

GREENING STRATEGY

INITIATIVES SUMMARY

The need for the Greening Strategy was first identified when the Region was considering adopting a Tree By-law in the early 1990s. The need 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.



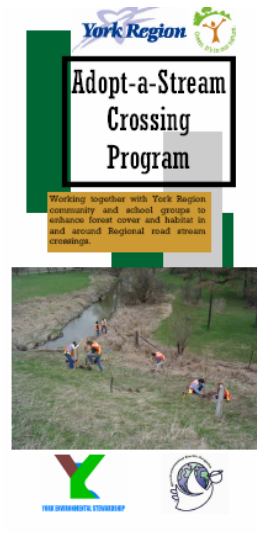
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Greening Strategy Initiatives

1 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.



1.1 Adopt-A-Stream Crossing Program (AASCP)

This program has been ongoing since 2001 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. In 2006, over 1800 trees and shrubs were planted on 13 sites with a 12 classes ranging from Grade 5 to 12. **Key Deliverables:** In 2006, over 1800 trees and shrubs were planted on 13 sites with a 12 classes ranging from Grade 5 to 12.

1.2 Rouge Watershed Wetland Creation Project

Ontario Streams, in partnership with the Rouge Park, the Region 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 the grading work required to re-establish this wetland.

Key Deliverables: Twenty five (25) hectares (62 acres) of new wetland in the headwaters of the Rouge watershed.

1.3 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 reforestation. 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: In 2006, over 40,000 trees and shrubs planted, on 23 hectares (57 acres), with 16 private landowners.

1.4 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 the urban forest. 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: Four local municipal naturalization projects were supported in 2006 by York Region through the Greening Strategy resulting in approximately 2,000 trees and shrubs being planted on over 4 hectares of land.

2 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. Significant land acquisitions were accomplished in 2006 by York Region and our partners.

2.1 Regional Forest Hall-Patterson Link

In 2006, a 100 metre wide area of forest was purchased in partnership with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Regional Forest Advisory Team to link the Hall Tract with the Patterson Tract to the south. The addition of these lands results in connecting 377 ha (over 930 ac) of York Regional Forest between Cherry Street (north of St. John's Sdrd.) to Aurora Road.

Key Deliverables: Strategic acquisition of 0.7 ha (2 ac) to expand the York Regional Forest resulting in improved public access and connectivity of the York Regional Forest in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

2.2 Slokker Property Acquisition

In 2006, the 68 ha (170 ac) Slokker Property in the Township of King was acquired by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) with a York Region contribution of \$1,000,000 to the required \$3,800,000 for the purchase. This acquisition will see a new Regional Forest Tract established in the western portion of the Region through agreement with the TRCA.

Key Deliverables: 68 ha (170 ac) secured in public ownership (TRCA), approximately 48 ha (120 ac) to be reforested, and the establishment of a new Regional Forest Tract within the Township of King.

2.3 Bayview Oak Ridges Estates Property Acquisition

In 2006, York Region approved the contribution of \$250,000 towards the TRCA acquisition of 10 ha (25 ac) adjacent to the Jefferson Forest within the Town of Richmond Hill. This acquisition, in partnership with the TRCA, the Town of Richmond Hill, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation provides a significant addition to the over 607 ha (1500 ac) of land in the area currently in public ownership (the Oak Ridges Corridor Park plus additional TRCA and Town of Richmond Hill lands).

Key Deliverables: 10 ha (25 ac) secured in public ownership within the Town of Richmond Hill.

2.4 Peggy's Wood

After almost 10 years of negotiations between the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Dunlap and Robarts Families, Peggy's Wood was approved for donation to York Region via the NCC as per our agreement with them. This 22 ha (54 ac) donation is a

significant 2006 achievement. The lands will be consolidated with other lands along the East Holland River being assembled by the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket. **Key Deliverables:** 22 ha (54 ac) secured under the NCC / York Region Securement Partnership Agreement. These lands are suitable for a further partnership with the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Newmarket to consolidate with adjacent lands that the Towns are securing through the development process as a major urban parkland.

2.5 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 an 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 contributed \$10,000 through the approved Greening Strategy Budget for the Plans preparation. The Plan, which recommends that the majority of the lands be restored to increase the habitat value of this portion of the Rouge watershed, was completed in 2006.

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

2.6 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) will 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 \$25,000 for the production of this plan. A comprehensive plan that directs the protection and enhancement of the Park over the coming years was completed in 2006.

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



2.7 Securement Partnership agreements

Since 2001, York Region has had successful conservation 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 were updated and renewed for 3 year terms (2006-2008) through a report to Regional Council in 2006. The Nature Conservancy of Canada is provided with \$100,000 from the Region to focus efforts within York. The agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust provides them access to \$40,000 from the Region to assist with the legal, professional and administrative costs of securing property within York Region.

Key Deliverables: Increase land protection across all of York Region.

2.8 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.

Key Deliverables: Over 185 landowners contacted with 13 individuals actively interested in pursuing a donation with York Region or a partner organization and a data base of key properties and interested landowners.

3 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.

3.1 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 2006, 600 people participated in two Forest Festivals and ten Forest Events. In addition, the Region hosted the Southern Ontario Public Forest Management workshop with 70 participants.

Key Deliverables: Over 600 community members learned about the York Regional Forest and our environmental initiatives and partnerships by attending Forest Festivals or Events.

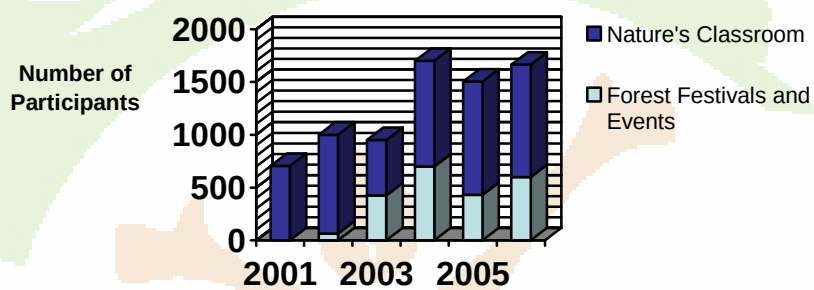
3.2 Nature's Classroom

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. Since 2001, annual participation in the program has been on an increasing trend while the cost to deliver the program have been decreasing.

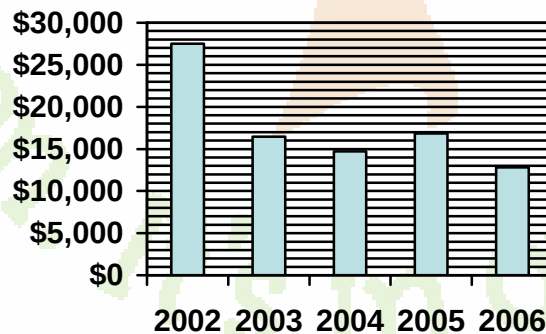
Key Deliverables: In 2006, over 1,000 community members were educated about the York Regional Forest and the Region's environmental initiatives by participating in a Nature's Classroom program.

Figure 1
York Region Forest Education Program Participation and Expenditures

Forest Education Annual Participation



Forest Education Annual Expenditures



3.3 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 6 public forums, including the Provincially appointed Natural Spaces Alliance. 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 100 stakeholders educated about the Region's Greening and Securement Strategies.

3.4 Corporate Environmental Education Events

York Region hosts a number of 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: In 2006, over 5000 students educated through the Children's Water Festival and Earth Week celebrations.

3.5 Greening Strategy Brochure

In 2006, Regional Council approved the production and distribution of a Greening Strategy brochure. This brochure highlights a number of Greening Programs and partnerships and what individuals and community groups can do to get involved in protecting and enhancing the environment. It also highlights some of the significant achievements accomplished through the strategy since its inception in 2001. 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 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 established to oversee an update of the legislation enabling the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program to be a valuable tool for protecting forests within the Province of Ontario. Details on these initiatives are provided below.

4.1 York Region's Sustainability Initiative

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 we are looking at natural heritage planning, infrastructure demands and compact, livable communities.

Key Deliverables: A new comprehensive approach to growth planning articulated through Regional Official Plan policies and practices throughout all departments of the Region.

4.2 Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)

In 2005, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, along with the Provincial Ministers of Finance and Natural Resources, announced the legislative changes required to reaffirm the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program as a valuable tool to protect privately owned forests. York Region was one of four representatives of the Association on Ontario Municipalities on the Task Force that oversaw the review of this legislation. In 2006, York Region staff scoped the merits of a Management Plan Grant Program under the Greening Strategy to increase participation in the program within York Region. The results will be presented to Regional Council for their consideration.

Key Deliverables: The potential for improved private land stewardship of woodlots through this important incentive program.



4.2 York Region Forest Conservation

In 2005 a new Forest Conservation By-law was adopted, superseding the Trees By-law adopted by the Region in 1991. Regional staff continues to promote sound private land stewardship using the by-law, the by-law brochure, and by responding to complaints. In 2006 staff reviewed legislative changes and implications to the Forest Conservation By-law. Changes as required will be reported to Council and updated in 2007.

Key Deliverables: Improved private land stewardship and forest protection in York Region.

5 Regional Operations

Through the Greening Strategy, the Region seeks to continually expand and improve the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, while providing necessary infrastructure and services to our residents.

5.1 Lagoon Decommissioning / Wetland Creation Initiative

In 2006, Regional Council approved the conversion of surplus Regional Sewage Lagoons to habitat wetlands as the preferred alternative subject to detailed design. The lagoons are currently used by a variety of waterfowl and other wildlife. Their conversion to habitat wetlands will protect these existing functions and provide improved habitat for new species of plants and animals. There is the opportunity, subject to detailed design and further assessment to incorporate these natural areas into the York Regional Forest.

Key Deliverables: This project will result in significant habitat protection and enhancement (over 30 ha / 74 ac) and the opportunity for public enjoyment, access and education in the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Georgina, and the Township of King.

5.2 Waste Management Site Naturalization

In cooperation with staff from Solid Waste Management, naturalization plans are being prepared for the valleyland portions of the Bales Drive / Garfield Wright property. Those portions not occupied by, or required for future structures will be reforested or otherwise naturalized. Options are being considered for an interim use of lands required for future

facilities. These lands could potentially be used as a nursery for native trees for naturalization projects in partnership with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

Key Deliverables: Increase in forest cover, demonstrated leadership.

5.3 Corporate Clean Air Task Force

The corporate Clean Air Task Force continued its work over 2006. A short list of new actions that can improve air quality in the Region was presented to Council in 2006. 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. The Greening strategy is recognized as a significant delivery opportunity to a number of Corporate Clean Air Task Force action items.

Key Deliverables: Improved air quality through modified corporate actions.

6 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.

6.1 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. Approximately 2,000 new street trees are planted every year.

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

7 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.

7.1 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 2006 included the Nature Conservancy of Canada, York Environmental Stewardship, the Conservation Authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Environmental Earth Angels, the University of Toronto, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Natural Resources Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

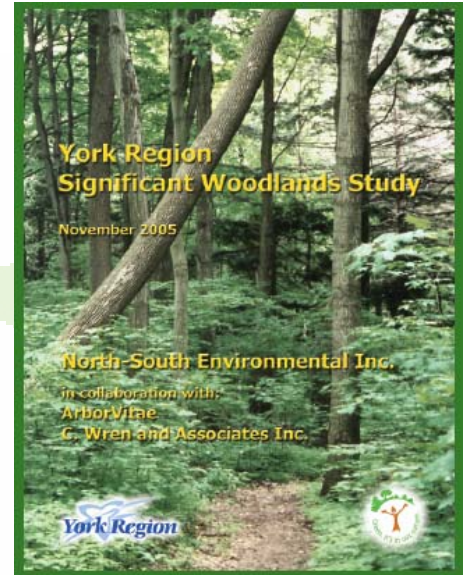
8 Information Management

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

8.1 Significant Woodlands Study

The adoption of the Significant Woodlands Study in January 2006 was a key achievement for the Region. This study provides a scientific assessment of the existing forest resources. Since adoption, this study has greatly assisted with Forest Conservation By-law administration and restoration and enhancement programs (through naturalization and stewardship initiatives). In 2007, the findings will be considered through a comprehensive Regional Official Plan Amendment to address the Greenbelt Plan requirements and the findings of this study.

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.



8.2 Natural Heritage Features and Attributes Inventory

In 2006, the Ministry of Natural Resources continued to update wetland evaluations within York Region. In addition, special surveys were undertaken to inventory the York Region Forest for rare plants and animals. In 2006 York Region contributed to the development of a Provincial Wetland Restoration Course that, through 4 phases, will result in the identification of specific sites within the Rouge and Humber watershed suitable for strategic wetland restoration, and the training of local professionals in the area of wetland restoration.

Key Deliverables: Updated environmental data and GIS mapping products, list of wetland restoration priority sites.

8.3 Land Securement Working Group Web Site Access

The Region chairs a Land Securement Working Group. This group functions to harmonize the securement of conservation lands and facilitates discussions about conservation priorities and programs. As further support to the partner agencies working to secure lands in York Region, the Geomatics Division reviews and updates 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: Communications and improved secure web site for land securement partners.

8.4 Greening Web Page

The York Region Greening web page is constantly being updated and revised. The web page includes links to our partners' sites and descriptions of recent Greening Achievements. The web page will also include this comprehensive list of Greening Strategy initiatives.

Key Deliverables: York Region's website gets, on average, 200,000 to 250,000 visitors per month. Using the website to promote the Region's proactive environmental protection and restoration efforts through the Greening Strategy has the opportunity to significantly increase public awareness and private land stewardship. Education is one of the most effective means to change personal behaviours that results in greater respect, appreciation and protection of the natural environment.



8.5 Everyday Guide to the York Regional Forest

In 2006, an additional 5,000 copies of the Everyday Guide to the York Regional Forest were distributed to libraries, local municipal offices and conservation authority offices across the Region. In 2007, the Guide will be updated to include additional information on the trail maps.

Key Deliverables: Greater public awareness and use of the York Regional Forest.

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 2006 distribution of our Greening Strategy 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 update of the Region's State of the Environment Report. This comprehensive update of the Region's environmental health was released in 2006.

9.2 Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable York Region

Through Vision 2026: Towards a Sustainable York Region, the Region reports on progress achieved as we accommodate new growth while protecting a sustainable natural environment, ensuring healthy communities and economic vitality (the triple bottom

line). Greening Strategy initiatives and advancements form part of this comprehensive report to the public to demonstrate our commitment to the triple bottom line.

10 The Greening Strategy Five Years Out (2001-2006)

When originally adopted in 2001, the Greening Strategy proposed a number of actions required to protect and enhance the Region's natural heritage system. These actions included increasing planting programs, securing land and facilitating communication between securement partners, adopting a new Trees By-law, and updating the Region's environmental databases; with an emphasis on partnership development. A number of the programs and partnerships developed to address these action areas are very successful on-going Greening Strategy initiatives. Next steps for advancement of the Greening Strategy will be to review the financing structure for the overall Strategy and redefine goals, objectives, targets and measurables.

