

Working Together

GREENING AND SECUREMENT STRATEGIES 2005 ACHIEVEMENTS

The need for the Greening Strategy was first established when the Region was considering adopting a Tree By-law in the early 1990s. It was further emphasized during the Regional Official Plan Report Card process in 1998, when the public said they “supported our environmental policies but felt we weren’t doing enough to implement them”. In response, Regional Council adopted the Greening Strategy in 2001. Since adoption, the Greening strategy has continued to grow and embrace new partners and program. The following is a summary of some of the 2005 Greening Strategy achievements.

York Region's Greening Strategy

2005 GREENING ACHIEVEMENTS

1	Information Management.....	3
1.1	Significant Woodlands Study	3
1.2	Natural Heritage Features and Attributes Inventory.....	3
1.3	Land Securement Working Group Web Site Access.....	3
1.4	Assessment of Securement Properties	3
2	Naturalization and Rehabilitation	4
2.1	Adopt-A-Stream Crossing Program (AASCP)	4
2.2	Regional Forest Hall Tract (Calandra) Reforestation	4
2.3	Rouge Watershed Wetland Creation Project.....	4
2.4	York Natural Planting Partnership (YNPP).....	4
2.5	Greening Support of Local Municipal Tree Planting Initiatives.....	5
3	Securement of Priority Greenlands	5
3.1	Harper Bequest.....	5
3.2	Little Rouge Corridor Management Plan	5
3.3	Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan.....	6
3.4	Securement Partnerships	6
3.5	Landowner Contact Extension Services	6
4	Community Education and Promotional Campaign	7
4.1	Greening Achievements Brochure.....	7
4.2	Greening Strategy Awareness, Presentations and Displays	7
4.3	Forest Festivals and Events.....	7
4.4	Nature's Classroom.....	7
4.5	York Region Forest Conservation By-law Information Products	8
4.6	Corporate Environmental Education Events	8
5	Role of Federal/Provincial Government Legislation	8
5.1	Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)	9
5.2	York Region Forest Conservation	9
6	Regional Operations	9
6.1	Constructed Habitat Wetland Feasibility Study	9
6.2	Salt Alternatives	9
6.3	Corporate Clean Air Task Force	10
7	Urban Forest.....	10
7.1	Enhanced Street Tree Watering Program.....	10
7.2	Annual Street Tree Planting and Streetscaping Program.....	10
7.3	Street Tree Assessment and Inventory.....	10
8	Green Partnerships	10
8.1	Strategic Partnerships.....	10
9	Monitoring and Reporting.....	11
9.1	State of the Environment Report	11

2005 Greening and Securement Strategy Achievements

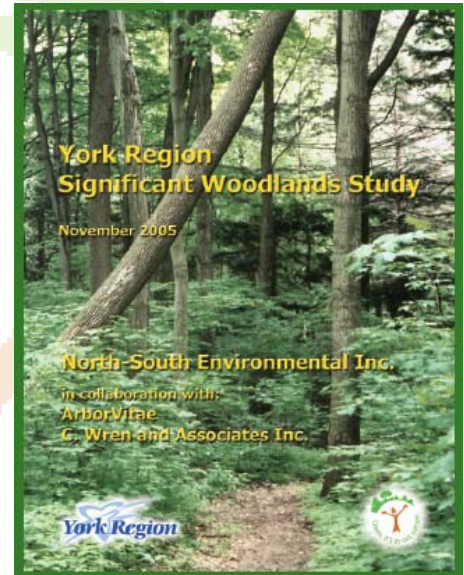
1 Information Management

The availability of current Geographic Information System (GIS) and digital environmental databases is of paramount importance in conserving natural features.

1.1 Significant Woodlands Study

The completion of a Significant Woodlands Study for York Region was a key achievement in 2005. This study provides a scientific assessment of the existing forest resources and will greatly assist the Region in protecting (through policy and development planning and Forest Conservation By-law administration) and enhancing (through naturalization and stewardship initiatives) these important forest resources.

Key Deliverables: Updated forest cover Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data layer, criteria for determining Regionally Significant Woodlands, securement guidelines to assist with the implementation of the Regions Securement Criteria and a scientific report supporting the Region's interest in protecting and restoring forest resources.



1.2 Natural Heritage Features and Attributes Inventory

In 2005, the Ministry of Natural Resources continued to update wetland evaluations within York Region. In addition, special surveys were undertaken to document the use of the York Region Forest by plants and animals known to be rare, threatened or endangered in the Region, Province or Country.

Key Deliverables: Updated environmental data and GIS mapping products.

1.3 Land Securement Working Group Web Site Access

As further support to the partner agencies working to secure lands in York Region, the Geomatics Division updated the secure web site that provides these partners with important environmental information and a tool to track and monitor securement activity throughout the Region.

Key Deliverables: Improved secure web site for securement partners.

1.4 Assessment of Securement Properties

At the request of the Transportation and Works Committee, staff has reviewed properties secured by the Region over the last several years against the findings of the recently adopted Significant Woodlands Study. It has been verified that Baker's Sugarbush and the Jefferson Forest are Significant Woodlands, the Hall Tract expansion (Calandra Property) is strategically located between a number of significant woodlands, is consistent with the Region's Securement Criteria and is an ideal property for public ownership and reforestation activity.

2 Naturalization and Rehabilitation

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.



2.1 Adopt-A-Stream Crossing Program (AASCP)

This program has been ongoing for 4 years and rehabilitates stream crossings at Regional roads. In 2005, the Trillium Foundation approved a funding request put forward by the program partners: York Region, York Environmental Stewardship and the Environmental Earth Angels (EEA). The Trillium Foundation is providing \$130,000 over two years to expand the program and facilitate its integration into school classrooms and programs across York Region. The program will benefit significantly with a program coordinator that was hired through the Trillium Funding in 2005.

Key Deliverables: Program co-ordinator hired to facilitate greater participation in the program and a web page and on line application process developed.

2.2 Regional Forest Hall Tract (Calandra) Reforestation

Further to the 2004 acquisition of an additional 24 hectares (60 acres) to expand the Hall Tract of the York Regional Forest, reforestation of approximately 16 hectares (40 acres) of vacant land was undertaken in 2005. The federal government funded machine planting on the majority of the site through the Forest 20/20 program. Additionally, a community planting event with Ballantrae Public School and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville provided more than 300 children with hands on planting experience as young stewards of the York Regional Forest.

Key Deliverables: 40 acres of new forest cover created within the Regional Forest in partnership with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Ballantrae Public School student body and the Federal Government.

2.3 Rouge Watershed Wetland Creation Project

Ontario Streams, in partnership with the Rouge Park and others is undertaking an ambitious wetland creation project at the Provincially owned site of the Ringwood Fish Culture Station in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. As a complement to the significant contribution provided by York Region in the form of peat trucked to the site, the Region contributed a further \$6,000 to this project to assist with this exciting project.

Key Deliverables: Twenty five (25) hectares (62 acres) of new wetland.

2.4 York Natural Planting Partnership (YNPP)

This very successful program, delivered in partnership with local Conservation Authorities, provides financial assistance to eligible landowners for private property tree planting. A new program brochure was prepared and distributed to increase public awareness of this York Region program and the benefits it can provide to landowners.

Key Deliverables: Over 52,000 trees and shrubs planted, on 33 hectares (81 acres), with 22 private landowners.

2.5 Greening Support of Local Municipal Tree Planting Initiatives

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 the landscape. These local initiatives provide a great opportunity to advance Regional objectives to increase forest cover, provide education, and improve the health of natural areas. Accordingly, 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: Six local municipal naturalization projects were supported by York Region through the Greening Strategy resulting in approximately 10,000 trees and shrubs being planted.

3 Securement of Priority Greenlands

In addition to securing priority greenlands through education and stewardship, there are a series of property acquisition tools, which are relevant to the Greening and Greenlands Property Securement Strategies. These tools include land bequests, easements, leaseback agreements, long term leases, donations and fee simple purchases. Over the last year, various municipalities and conservation authorities have made significant advancements in the area of environmental land securement. York Region has been looked upon as example by these partners when considering a program for their agency. Most specifically the Region of Peel and Credit Valley Conservation have recently adopted a Greenlands Securement Strategy and Securement Criteria (respectively). Both of these agencies have acknowledged the assistance and leadership provided by York Region staff when preparing their programs.

3.1 Harper Bequest

In 2001, York Region provided \$7,500 to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust to assist with the administrative costs associated with securing a bequest of 7 hectares (18 acres) within the Final Will and Testament of Beth Harper. With the passing of Miss Harper, title of this property was transferred to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust in 2005.

Key Deliverables: 7 ha (18 acres) secured under the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust / York Region Securement Partnership Agreement.

3.2 Little Rouge Corridor Management Plan

In 2004, the Ontario Realty Corporation, on behalf of the Province of Ontario, transferred 544 hectares (1344 acres) to the Town of Markham and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority for Rouge Park purposes. The addition of these lands to the Rouge Park makes York Region home to one of the largest natural environment parks in and urban area within the Province and Country. York Region has been an active participant on the Steering Committee established to oversee the development of a Management Plan for these lands. Additionally, York Region has committed a contribution of \$25,000 through the approved Greening Strategy Budget, over two years for the Plans preparation. The Plan, which is expected to recommend that the majority of the lands being restored to increase the habitat value of this portion of the Rouge watershed, is scheduled to be completed in 2006.

Key Deliverables: Management Plan for 544 hectares (1344 acres) of newly acquired Rouge Park lands.

3.3 Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan

In 2001, the Province of Ontario began extensive negotiations with a consortium of development companies owning environmentally sensitive lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine in the Town of Richmond Hill. As a result of the significant cooperation of both parties, 412 hectares (1000 acres) is slated to be transferred to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority to be managed for its natural attributes on behalf of the Province of Ontario and its residents. York Region has been an active participant on the Advisory Committee established to oversee the development of a Management Plan for these lands and contributed \$10,000 for the production of this plan. A comprehensive plan that will see this area protected and enhanced over the coming years is expected to be completed in 2006.

Key Deliverables: Management Plan for 412 hectares (1000 acres) of environmentally sensitive land within the Town of Richmond Hill.



3.4 Securement Partnerships

Since 2001, York Region has had partnerships with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. These partnerships have been extremely successful in securing land as reported on in this, and previous, Greening Achievements Reports. These valuable agreements will be updated and renewed through a report to Regional Council in 2006.

Key Deliverables: Pending updated partnership agreements and approximately 10 properties in negotiation for land or conservation easement donation.

3.5 Landowner Contact Extension Services

York Region has proactively approached landowners to discuss conservation options for their land, for the purposes of establishing land donations or conservation easement

donations. The intent is that these donations be secured by the Region or transferred to the appropriate conservation partner. The interest by landowners has been significantly greater than anticipated. Several potential conservation easement donations have been provided to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for finalization in 2006.

Key Deliverables: Over 110 landowners contacted with 20 individuals actively interested in pursuing a donation with York Region or a partner organization

4 Community Education and Promotional Campaign

Public awareness of the values of our natural environment is an essential factor towards securing a healthy natural heritage system for future generations. The Region has a number of promotional and educational initiatives underway to raise public awareness of our natural environment and the Region's diverse environmental programs and initiatives.

4.1 Greening Achievements Brochure

As directed by Regional Council in April 2005, a brochure highlighting Greening Achievements was prepared. Over 2005 this brochure was distributed to members of the public, partner agencies and stakeholders.

Key Deliverables: Increased public awareness of the significant achievements of York Region through the Greening and Securement Strategies.



4.2 Greening Strategy Awareness, Presentations and Displays

Awareness of the Region's Greening Strategy is being increased through internal and external marketing. In 2005, the Greening Strategy was brought to approximately five events, and comprehensive presentations were made at approximately 10 public forums. There is significant value in the Greening Strategy being identified as the Region's marketing and promotional vehicle for our broad based environmental initiatives.

Key Deliverables: Over 400 stakeholders educated about the Region's Greening and Securement Strategies.

4.3 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. In 2005, over 700 people participated in three Forest Festivals and nine Forest Events.

Key Deliverables: Over 400 community members learned about the York Regional Forest and our environmental initiatives and partnerships by attending Forest Festivals or Events.

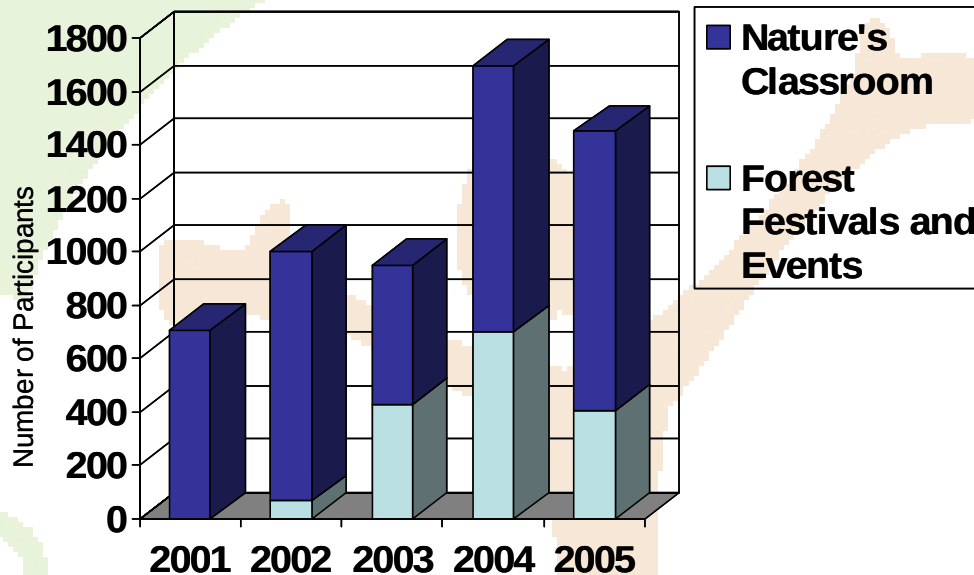
4.4 Nature's Classroom

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. While participant numbers at 2005 Forest Festivals and Events, and Nature's Classroom Programs were higher than 2004, the overall annual

participation number is down slightly as the always well attended Spring Forest Festival was cancelled as a result of inclement weather (see figure 1).

Key Deliverables: In 2005, over 1,000 community members were educated about the York Regional Forest and the Region's environmental initiatives by participating in a Nature's Classroom program.

Figure 1
York Region Forest Education Program Participation



4.5 York Region Forest Conservation By-law Information Products

Awareness of the Region's wealth of forest resources, and the tools available to protect them are of paramount importance in encouraging sound management and stewardship of these natural features. In 2005 the preparation of Forest Conservation By-law educational products further enhanced public awareness of this significant resource.

Key Deliverables: Forest Conservation By-law Brochures and Booklets produced and distributed to local municipal offices, Conservation Authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources, libraries and requesting landowners.

4.6 Corporate Environmental Education Events

York Region hosts a number of additional environmental education events. The Greening Strategy is a strong partner in all of them with particular success through the York Children's Water Festival and Earth Week celebrations.

Key Deliverables: Over 5000 students educated through the Children's Water Festival and Earth Week celebrations.

5 Role of Federal/Provincial Government Legislation

Legislation is a very useful tool to protect, enhance and promote the natural environment. In 2005, York Region adopted a new comprehensive Forest Conservation by-law to replace the existing Trees By-law, and participated on a Provincial Committee



Key Deliverables. Depending on the outcome of the pilot project, the research has the potential to result in the application of the product more broadly reducing in salt use reductions for the Region's winter road operations.

6.3 Corporate Clean Air Task Force

A corporate Clean Air Task Force continued its work over 2005. A short list of new actions that can improve air quality in the Region has been presented to Council. The next steps in this program are to select those actions with the most benefit, devise policies to implement the actions and develop an implementation plan.

Key Deliverables: Improved air quality through modified corporate actions.

7 Urban Forest

The urban forest plays a significant role in enhancing the natural environment. Trees provide many environmental benefits such as oxygen production, improved aesthetics, and temperature moderation – in addition to enhancing the quality of life in York Region.

7.1 Enhanced Street Tree Watering Program

In the interest of improving the health of newly planted Regional Street Trees, York Region initiated an enhanced Street Tree Watering program. Though this program is in its infancy, some techniques were explored that maximize the benefits to these trees while practicing sound water conservation. Further investigation will be undertaken to continue this program to increase tree health and survival while ensuring a conscientious use of water.

Key Deliverables: Over Four Thousand (4,000) recently planted street trees (planting within the last five years) were watered over the 2005 summer season, three to four times as necessary, to optimize the health of our urban canopy.

7.2 Annual Street Tree Planting and Streetscaping Program

York Region has increased seedling, riparian and calliper stock tree planting in many areas of its operation. High quantities of high quality trees are being planted each year on Regional Road rights of way. Staff continues to review and improve planting and maintenance specifications.

Key Deliverables: Over 2000 new street trees planted (excluding those planted as a condition of new development).



7.3 Street Tree Assessment and Inventory

In 2005, the Region implemented a street trees inventory to spatially locate street trees as part of the Region's Asset Management Strategy. A GIS database to compile and manage the information was developed. It is anticipated that full capture of the Region's street tree assets will be completed in 2006.

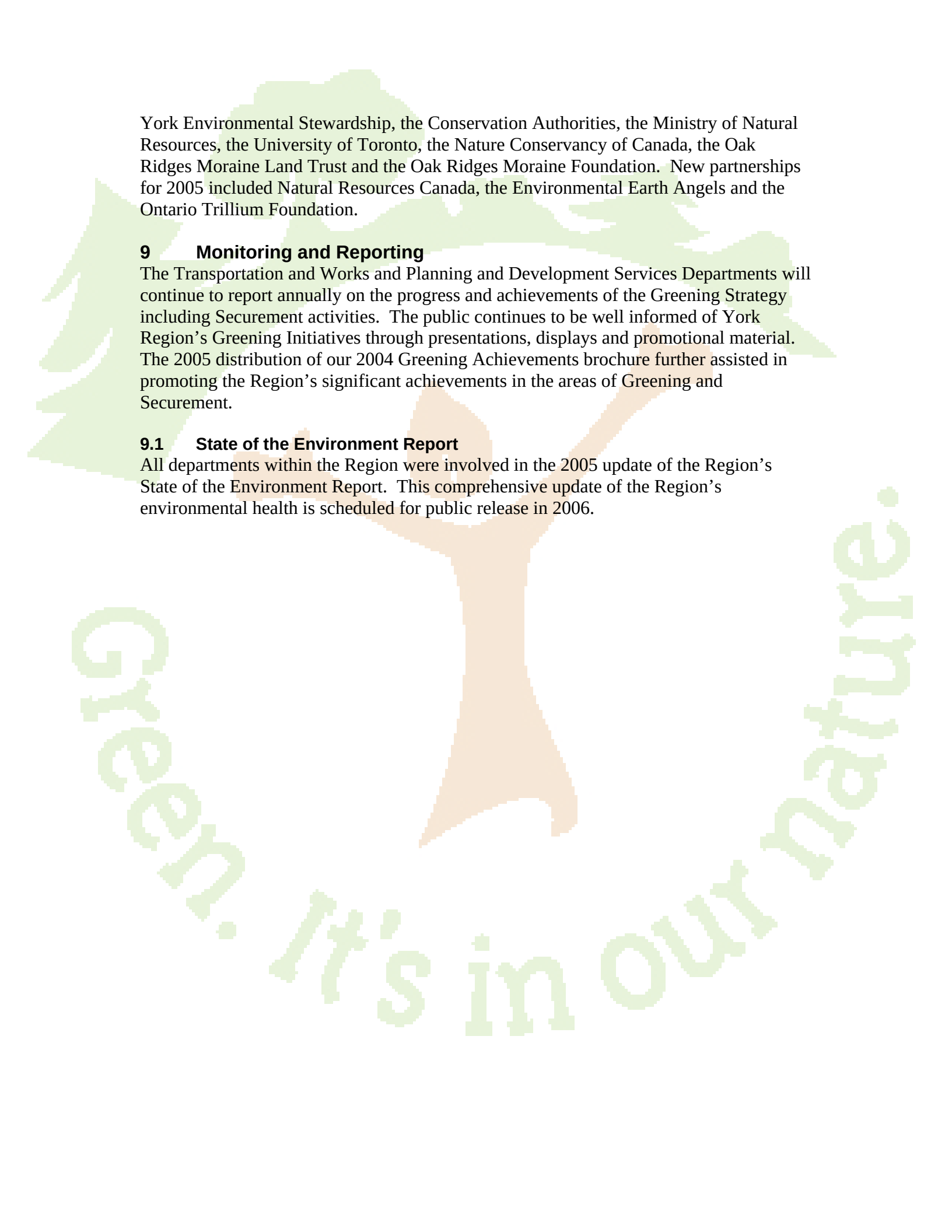
Key Deliverables: GIS Asset Management Database for Regional Street Trees.

8 Green Partnerships

The Greening Strategy is successfully administered with the assistance of numerous partners. Partnerships have been established with local municipalities, other levels of government, academic agencies, and private and public stakeholders.

8.1 Strategic Partnerships

York Region continues to demonstrate leadership through Green Partnerships. These partnerships enable us to leverage additional funds, services and support, and optimize on the experience of other groups and individuals. Some key partnerships in 2005 included



York Environmental Stewardship, the Conservation Authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the University of Toronto, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. New partnerships for 2005 included Natural Resources Canada, the Environmental Earth Angels and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

9 Monitoring and Reporting

The Transportation and Works and Planning and Development Services Departments will continue to report annually on the progress and achievements of the Greening Strategy including Securement activities. The public continues to be well informed of York Region's Greening Initiatives through presentations, displays and promotional material. The 2005 distribution of our 2004 Greening Achievements brochure further assisted in promoting the Region's significant achievements in the areas of Greening and Securement.

9.1 State of the Environment Report

All departments within the Region were involved in the 2005 update of the Region's State of the Environment Report. This comprehensive update of the Region's environmental health is scheduled for public release in 2006.