

**FURTHER TO WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
#1/03**

To be held on Friday, April 11, 2003

FURTHER TO:

Pages

SECTION I - ITEMS FOR AUTHORITY ACTION

7.15 ROUGE PARK NORTH DRAFT OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT 41-46

TO: Chair and Members of the Watershed Management Advisory Board
Meeting #1/03, April 11, 2003

FROM: Brian Denney, Director, Watershed Management Division

RE: ROUGE PARK NORTH DRAFT OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT

KEY ISSUE

Endorsement of the Town of Markham's draft Rouge Park North Official Plan Amendment and supporting Implementation Manual, and Urban Design and Infrastructure Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

THE BOARD RECOMMENDS TO THE AUTHORITY THAT the Town of Markham's draft Rouge Park North Official Plan Amendment, and supporting technical documents be endorsed subject to the recommended policy refinements provided by TRCA staff within this report;

THAT the Authority direct staff to continue to provide technical review and support to the Town of Markham, and the Rouge Park North consulting team to complete the Implementation Manual revisions, and to address issues related to stakeholders queries;

AND FURTHER THAT the resolution be forwarded to the Rouge Alliance for information.

BACKGROUND

On July 28, 2000, the Authority adopted the following resolution:

THAT the Rouge North Management plan be endorsed;

THAT the Authority support the Rouge Alliance's initiatives in obtaining Provincial endorsement of the Rouge North Management Plan and the recognition of the Rouge Park within the Provincial Policy Statement;

THAT the Rouge Alliance prepare and adopt an Implementation Program and Acquisition Strategy to ensure the intent of the Plan is achieved. As part of this program municipalities of Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham and the Region of York will need to consider amendments to the Official Plan as one of the implementation strategies;

THAT the Authority recommend that municipalities within the Rouge Watershed consider undertaking, with technical assistance from the TRCA, subwatershed plans prior to considering urban expansion.

In addition, resolutions were also received from all members of the Alliance which recommended that the completion of an Implementation Strategy was necessary to achieve the objectives set out in the Rouge North Management Plan.

Since this time, Authority staff have actively participated on the Rouge Park Alliance, and in various technical sub-committees to formulate the park implementation strategies. For the interim, Authority staff have used the policies of the Rouge North Management Plan as a guide to explore opportunities to achieve the Plan's vision wherever possible. However, the achievement of the plan's intent has been limited by the current planning policies.

Markham Council endorsed the RNMP (2001) on July 10, 2001, and subsequently initiated the formal amendment process on May 28, 2002, authorizing Town staff to prepare an Official Plan Amendment to implement the Rouge Park North Management Plan (2001). The purpose of the Draft Amendment is:

- To recognize existing public lands, identified as Rouge Park, along the Rouge River tributaries as Rouge Park lands,
- To incorporate ecologically-based criteria as a means of delineating future Rouge Park on the non-urban lands of Markham,
- To incorporate policy direction for the long-term management of the Park lands within Markham.

Extensive public consultation and stakeholder review has occurred during the amendment planning process.

The draft OPA includes three (3) key supporting documents including an Implementation Manual (Boundary Delineation Criteria), Urban Design and Infrastructure Guidelines and a Rouge Park map. It is the intention that the Rouge Park North be designated through the application of the Boundary Delineation Criteria and the policies outlined in the OPA.

TRCA have had several occasions to comment on the park boundary delineation process, and since the distribution of the draft OPA amendment, and draft supporting documents, have been actively working with the Town, and the Park's consultant Schollen & Company Inc. to refine the Implementation Manual (Boundary Delineation Criteria), and park mapping. TRCA has met with the Rouge Park staff, and has, at the request of the Town of Markham, reviewed several letters/submissions of comment from the following:

- **Friends of the Rouge Watershed**, Jim Robb, March 21, 2003
- **City of Toronto, Community Planning, East District Office**, P. Hamilton, February 14, 2003
- **Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.**, Glenn De Baeremaeker, February 18, 2003
- **ESG INTERNATIONAL INC.**, Tom Hilditch, January 28, 2003
- **Urban Development Institute (UDI), Ont., York Chapter**, F. Nelson, January 29, 2003

RATIONALE

The Toronto Region Conservation Authority appreciates the extensive effort that the Town of Markham has made to formulate this draft Official Plan Amendment (OPA), and to conduct a constructive dialogue with Alliance members and stakeholders to resolve issues of concern and clarification.

TRCA, Schollen & Associates, and Town staff have conducted lengthy discussions over the last two months related to technical concerns associated with the Implementation (Boundary Delineation Criteria) Manual from the Urban Development Institute (UDI) and their consultant, Tom Hilditch from ESG International Inc. TRCA has worked with the participants to address detailed queries related to:

- confirming the science associated with the boundary delineation criteria, inclusive of the TRCA's field protocols;
- clarifying the manual terms, and the process associated with application of the boundary criteria and delineation;
- verifying the compatibility and support given to the boundary criteria from the TRCA Terrestrial Natural Heritage Strategy.

A revised implementation manual document is still forthcoming for final approval reflecting these adjustments and clarifications.

TRCA and Schollen & Company Inc. jointly prepared detailed comments, specific to each concern and question, and forwarded them, under separate cover, to Town staff for incorporation into a set of technical responses associated with the Rouge North Implementation Manual. This letter will be finalized and will be forwarded through the Town as a formal response to comments from UDI and ESG International Inc., and any other technical concerns raised during this OPA process.

It must be noted that modifications/ clarification to the terminology and criteria included in the Implementation Manual must be brought forward into the final OPA document. It was agreed that Schollen & Company Inc. will provide those refinements to the Town for final editing purposes.

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TRCA supports the creation of this Official Plan Amendment that sets the implementation stage for the Rouge Park North, with the foundation to activate negotiations for land securement and park management. It is important that the full intent of the Rouge Park North Management Plan is carried forward into the Official Plan, while setting the appropriate steps in place to ensure success in the planning arena.

TRCA offers the following comments regarding the draft Official Plan Amendment. A letter incorporating these recommendations has been sent to the Town of Markham for their April 8, 2003 deadline for comments.

Park Vision, Goals and Objectives

The OPA should include consistent wording associated with the park vision, goals and objectives as per the Rouge Park North Management Plan (RPNP);

Manual as a Technical Supporting Document

The TRCA supports keeping the Rouge North Implementation Manual as a supporting technical document to the OPA, in view of the evolving science and technical work that is developing at the Authority. The Terrestrial Natural Heritage Program of the Authority, and upcoming watershed and groundwater studies will be completed over the next year or two. Studies will be open to technical review and refinement as needed.

Public Process for Change

To ensure an open process for any anticipated change to the OPA and Park implementation documents, a public review and commenting process should be ensured.

Watershed Strategy (k)

TRCA will be initiating their Watershed strategy process in 2003, with an anticipated completion over the next two years. Policy (k) needs to be strengthened to state that “development applications must be consistent with the Watershed Strategy for the Rouge River watershed”.

TRCA would support no further OPA’s to expand the urban boundary in the Rouge Watershed should be adopted until the plan water budget is determined and the watershed strategy is completed.

All tributaries within the Rouge Watershed will be subject to application of the ecological criteria, to determine park boundary and development limits.

Monitoring (j)

TRCA would support a monitoring program that is implemented with the Town, the Rouge Park Alliance and other government agencies to report on the progress towards the goals and objectives (and ecological health) of the Rouge Park North in the Town of Markham. This work needs to be linked to the TRCA's existing monitoring program with the watershed.

Urban Policy Area (e) Existing Approvals Apply (f) Enhancement Opportunities

TRCA would support the inclusion of a “best efforts” policy for applying the ecological criteria within the Urban Policy Area of Markham’s Official Plan, where opportunities exist to re-open development limit dialogue with landowners.

Little Rouge Creek Policy Area (e) Urban Open Space

It is the intention of the plan to keep public park uses located contiguously to the outer portions of the creek corridor, however, site-specific assessment will need to be conducted to determine the appropriate integration of open space uses and Rouge Park corridor lands. Policy (e) should read that Urban Open Space uses may be permitted within the outer 100 metres of the Little Rouge River Corridor, including stormwater management facilities, subject to the goals and objectives of the RPNP approval of stormwater management studies (and Master Environmental Servicing Plans - MESP’s) and consistency with the Rouge Park North Infrastructure Guidelines.

As per the RNMP, extensive open space uses that alter the landscape (except reforestation), shall not be permitted within 200 metres of the centreline of the Little Rouge Creek, except as approved on a case by case basis in the context of the Rouge North Management Plan (2001) and the Little Rouge Creek Master Plan.

Stewardship Options

In keeping with the TRCA's Terrestrial Natural Heritage Program, the policy should include not just the protection of identified natural and environmental features in private ownership but the enhancement of environmental features and/or functions on private lands.

Management and Restoration Plans

The wording should be strengthened to be consistent with the RNMP.... Management and Restoration Plans will recognize the unique attributes of Special Management Sites and strive for consistency with the goal, purposes and objectives of the Rouge North Management Plan (2001).

The restoration and management of vegetation communities within the Rouge Park North lands is encouraged, and is consistent with the TRCA's policies and Terrestrial Natural Heritage Program.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

As a member of the Rouge Alliance, and as an agency partner in the implementation of the park policies, TRCA staff will continue our dialogue with the Town and stakeholders on the Rouge Park North OPA and the technical implementation manual. Staff will assist the Town of Markham in preparing the final edited version of the OPA and Rouge North Implementation Manual.

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Date: April 08, 2003

Attachments: 1

