3 of the province's lands in Seaton to the Greenbelt. The province's plans for Seaton must respect this promise.

The federal government owns 75 square kilometers of greenspace and farmland in North Pickering. FRW believes most of this land should be added to the greenbelt.

ROUGE REPORTER

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Giving Nature a Voice and a Helping Hand

Editorial

Welcome to FRW's first newsletter. We hope you enjoy it.

FRW envisions the Rouge River watershed as a healthy and vibrant sanctuary for nature and the human spirit within the Greater Toronto Area.

Through strong greenbelt linkages with the Oak Ridges Moraine and adjacent watersheds such as Duffins Creek, the Rouge River ecosystem can sustain healthy forests, farms, meadows and streams and habitat for diverse flora and fauna, contributing to the complex web of global biodiversity.

The protection and restoration of our ecosystems will also safeguard human health by sus-

**The woods are lovely
dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.**

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

taining the ecological processes that naturally protect the quality of our air, water, land and food.

Healthy ecosystems will provide communities with clean air, rivers, lakes and beaches, safe drinking water and food, and exciting opportunities for education, recreation and tourism.

Reaching these goals cannot be accomplished without the

support and involvement of the community.

With that in mind, we ask you to read this newsletter and consider volunteering some of your time or making a donation to further the vision of a healthy Rouge Watershed and park.

FRW Offers Clean Air Seminars for Students

By Sadhana (Sadi) Siva

FRW's Clean Air Program involves more than 1,200 students a year in issues such as climate change; greenhouse gas emissions; renewable energy; *One Tonne Challenge*, eco schools, and waste and energy audits.

In this program, students are presented with a "Climate Change" display emphasizing "Sources, Impacts and Solutions", and a video that stresses these vital points. Students are encouraged to

participate in class discussions through debates, games, quizzes, case studies, challenges, contests, as well as school and home energy audits.

The program is free and it complements the Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum Guidelines for Elementary and Secondary Schools.

FRW also organizes Climate Change contests every year. During last year's contest, more than 250 essays were

submitted from students in York, Durham and the Greater Toronto Region. This year, FRW is holding another contest entitled: *Taking Action on Climate Change: Garbage for One Person is Gold for Another*. Please visit our website (www.frw.ca) for more information regarding this contest.

If you would like to book a classroom presentation for your students, please call me at 416-208-0252 and/or email sadhana@frw.ca.

Restoring the Beare Borrow Pit ...from pg 1

By Colin O'Neill

Between 1965 and 1985, the Beare Landfill received some 10 million tonnes of garbage from Toronto citizens and businesses. Every day, soil and sand was removed from the nearby Beare Borrow Pit to cover the garbage. After the landfill closed, the Borrow Pit remained sparsely vegetated because the topsoil had been removed leaving a grey impermeable subsoil.

In 1998, FRW began a partnership with the City of Toronto to restore areas around the Borrow Pit. Trees were planted with success where topsoil remained. However, the actual pit, with its poor subsoil and drainage, was unsuitable for reforestation.

A local naturalist suggested wetland restoration and several small trial ponds were dug. These ponds retained water, and attracted frogs, turtles, birds and dragonflies. Pleased with this success, the City of Toronto and other government and business partners helped FRW to restore ponds, wetlands and meadows in the entire five hectare site.

FRW consulted with Bob Johnson, an amphibian and turtle expert at the Toronto Zoo, on the design of the ponds and wetlands. The larger ones were built between 2003 to 2006 in the fall and winter to avoid disturbance during the wildlife breeding and rearing season. Design features which were most attractive to wildlife in the early stages were maximized in the later stages.

The subsoil excavated from the ponds was formed into wide berms (dams) which raised water levels **more on page 6**



A pond is begun in the Beare Borrow Pit.



Volunteers planted wildflowers and spread mulch.



Two years later, the pond has come to life.

What Happens When a New Wetland is Created?

By Colin O'Neill

Over the last seven years, FRW, municipal, provincial and federal government partners, corporate sponsors like Unilever and Toyota Canada, United Soils, Rouge Park and thousands of dedicated volunteers have worked with Mother Nature to convert the barren Beare Borrow Pit into a wetland which could be considered regionally (or perhaps in a few years, provincially) significant.



Blue Flag Iris

“more than 100 native... species”

Wetland species were planted around and near the ponds and dry land plants were placed further uphill. Seeds from native wildflowers like black-eyed susan, sweet ox-eye, evening primrose and bergamot were planted and given time to mature. Many of the native species, were grown by small local Nurseries. There are more than 100 native tree, shrub and



Baby Snapping Turtle

wildflower species at the wetland including sycamore, dense blazing star, fragrant water lily and wild lupine. This diversity of wildflowers and shrubs attracts many interesting butterflies and moths including monarch, viceroy, checkerspot, swallowtail, cecropia and polythemus.



Monarch Caterpillar

Trails circle the wetland and birds like wood duck, eastern bluebird, trumpeter swan and woodcock can be seen.

Various mammals also use the site, including mink, deer, beaver, fox, coyote, vole and deer mice.



Red-spotted Newt.

In the spring, a variety of amphibians and reptiles can be observed or heard including Blandings turtles (a species at risk), red spotted newts, grey tree frogs, leopard frogs, green frogs, chorus frogs, American toads, garter snakes and milk snakes.

Frog Monitoring



Full article: www.frw.ca

Settlement Workshop Gives Historical Perspective

A workshop exploring the history of the Rouge River was hosted by Friends of the Rouge Watershed on March 11, 2006. The event opened with First Nations' prayers by David Grey Eagle, and his elder Pauline Shirt.

Dana Poulton, an archaeologist with extensive experience in the Rouge, discussed 10,000 years of aboriginal and early European settlement.

Jim Garrett, author of *The Rouge River Valley: An Urban Wilderness*, discussed 100,000 years of geological history and settlement by plant and animal communities.

Paul Harpley, a noted wildlife artist and life-

long naturalist, talked about his childhood experiences growing up in the Rouge, where his grandfather owned a cottage before Hurricane Hazel hit Toronto in 1954.

The workshop closed with videotaped recollections by Lorne Smith, Town of Markham historian, who told stories about early settlers of the area.

Ryerson students and FRW volunteers taped the Workshop. Call 416-208-0252 for more information.



Arrow and spear points from the Rouge.

Bearefrom page 4 creating additional wetland areas. Buried pipes regulate water levels and allow slow drainage. The ponds vary in size, shape, depth and shoreline to increase habitat diversity. Logs, branches, sand, rocks and peninsulas increase shoreline habitat niches and shelter from predators.

Once the ponds were dug and sandy topsoil was spread, volunteers planted thousands of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers throughout the wetlands.



FRW's logo is a tree frog.

New Initiatives for 2006

In 2006, FRW hopes to undertake several new initiatives to further protect and enhance the Rouge watershed.

Watershed Strategy

FRW wants to ensure that the Rouge Watershed Plan, being developed by the TRCA, has effective objectives and policies for protecting and improving watershed health. The plan should require:

- ◆ A minimum of 35% forest cover and less than 10% hard surfaces per subwatershed to protect and improve water quality and quantity, air quality and biodiversity,
- ◆ Innovative storm water treatment to improve water

quality and fish habitat and reduce flooding and erosion risks;

- ◆ Five consecutive years of positive trends in water quality, streamflow stability, air quality and watershed health, before any further urban area expansions are considered in the Rouge watershed.

Restoration Workshop

FRW plans to organize a workshop that will bring together groups like 10,000 Trees, Ontario Streams, Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), and others to share restoration best practices and discuss ways to improve the work we are doing.

Calendar of Events

- ◆ Saturday, April 22, 2006, 9:30am to 2pm: Tree planting with Councillor Raymond Cho, the Morningside Heights Residents Association and Korean Canadians.
- ◆ Saturday, April 29, 10am to 2pm: Guides/Scouts/Cubs tree planting and nature hike day at Woodland Park on the southeast corner of Reesor Road and Steeles Avenue. Public welcome.
- ◆ Saturday, May 6, 10am to 2pm: Ontario Nature and FRW tree planting and nature hike at the new Beare Wetland. Public welcome.
- ◆ Saturday, May 27, 10am to 3pm: Toyota Canada and FRW tree planting and nature walk at Beare Hill and Beare Wetland.
- ◆ Sunday, May 28, 1pm to 4pm: Interfaith Spring Tree and Wildflower Planting at Beare Wetland. Public welcome.
- ◆ Saturday, June 3, 10-12am: Beare Wetland Grand Opening Ceremony.
- ◆ Saturday, June 17, 10am to 3pm: Ontario Nature Greenway Strategy and Cycling Event at Herongate Barn and Dinner Theater, Altona Road, one kilometer north of Taunton Road.

Notes: Please call (416) 208-0252 or email at sadhana@frw.ca for more information. See page one of this newsletter for directions to the Beare Wetland.



Students with milk snake.

Earth Day Planting near Morningside Tributary

On Earth Day, April 22, 2006, FRW will partner with Councillor Raymond Cho, Morningside Heights Residents and their Association to plant 1,500 trees near the Morningside Tributary of the Rouge River and Park.

The planting site is a former Brookside Golf Course fairway which is now a City park and part of Rouge Park.

The fairway breaks the canopy of an old growth maple and pine forest just west of Staines Road and south of Steeles Avenue, creating an ideal habitat for many forest edge species (cowbird, crow, raccoon, etc) that prey upon and eliminate vulnerable and rare species (hermit thrush, scarlet tanager, etc). Planting trees will help to restore forest continuity, improving survival of rare and interesting spe-

cies that require larger forest tracts to breed and succeed.

The Tributary is home to the redbreasted dace, a small red-striped, insect-eating fish that is a federal species at risk. It may also be the last small tableland stream in Toronto which can support trout year-round. Increasing forest cover will help protect water quality and cool the stream.

The stream is regularly stocked with young trout and salmon by the Metro East Anglers. This group operates a trout hatchery on the Parkview Golf Course north of this site.

FRW hopes that this planting will lead to ongoing conservation partnerships with Morningside Heights residents. We look forward to working with the community in this regard.



I Wish to Donate

Yes! I want to donate to Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW)!

Name (will appear on tax receipt): _____

Address: _____

City, Province, Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to support FRW as:

- Patron (\$1,000 and above)
- Sustainer (\$100 to \$999)
- Friend (\$25 to \$99)
- Other \$ _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Please complete this form and enclose it with your payment.

Mail: Friends of the Rouge Watershed,
2259 Meadowvale Road,
Scarborough, Ontario M1X 1R2.

Fax: 416-396-3292.

Charitable number: 88878-1028-RP0001
(Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20.00.)



I Wish to Volunteer

Yes! I wish to volunteer with Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW)!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, Province, Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to work with FRW on...

- Tree planting
- Wildflower planting
- Bird box building
- Tree maintenance
- Scientific research
- Legal/accounting
- Computer Support
- Administration
- Fundraising
- Other _____

Please complete this form and check all the activities that interest you.

Mail:
Friends of the Rouge Watershed,
2259 Meadowvale Road,
Scarborough, Ontario M1X 1R2.

Fax: 416-396-3292

Friends of the Rouge Watershed would like to thank our many contributors and partners...



Rouge Park Alliance

ENVIRONMENT CANADA



Great Lakes Sustainability Fund / Le Fonds de durabilité des Grands Lacs



CFWIP HRDC



Morningside Heights Residents Association



United Soils

