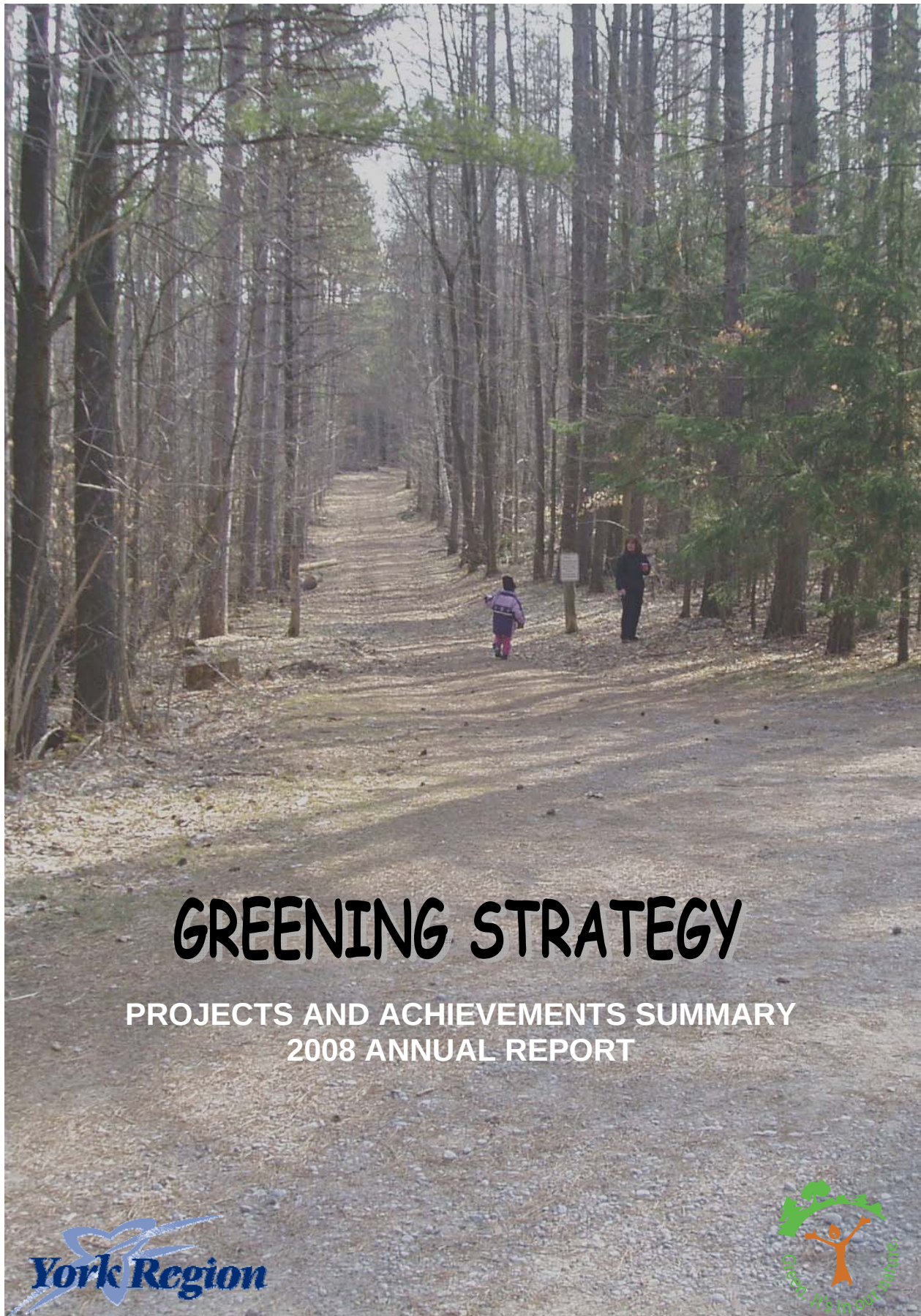




GREENING STRATEGY

PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY
2008 ANNUAL REPORT



February 2009

GREENING STRATEGY INITIATIVES

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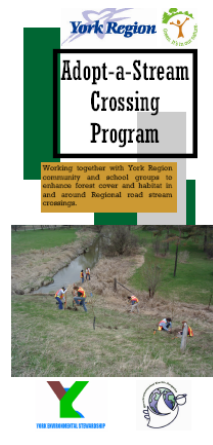
Greening Strategy Initiatives

Since adopting the Greening Strategy in 2001, The Regional Municipality of York has demonstrated a commitment to the natural environment with a number of on-going programs, annual projects and strategic partnerships. The intent of these projects is to achieve on the ground action consistent with the forward thinking environmental policy in the Regional Official Plan as well as other strategic documents. The following is a summary of these programs, projects and initiatives.

1 On-going Programs

The Region is committed to protecting, rehabilitating, and creating natural areas through the Greening Strategy. In partnership with a variety of organizations, the Region continues to positively impact the quality of our environment. Greening Strategy program and projects contribute to:

- Increasing York Region's forest cover from the 22.5% existing to 25%,
- Improving habitat diversity,
- Engaging the public for the purposes of environmental education, promotion and appreciation,
- Expanding the network of protected land through the Land Securement Program, and
- Growing the York Regional Forest as an amenity to York Region residents and wildlife.



1.1 Adopt-A-Stream Crossing Program

This program has been on-going since 2001 and rehabilitates stream crossings at Regional roads. In 2008, the program received a grant from Environment Canada through the Lake Simcoe Clean-up Fund. The fund provided \$38,000 to increase participation in the program with a focus on the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, 915 trees and shrubs were planted on 11 sites with over 300 students from across York Region ranging from Grades 5 to 12.

1.2 York Natural Planting Partnership

This very successful program, delivered in partnership with local Conservation Authorities, provides financial assistance to eligible landowners for private property reforestation. Select opportunities to plant on public lands are also considered through this program.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, over 25,000 trees and shrubs were planted on 14.4 hectares with 20 private landowners and 2 public partners on 29 sites.

1.3 Regional Forest Operational Management Planting

Tree planting is an integral part of managing the York Regional Forest. In doing so, we involve the community through a spring tree planting event, and also undertake larger

scale tree planting in accordance with the Regional Forest Management Plan with the goal:

To ensure the ecological sustainability of the Regional Forest and its associated natural heritage features and values through the utilization of an ecosystem-based approach to management, which also recognizes social and economic values.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, the Hall Tract was planted with 10,200 trees, the Nobleton Tract (Slokker) was planted with 22,300 trees, and the community planted 1,800 trees within the Eldred King and North Tracts.

1.4 Bulk Tree Seedling Order Program

This annual program was initiated in 2007 in partnership with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and York Environmental Stewardship. Regional residents are provided with an opportunity to buy bulk large quantities of trees and shrubs at a reduced cost for the purposes of naturalization their properties. Participants are responsible for planting the material themselves.

Key Deliverables: Over 7,300 trees and shrubs distributed to 220 community volunteers.



1.5 Greening Support of Local Municipal Tree Planting Initiatives

Some local municipalities have fostered very successful working relationships with their local environmental stewards. As a result, they are very active with their communities in naturalizing public lands. These local initiatives provide a great opportunity to advance Regional objectives to increase forest cover, provide education, and improve the health of the urban forest. Accordingly, each year Greening Strategy funding is provided to cover the costs of plant material required for these community naturalization initiatives at the request of the local municipality.

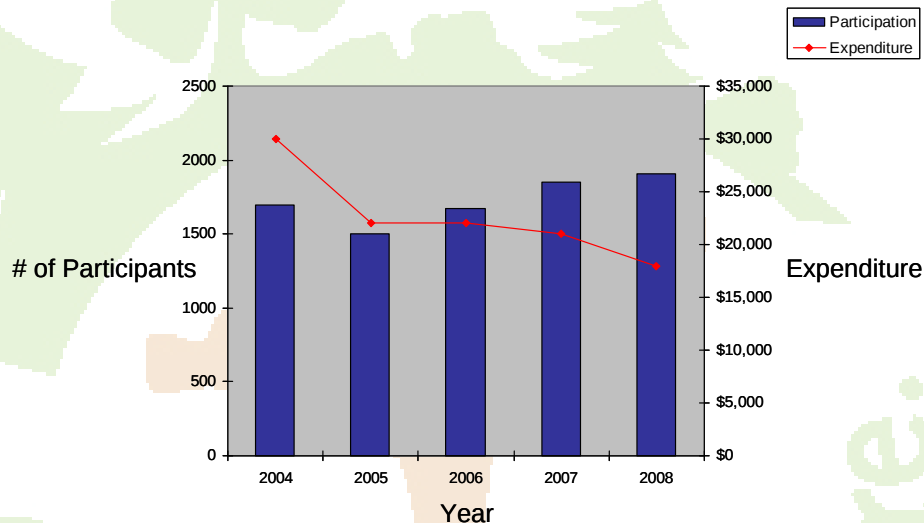
Key Deliverables: In 2008, seven local municipal naturalization projects in East Gwillimbury, Newmarket, King, Aurora and Richmond Hill were supported by the Greening Strategy. This Greening Strategy support resulted in approximately 8,010 trees and shrubs being planted on almost 2 hectares of land, with over 500 volunteers.

1.6 Forest Festivals and Events

Monthly forest festivals and events are hosted in the York Regional Forest. The intent of these events is to educate the public about forest ecosystems and to increase awareness of the natural and social heritage of the York Regional Forest.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, over 500 people participated in two forest festivals and ten forest events.

**Education Program Trends
(Forest Events and Nature's Classroom Programming)**



1.7 Nature's Classroom

Nature's Classroom is a Regional environmental education program which presents a unique opportunity for a variety of groups to experience and learn about the natural environment in a forest setting.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, almost 1,500 community members were educated about the York Regional Forest and the Region's environmental initiatives by participating in a Nature's Classroom program.

1.8 Corporate Environmental Education and Awareness Events

York Region hosts a number of environmental education and awareness events. The Greening Strategy is a strong partner in many of them with particular success through the York Children's Water Festival and Earth Week celebrations. Natural Heritage and Forestry Services contributed to the Children's Water Festival in partnership with Water for Tomorrow.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, over 5,000 students were educated through the Children's Water Festival and Earth Week celebrations. Greening Strategy funding provided for the planting of 450 trees and shrubs at the water festival.

1.9 Securement Partnership agreements

Since 2001, York Region has fostered successful conservation partnerships with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. The Nature Conservancy of Canada receives \$100,000 annually to focus



efforts within York Region. The agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust provides them access to \$40,000 annually from the Region to assist with the legal, professional and administrative costs of securing property within York Region.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, property rights on five properties were secured by the NCC and the Land Trust through these agreements totalling 136 hectares of land.



2 2008 Land Securement and New Projects and Events

In 2008, York Region was involved in a number of land securement projects and initiated or participated in a number of new projects or events.

2.1 Rouge Park Tree Planting Initiatives

In 2008, York Region partnered with the Rouge Park, Trees Ontario, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to plant 2 sites within the Rouge Park. Rouge Park reforestation offers a unique opportunity to help realize the Regional Official Plan target of 25% forest cover by 2026. The intent of this multi-year partnership is to help facilitate large areas of the park being reforested in a timely fashion.

Key Deliverables: In 2008, two sites totalling 5.6 hectares were planted with a total of 14,416 trees.

2.2 Redside Dace Habitat Improvement Project

This project will restore approximately 2,910 metres of stream length to help in the recovery of reddsides through habitat rehabilitation. The project, led by Ontario Streams, rehabilitates in-stream habitat and riparian areas and monitors the success of the project.

Key Deliverables: 0.575 ha of restoration areas (2,910 metres of stream length) rehabilitated and planted with 1,405 trees and shrubs, by over 250 volunteers.

2.3 Planting Trees with York Regional Staff

In the spring of 2008, over 150 staff members from three different departments enhanced the Region's green infrastructure by planting trees in the valley system behind the Bales Drive Operations Centre and within the Rouge Park.

Key Deliverables: Over 2,300 trees planted.



2.4 2008 Land Securement

Wolske York Regional Forest Acquisition

In 2008, York Region acquired the Wolske property in the Town of Georgina. This strategic acquisition provided public access to the Godfrey Tract which, until this acquisition, had no public road frontage.

Key Deliverables: Five hectares of land secured in the Town of Georgina.

Swan Lake Property Partnership Acquisition

The Swan Lake property is a forested parcel with a small kettle lake, located in north Richmond Hill on the Oak Ridges Moraine. In 2008, the property was acquired by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, York Region, and the Town of Richmond Hill, with the assistance of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The property is a strategic addition to a large collection of public land in the area providing important social and wildlife connection functions.

Key Deliverables: 20 hectares of Oak Ridges Moraine land secured in the Town of Richmond Hill.

Perryman Property Partnership Acquisition

The Perryman property was acquired by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, York Region, and the Town of Richmond Hill, with the assistance of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. This property includes forested land and abandoned agricultural land. With a focus on renaturalization and passive recreation, the property will be owned by the TRCA and managed by Richmond Hill as an expansion of the adjacent Phyllis Rawlinson Park.

Key Deliverables: 33 hectares of Oak Ridges Moraine land secured in the Town of Richmond Hill.

Bendor and Graves York Regional Forest Expansion

The largest acquisition of the year, this expansion to the Bendor and Graves Tract of the York Regional Forest will provide opportunities for reforestation, improvements to the passive recreational amenities of the York Regional Forest and improved connectivity for people and wildlife.

Key Deliverables: 121 hectares of Oak Ridges Moraine land secured in the Towns of Whitchurch-Stouffville and East Gwillimbury.



3 Future Greening

Under the Greening Strategy, new programs, projects and partnerships continue to be developed. The following were initiated in 2008 with additional tangible deliverables anticipated for 2009 and beyond.

3.1 York Natural Planting Partnership for Private Urban Landowners

In 2007, the Natural Heritage and Forestry Services Section entered into a partnership with LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) to undertake a feasibility study for a private urban landowner tree planting program for York Region. In 2008, York Region, the Town of Markham and LEAF partnered to deliver a pilot program within Markham. The program was exceptionally successful with 60 landowners participating. Subject to successful fundraising and partnership building in 2009, it is anticipated that this program will be an on-going Greening Strategy program.

Key Deliverables: Further plantings in partnership on private urban properties.



3.2 Peggy's Wood Management Planning

In 2008, a consultant was retained to undertake a management plan for the Peggy's Wood area for York Region in partnership with the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket. Over 2008, the field work was undertaken with the intent that the management plan be completed in the spring of 2009.

Key Deliverables: A management plan for approximately 100 hectares of recently acquired Natural Heritage lands within the ownership of York Region, the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket.



3.3 MacMillan Farm - Options Study

In 2005, the MacMillan family, (Lyn and Robert MacMillan pictured below) generously donated 49 hectares of land to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) through our Greening Strategy Securement Partnership. Located within the centre of these lands is the MacMillan Farm, the ownership of which was retained by the MacMillan family. In 2008, with the consent of the MacMillan family, the NCC, the TRCA, the City of Vaughan, and York Region jointly commissioned a study to assess options to see this significant property come into public ownership for operation and management as a public natural and cultural heritage amenity. The options presented in this study will be considered for potential implementation in 2009.

Key Deliverables: Options study presenting alternative scenarios for the ultimate ownership and management of the property in the context of the surrounding NCC owned Nature Reserve.



3.4 Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report

The Greening Strategy and Natural Heritage and Forestry Services staff are a resource to the Planning Department when developing and implementing environmental policy. With the introduction of the Greenbelt Act and Places to Grow legislation, York Region is comprehensively and proactively looking at our current planning practices and the best means by which to accommodate significant future growth as established by the Province while ensuring that we have a sustainable natural environment, healthy communities, and economic vitality (the triple bottom line). In doing so, the Region adopted the Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report. Lead by the Planning and Economic Development Department, Greening Strategy land securement activities will be further refined through Action 1 of the report (Update Our Natural Heritage System), in addition to further refinements to the Greening Strategy as required by Action 7 (Advance the Greening Strategy).

Key Deliverables: It is anticipated that a new comprehensive approach to growth planning articulated through Regional Official Plan policies and practices throughout all departments of the Region will be developed in 2009.

3.5 York Region Urban Forest Studies Partnership

In partnership with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Town of Markham and the City of Vaughan, urban forest studies will be undertaken for these urban centres. These studies, using the Urban Forest Effects Model (UFORE) developed by the US Department of Agriculture – Forestry Services, are used internationally to characterize the urban forest and quantify the values (environmentally and financially) of our trees. This information can then be used to mitigate climate change and urban heat island effects, improve air quality, restore natural aesthetics, reduce flooding, decrease energy use, and more, by managing the urban forest within our growing communities.

Key Deliverables: A report on the status and value of the urban forest to assist the Region and local municipalities in the management and enhancement of our urban forest.

3.6 Regional Natural Heritage Trails Study

One of the actions of the Natural Heritage and Strategic Directions Report approved by Regional Council in 2008 was to undertake a Regional Natural Heritage Trails Study. This study will assess the Region's Natural Heritage System and recommend a conceptual Regional Trails Network. The study, funded in part through the Greening Strategy, will also make recommendations for a Regional role in Natural Heritage Trails planning and implementation likely through the Greening Strategy.

Key Deliverables: Regional Natural Heritage Trails Network and a potential role for the Region.

4 Summary

The Greening Strategy continues to emphasize and deliver environmental on-the-ground-action. Implementation of the suite of land securement programs and other projects helps the Region work towards policy objectives such as the Regional Official Plan forest cover target of 25%. Each year, as a result of this strategy, tens of thousands of trees are planted and acres of forests are created. Since the program's origin in 2001 over 879 hectares (2,189 acres) of conservation lands have been secured. Partners, including a variety of stakeholders and our urban and rural residents, help us leverage our funds and work toward our objectives.

The programs and projects outline in this report help to demonstrate leadership in environmental action. Regional Council has placed a strong emphasis on the protection and enhancement of our sustainable natural environment. This investment in our Green Infrastructure recognizes both the importance of the variety of functions and services (e.g. clean air and clean water) that our natural environment provides, and the priority that our residents place on the value of healthy green liveable communities.