

On the Don

This publication can be viewed online at www.trca.on.ca/don_newsletter

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Don Mouth Naturalization & Port Lands Flood Protection Project

The Environmental Assessment is Almost Done!

In 2010, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) and Waterfront Toronto (WT) plan to submit the Environmental Assessment for the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project (DMNP EA) for approval. This submission caps off a long planning process whose roots can be traced to a public meeting at the Ontario Science Centre in 1989.

Historical timeline of the project:

- 1989: A public meeting drew over 500 participants from the public, government agencies and environmental organizations to discuss the ailments of the Don River and ways to improve it. The community and local councillors became actively engaged and formed the Task Force to Bring Back the Don.
- August 1991: The Task Force proposed an ambitious vision of returning wetlands to the mouth of the Don as part of their report "Bringing Back the Don".
- December 1991: The Task Force's vision was showcased in "Regeneration" the final report of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront.
- 2001: The City of Toronto's Central Waterfront Secondary Plan embraced the idea of a wetland at the Don mouth.
- 2004: TRCA initiated the DMNP EA on behalf of WT.
- 2006: The Ministry of the Environment approved TRCA's Terms of Reference for the DMNP EA, setting the legislative framework for the EA to proceed.
- 2007: Waterfront Toronto held an International Design Competition, and selected the vision proposed by Michael Van Valkenberg Associates, Inc as best meeting the urban and environmental needs in the area.
- 2008: The winning design became Alternative 4WS in the DMNP EA and underwent detailed evaluation alongside other alternatives.
- 2009: Alternative 4WS was selected as meeting the DMNP EA's goals and was further refined as the Preferred Concept (Figure 1).
- 2010: TRCA and Waterfront Toronto to submit DMNP EA.

Flood Protection Benefits

In the 1980s, TRCA identified the mouth of the Don as the greatest flood risk area in its jurisdiction. Figure 2 shows the approximate extent of flooding that would occur under a Hurricane Hazel scenario. Naturalizing the Don mouth will permanently alleviate the risk of river flooding to more than 200 hectares (ha) of land and approximately 850 existing homes, commercial businesses and industrial uses.

The yellow outline on the left side of Figure 2 depicts a portion of the area at risk to flooding west of the Don River. This will be alleviated with the completion of the Flood Protection Landform in the West Don Lands, a separate project from the DMNP EA.



Figure 1: Alternative 4WS
Property of Waterfront Toronto.



Figure 2: Extent of flooding under a Hurricane Hazel scenario.

Ecological Benefits

Unlike most projects requiring an EA process, the outcomes of the DMNP project are strongly beneficial for all aspects of the environment. The intent of the DMNP project is to transform a degraded area with limited potential for use into a spectacular public greenspace surrounded by a progressive and sustainable urban fabric. The final outcome is an environment far superior to the existing conditions.

This project will create over 40 ha of higher quality habitat where there is currently no functional habitat or only highly degraded habitat. This will include the creation of wetlands, new and enhanced aquatic habitat, and parks, open space and terrestrial habitat for active and passive recreation.

The proposed Ship Channel wetland will be protected from the turbid waters of the Don, providing habitat for fish species, reptiles, amphibians, birds and small mammals, and perhaps allowing for the establishment of more sensitive vegetation, such as wild rice. Extensive open space areas will provide a transition between the built urban form and the naturalized areas.

Benefits to the City

In addition to providing flood protection and ecological benefits, a naturalized Don River mouth would benefit Toronto as a great public open space for Toronto's central waterfront (Figure 3), with improved trails and opportunities for recreational watercraft. The DMNP EA provides adaptational capacity in the naturalization and flood protection components against the possible effects of climate change.



Figure 3: Public open space at the Don River Mouth
Property of Waterfront Toronto

The DMNP EA provides adaptational capacity in the naturalization and flood protection components against the possible effects of climate change. It also allows for integrated planning to identify efficiencies in the design and implementation of infrastructure crossings (e.g. bridges and utilities), stormwater management, public access nodes to the open space areas, and comprehensive consideration of soils and groundwater management.

Construction Impacts of the Project

It is recognized that there are some potential effects associated with this project, relating primarily to construction activities. These effects are minor compared to the overall benefits of the final project, and can be mitigated or managed using current Best Management Practices (BMPs), and implementing a progressive Environmental Management Plan.

Adaptive Management & Monitoring

A comprehensive monitoring program has been recommended in the EA, including a post-construction performance monitoring program as part of the EA approvals, to ensure that the new river mouth functions as designed. This will allow us to adapt the operational management of the river system and to gain further knowledge of large-scale ecological restoration. Compliance monitoring will also be required as part of the EA approvals to guard against negative effects during the construction period of the project.

Timeline of next steps by the DMNP EA team:

- Complete the draft EA Report.
- Release a draft of the EA for a 30 day public and agency review in late spring prior to the official submission of the EA to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).
- Officially submit the EA for approval to the MOE in summer 2010.
- Officially submit the Federal EA for approval in late summer or early fall 2010. EA approvals anticipated by spring 2011.
- Detailed design and construction is dependent on funding availability.

For more information on details of the DMNP EA, please visit www.trca.on.ca or www.waterfronttoronto.ca.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

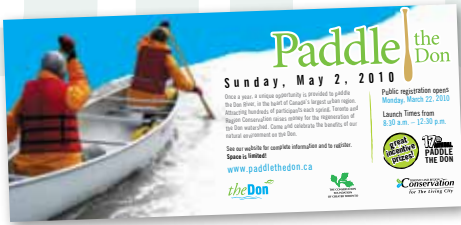
Fish species found in the Don

1. I belong to the minnow family.
2. My distinctive red and yellow stripes become brighter in the springtime.
3. I am known to have a big mouth.

What species am I?

Answer on page 4.

Hot Don issues and updates



Paddle the Don

by Jake Schabas

On Sunday, May 2, environmental supporters, avid canoeists and people from across the GTA will come together to celebrate the Don River. Building on the

tremendous success of previous Paddle the Don events, TRCA along with its partners and sponsors is holding the 17th annual Paddle the Don this year which will be complemented by a 'Pedal the Don' bike ride along the canoe route and a series of Jane's Walks around the watershed.

Along the fifteen kilometer journey, from E.T Seton Park just south of Eglinton Avenue, paddlers will get a view of Toronto few have ever seen, including signs of spring plants and animals along the banks of the Don, the undersides of thirteen bridges, seven railway crossings, five walking and biking paths, three streetcar lines, the Bloor viaduct and both the Don Valley Parkway and Gardiner Expressway. The trip finishes at the Keating Channel at the mouth of the Don.

To greet the exhilarated paddlers will be the Banrock Station Landing Party, complete with a barbeque, refreshments and music by the Don Valley Boys band. Although registration for Paddle the Don is now full, everyone is welcome to join the celebration at the Landing Party or cheer on the paddlers from one of the many river viewing spots.

For more information about the event, check out www.paddledon.ca or become a fan of Paddle the Don on facebook.

Visit www.pedalhedon.ca and www.janeswalk.net for details of other events on May 2.

Natural and Cultural Heritage Restoration at Milne Hollow

by Jake Schabas

The little farmhouse that could. That's one way of describing the last standing remnant of the nineteenth century Don Valley hamlet of Milneford Mills. Sitting within view of the Don Valley Parkway as it crosses Lawrence Avenue, this tiny gothic revival-style house was built in the 1860s and is one of the oldest structures in all of Toronto.

Once part of a cluster of 16 buildings that included two water-powered mills, a dry goods store, a wagon shop and workers' housing, the house's survival is nothing short of miraculous. The farmhouse has survived the decline of Toronto's mill industry, the clear-cutting of the valley wall to the south for the former Don Valley Ski Club and the building of the Don Valley Parkway, but years of neglect and vandalism have taken their toll.

Today, activity in this valley parkland - part of the Charles Sauriol Conservation Reserve - is all about regeneration. The park, known as Milne Hollow, is one of the City of Toronto's Bird Flyways sites, a project to enhance bird habitat along migratory corridors. Trail enhancements are underway to connect Milne Hollow to the west side of the East Don River Valley, including Moccasin Trail Park on

the west side of the DVP. Sitting at the entrance to the park, the little house of Milneford Mills has witnessed the remarkable transformation brought about by a century and half of human influence on the Don Valley.

The City of Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation, Heritage Toronto and local historic, conservation and preservation community groups are exploring options to restore the house. If you are interested in supporting the restoration of this historic gem, please contact Kim Statham-Bray at kstatha@toronto.ca.

The City of Toronto's Community Stewardship Program involves volunteers at Milne Hollow in a variety of stewardship activities. The team meets once weekly on Thursdays from 10 a.m. - Noon. The season runs from May through to September.

If you would like to join the group or for additional information, please contact the Natural Environment and Community Programs section of Urban Forestry at 416-392-LEAF (5323) or greentoronto@toronto.ca

Cleaning Up Our Waterways: Don River and Central Waterfront Project Upcoming Public Open Houses

In 1987, the International Joint Commission identified the City of Toronto's waterfront as one of 43 polluted Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes Basin, largely due to poor water quality conditions in the Don River and the Inner Harbour. Overflows from both storm sewers and combined sewers - sewers that contain both sanitary flows and stormwater - were identified as the main sources of pollution. In 2003, the City approved the Wet Weather Flow Master Plan, a long-term comprehensive plan aimed at solving this problem across the City's watersheds.

In mid 2008, the City of Toronto launched the Don River and Central Waterfront Project. It will bring together the solutions identified in the Wet Weather Flow Master Plan (WWFMP) aimed at improving water quality in the Lower Don River, including Taylor Massey Creek and the Inner Harbour with consideration for necessary upgrades to sanitary trunk sewer system.

The Project Team has now determined a preliminary preferred solution building upon the past recommendations. The solution identifies a number of facilities such as tunnels and underground storage tanks in locations throughout the study area.

The City of Toronto invites you to attend a Public Open House to learn more and gather your input before plans are finalized. Please see the Event Listings section of the newsletter for details on Open Houses in your area, as well as a workshop on May 31.

For more information on this project and materials presented at past meetings, please visit www.toronto.ca/involved.

ANSWER:

By Lauren Cummings

Redside Dace (*Clinostomus elongatus*)

Family: Cyprinidae



The redside dace is the only minnow species in Canada that has the ability to jump out of the water to feed. Their distinctive large mouth allows them to snatch small flying insects that hover above the stream surface, such as gnats, midges, mayflies and black flies.

Redside dace grow to a maximum of 12 cm, reach maturity at two years and have a life span of approximately four years. They spawn in late May in gravelly areas of cool, clear streams. Because they are visual feeders and need to see their prey before jumping, redside dace prefer clear, slow moving water.

The redside dace can be found in small freshwater streams ranging from parts of Minnesota in the west, down to Ohio, to New York State in the east, and southern Ontario in the north. Isolated populations have been found in northern Michigan and northern Kentucky. The redside dace is found discontinuously across its range, which means that many of these populations are isolated from one another, and consequently genetic health may decline over time or a single catastrophic event such as a chemical spill could wipe out a population. The Golden Horseshoe Region contains upwards around 80% of the Canadian redside dace population and much of that within areas that are slated for development in the coming years. Urban development is considered the most immediate threat to redside dace in Canada.

The preferred habitat of redside dace is made up of deeper pools in slow-moving sections of small, cool water streams often with overhanging grassy vegetation growing along the riverbanks. Urbanization can alter the physical habitat and water quality that redside dace depend on through changes in the natural flow regime, high velocities and turbidity. Because of extensive urbanization and resulting habitat degradation, redside dace in Southern Ontario are presently restricted to the calmer headwater streams of the watershed in which they were once more widespread.

The redside dace is listed as a Species of Special Concern nationally and it is Endangered provincially under the Endangered Species Act. Minnows are commonly used as baitfish, so the harvesting of baitfish has been prohibited by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the Ontario Fisheries Regulations in streams where redside dace are known to be present. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) suggests the redside dace may be a useful indicator of ecosystem health, because of their sensitivity to environmental disturbance.

The Don River has seen a large decline in the range and overall population size of redside dace. Their existing populations are now confined to upper reaches of the East Don river, and recovery planning is targeted for areas where they were once found in the Upper West Don river.

Don watershed events

TAYLOR MASSEY CREEK EVENTS

The Taylor Massey Project coordinates planting and stewardship events with its partners. Please visit <http://www.thetmp.org/calendar.htm> for information on Spring 2010 events.

CITY OF TORONTO PLANTING EVENTS

For more details visit www.toronto.ca/greentoronto, call 416-392-LEAF or email greentoronto@toronto.ca

East Don Restoration Event

May 1, 2010, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Cedarbrook Park Tree & Shrub Planting Event

May 15, 2010, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Winfield Park Community Planting

May 15, 2010, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Taylor Creek Wetland Planting

June 5, 2010, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Toronto Islands Tree Festival

June 12, 2010, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

DON RIVER AND CENTRAL WATERFRONT PROJECT OPEN HOUSES

Tuesday, May 4, 2010 - Warden Woods Community Centre Lounge, 74 Firvalley Court, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Monday, May 10, 2010 - Leaside Community Gardens Arena William Lea Room, 1073 Millwood Road, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Tuesday, May 11, 2010 - Harbourfront Community Centre Medium Assembly Hall, 627 Queens Quay West, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Monday, May 31, 2010 (evening workshop)

For more details and to register please call 416.338.5470 or e-mail: cleanwaterways@toronto.ca

12TH ANNUAL MILL POND SPLASH

June 6, 2010, 12:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Mill Pond Park, Richmond Hill

Join TRCA, Richmond Hill Naturalists, Town of Richmond Hill and Don Watershed Regeneration Council for this free annual eco-festival including displays, presentations, native wildlife shows, nature walks and children's activities focused on conservation and our natural environment. For more information

CREATING A LUSCIOUS LAWN THE NATURAL WAY

June 16, 2010, 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Maple Library, 10190 Keele St., Vaughan

Come to this FREE workshop and learn how to keep your lawn looking good and feeling healthy, even through the driest days of summer.

Registration required at www.trcastewardshipevents.ca or 416-661-6600 x 5741



Member of Conservation Ontario

On the Don is a newsletter about the Don River watershed and the efforts to rehabilitate its waters and lands. This newsletter is published by Toronto and Region Conservation in partnership with the Don Watershed Regeneration Council.

Toronto and Region Conservation

With over 50 years of experience, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) helps people understand, enjoy and look after the natural environment, for a cleaner, greener and healthier place to live, for you today and for your children tomorrow.

Don Watershed Regeneration Council

The Don Watershed Regeneration Council is a volunteer, watershed-wide advisory committee established by Toronto and Region Conservation in 1995 to help restore the Don River watershed to a healthy, sustainable natural environment.

Please send an email to donlist@trca.on.ca with the message 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' if you wish to be added or removed from the *On the Don* mailing list.