



York Regional Forest - the natural experience -

Presentation to York Region
Accessibility Advisory Committee

February 27, 2008

York Regional Forest – the natural experience

Overview

- ❑ History
- ❑ Today's Forest
- ❑ Management and Public Use
- ❑ Education
- ❑ Accessibility

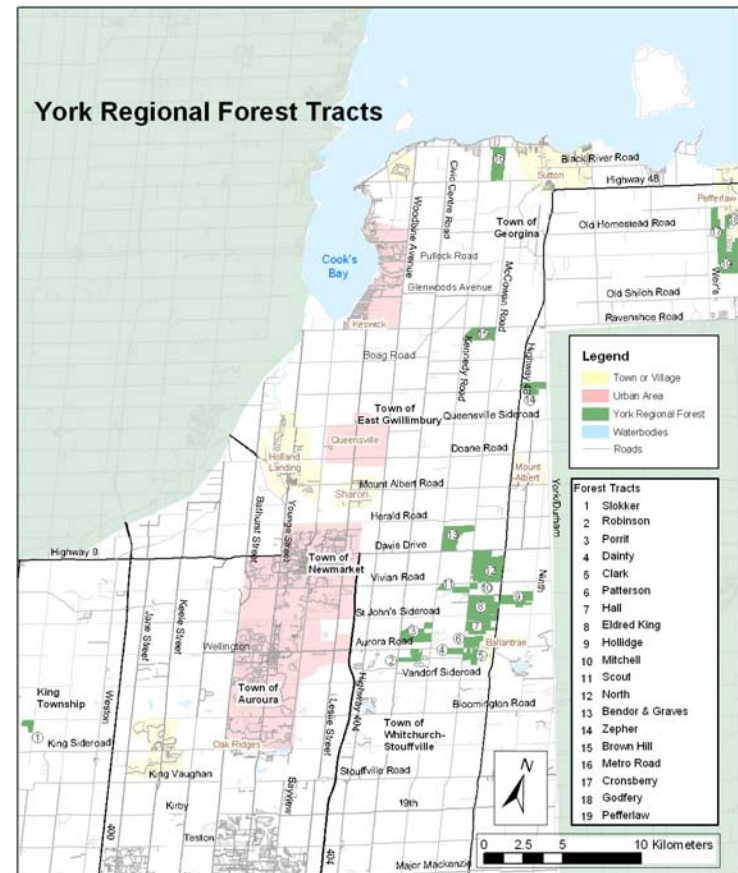
York Regional Forest - History

- ❑ Established in 1924 to restore degraded agricultural lands and to conserve existing woodlands
- ❑ 1924-1998 the forest was managed under an agreement by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



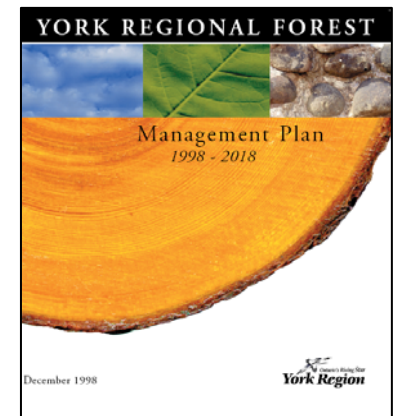
York Regional Forest - Today

- ❑ 19 forest tracts totaling 2200 hectares
- ❑ Tracts located in four of nine area municipalities
- ❑ 120 kilometres of forest access trails
- ❑ Owned since 1924, managed since 1998
- ❑ **“Demonstration Forest”**



York Regional Forest - Management

- ❑ 20 year Forest Management Plan (1998 – 2018)
- ❑ Goals:
 - ❑ Conserve biological diversity
 - ❑ Maintain diverse habitats for wildlife
 - ❑ Provide recreation opportunities
 - ❑ Science and education
 - ❑ Public awareness and involvement
 - ❑ Sustainable forest management



York Regional Forest - Management

- ❑ York Regional Forest Advisory Team
- ❑ Forest Certification – First public forest in Canada to be Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified



“Demonstration Forest”



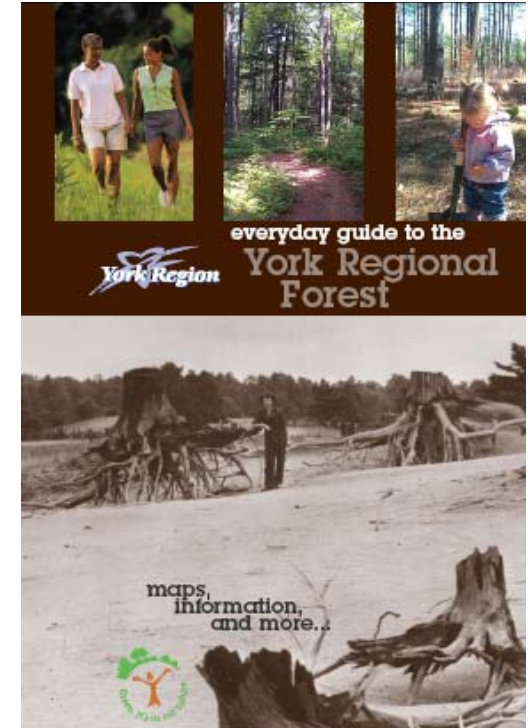
York Regional Forest – Public Use

- ❑ Public use has significantly increased in recent years
- ❑ Forest provides for low impact, passive recreational uses including:
 - ❑ Hiking/walking
 - ❑ Bird watching
 - ❑ Nature appreciation
 - ❑ Equestrian
 - ❑ Cycling



York Regional Forest – Public Use

- ❑ Recent Forest User Survey found:
 - ❑ 94,900 visits to forest yearly
 - ❑ Walking/hiking and dog walking account for 60% of use
 - ❑ Other uses include, Equestrian (15%), Cycling (10%), Skiing (7%)
 - ❑ Five (5) forest tracts receive 75% of the use



Balance Public Use and Environmental Impact

York Regional Forest – Public Education

- ❑ Nature's Classroom
- ❑ Forest Events and Festivals
- ❑ Over 1500 people per year participate



Current Accessibility Initiatives

- ❑ Universal Trail Assessment Protocol (UTAP) – Hollidge Tract Pilot Project
 - ❑ Assess current accessibility and identify existing barriers to accessibility
 - ❑ Assessment based on five trail characteristics (grade, cross slope, width, surface, trail length)
 - ❑ Partnership between York Region and Oak Ridges Trail Association



Current Accessibility Initiatives

- ❑ Training – 2 staff have completed inclusivity and accessibility training course
- ❑ Nature's Classroom
 - ❑ Program marketed to community groups (seniors, service clubs, etc.)
 - ❑ Past programs have included:
 - ❑ Partnership with school board to utilize off-road wheelchair.
 - ❑ Programs for persons with learning disabilities

Opportunities

Proposed Accessibility Initiatives

1. Identification of barriers

- ❑ Review of Regional Forest buildings
- ❑ Consider additional UTAP assessments
- ❑ Review of Regional Forest publications
- ❑ Review of Nature's Classroom and Forest Event and Festival programs and marketing
- ❑ Other....?



Proposed Accessibility Initiatives

2. Removal of barriers

- ❑ Building and program reviews
- ❑ UTAP assessment results

3. Prevention of barriers

- ❑ Incorporate the use of Ontario's Best Trails for the construction of new trails

“Demonstration Forest”

Ontario's Best Trails

Guidelines and Best Practices for the
Design, Construction and Maintenance
of Sustainable Trails
for All Ontarians



Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative

2006