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2008 GREENING STRATEGY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 19, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services and Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides Regional Council with an update on the activities and environmental achievements of the Greening Strategy in 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

The Regional Greening Strategy was adopted by Regional Council in 2001. The intent of the strategy 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 Strategy helps to address habitat restoration, securement of greenlands, environmental education and promotion and other priority environmental interests. Greening Strategy programs include the allocation of funds for projects and land securement activities.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Region is committed to protecting, rehabilitating, and creating natural areas through the Greening Strategy. A complete list of Greening Strategy initiatives and their actions and deliverables are included in *Attachment 1*. Some notable 2008 highlights are summarized in the following sections.

4.1 ON-GOING PROGRAMS

The Greening Strategy has a number of successful, on-going programs which contribute to increasing forest cover, improving habitat diversity, public education and land

securement. The following are some of the 2008 successes of on-going Greening Strategy programs.

Over 65,000 trees and shrubs planted on public and private land

Existing Greening Strategy restoration and tree planting programs include:

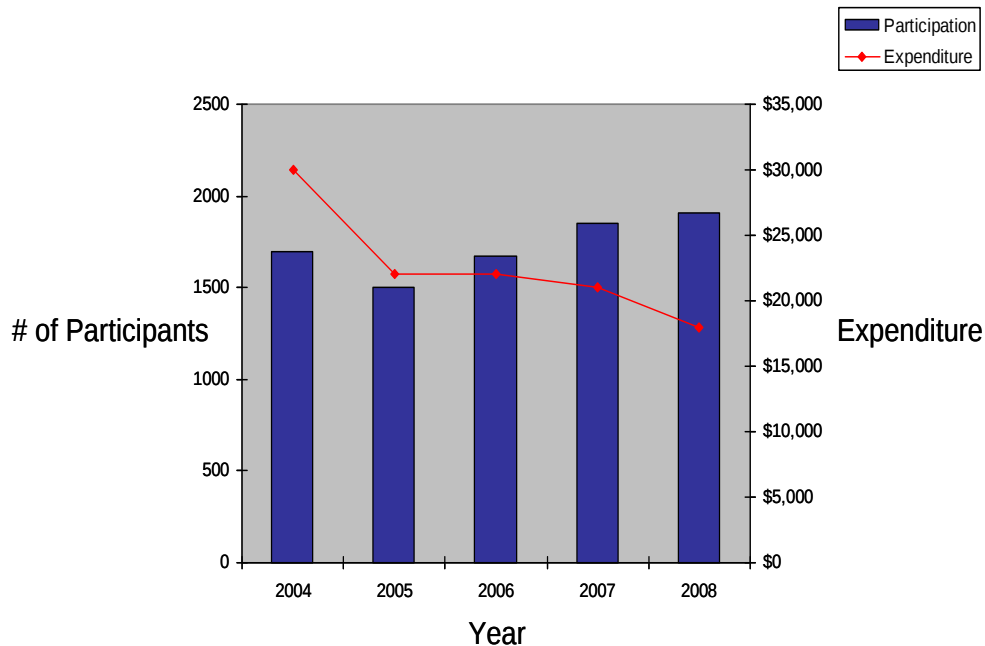
- The York Natural Planting Partnership,
- The Adopt a Stream Crossing program
- Support of local community naturalization initiatives.

Through these programs, a total of over 33, 000 trees and shrubs were planted on 40 sites across York Region in 2008. Additionally, sustainable management of the York Regional Forest resulted in the planting of over 34,000 trees within the Hall, Nobleton, North and Eldred King Tracts of the York Regional Forest.

Participation in Nature's Classroom, the Region's environmental education program, increases as costs to deliver the program decrease

Nature's Classroom 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 Region's environmental education programs (Forest Festivals and Events plus Nature's Classroom programming) has been on an increasing trend while the costs to deliver the program have been decreasing. This is the result of the establishment of a standardized registration process that has improved program delivery efficiency, internalized functions and reduced payments to contractors. In 2008, almost 2000 community members were educated about the York Regional Forest and the Region's environmental initiatives by participating in Forest Festivals or events, or a Nature's Classroom program.

Figure 1
Education Program Trends
(Forest Events and Nature's Classroom Programming)



4.2 2008 LAND SECUREMENT AND NEW PROJECTS AND EVENTS

The Greening Strategy also delivered a number of new projects in 2008. The highlight was the new coordinated planting program with the Rouge Park, Trees Ontario, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to plant two sites within Rouge Park. Rouge Park provides an ideal opportunity as the Region strives towards 25% forest cover. Approximately 230 hectares of new forest are required every year to achieve this target by 2026. It is anticipated that this 2008 achievement, which saw over 14,000 trees planted, will be a significant annual planting event for the Park and the Region in future years.

2008 was a banner year for land securement in York Region

The year 2008 will be remembered as a banner year for conservation land securement in York Region. Regional Council secured a total of 315 hectares (782 acres) through nine properties as outlined in Table 1. The locations of these properties have been identified on *Attachment 2*. Five properties were purchased by the Region and partners. Four properties involved the donation of a conservation easement (CE); two to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and two to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. These conservation easements restrict incompatible uses from occurring on the properties in perpetuity.

Table 1
Properties Secured in 2008

Property	Land Hectares	Acres	York Region Contribution	Value of Securement
Wolske (Purchase – YR)	5	13	\$83,700.00	\$83,700
Swan Lake (Purchase - TRCA, YR, RH, ORMF)	20	50	\$1,200,000	\$3,400,000
D. Groomsbridge (CE Donation – ORMLT)	20	50	\$15,000	\$191,250
E. & M. Groomsbridge (CE Donation – ORMLT)	20	49	\$15,000	\$172,500
Perryman (Purchase – TRCA, YR, RH, ORMF, Ducks Unlimited)	33	81	\$743,501	\$2,150,000
Roches Point (Gibbons) (CE Donation LSRCA, NCC)	27	68	\$3,900	\$385,000
Roches Point (Mathews) (CE Donation LSRCA, NCC)	55	136	\$4,900	\$910,000
Fradkin - Happy Valley (Purchase – NCC)	14	36	NCC Agreement	\$363,000
Bendor and Graves Addition (Purchase – YR)	121	299	\$3,287,500	\$3,287,500
TOTAL	315	782	\$3,287,500	\$10,942,950

Details of other new projects are further summarized in *Attachment 1*.

4.3 FUTURE GREENING

The Greening Strategy continues to grow and embrace new programs, projects and partnerships. The following are highlights of some of the initiatives started up in 2008 with anticipated deliverables for 2009 and beyond.

A new York Region pilot project started a backyard tree planting program in Markham

Within the City of Toronto, LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests), a not-for-profit organization, has successfully delivered a backyard tree planting program since the mid 1990s. In 2008, LEAF, under the direction of York Region staff, completed a feasibility study to assess programs that could be implemented in York Region to enhance the urban forest. Through this program, landowners pay a significantly reduced rate to purchase trees and shrubs to be planted by LEAF arborists within their backyard. The program focuses on getting the right tree in the right place to increase survival and fostering environmental stewardship in the landowners. In 2008, York Region enabled the program to be delivered to 60 Markham landowners as a pilot

project, with the intent to expand the program into the Town of Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan in the spring of 2009. This project enhances the urban forest, providing increased canopy cover with associated environmental benefits (e.g. pollutant uptake, water attenuation, reduction in heating and cooling costs in adjacent buildings).

In 2008 York Region also initiated a new partnership program to assess and grow our urban forest

In 2008, York Region participated in a GTA forum reviewing the value of different urban forest assessment and reporting tools. Based on the recommendations of that group, the Region subsequently developed a partnership with TRCA to have urban forest studies undertaken in York Region with supportive local municipal partners. For 2009, the York Region capital budget includes funds to cost-share in the preparation of urban forest studies with two local municipalities. 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 environmental (e.g. carbon storage, pollutant removal and carbon sequestration rates, water attenuation, etc.) and financial values 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 community energy use, and more by directing the creation and management of the urban forest within our growing communities. It is expected that Vaughan and Markham will undertake UFORE studies in partnership with York Region and TRCA in 2009.

4.4 RELATIONSHIP TO VISION 2026

The Greening Strategy addresses several goal areas of Vision 2026, including “Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture”, “Responding to the Needs of Our Residents”, and “Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region”.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

When allocated to partnership projects, the Greening Strategy funding leverages funds at ratios between 2 to 1 and 6 to 1 (partners to Region).

An annual Greening commitment of \$1.35 million is allocated to the delivery of the Greening Strategy, including land securement. The 2009 budget contains the funds necessary to undertake all of the Greening tasks planned for 2009. There are no additional financial implications with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the Greening and Securement Strategies and are consulted on, or involved in, a number of implementation programs and projects (e.g. partnership implementation for urban forest assessments with the City of Vaughan and the Town of Markham). Local municipal staffs are also members of the Land Securement Working Group and the Area Municipal Forestry Forum. As well, through Vision 2026, Planning for Tomorrow, the Corporate Clean Air Task Force and the State of the Environment Report, the people of York Region have reiterated the importance of the Region's natural heritage.

7. CONCLUSION

The Greening Strategy continues to demonstrate the Region's leadership and commitment to the natural environment. This proactive, high profile strategy exemplifies the Region's actions in environmental protection, rehabilitation and enhancement. The broad suite of Greening Strategy programs help address the Region's environmental policies and objectives as articulated in the Regional Official Plan, the State of the Watershed Report and Vision 2026. Implementation of this Strategy has resulted in York Region being recognized as a leader and champion in the environmental field.

For more information on this report, contact Paul Jankowski, General Manager, Roads at extension 5901 in the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The two attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)