



# At the Forks

The Magazine of the Friends of the Don East

Volume 8

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Issue 3

## Strangling Toronto with More Cars

*by Don McLean*

An incredible scheme to widen the Don Valley Parkway to 10 lanes may actually get off the ground. City Council considers the proposal for the third time at its November 6 meeting. The scheme is obviously disastrous for the Don Valley and its natural features, but its worst impacts will likely be imposed on the neighbourhoods adjacent to the parkway.

Adding four toll lanes to the DVP could dump an extra 4000 vehicles per hour into city neighbourhoods, onto streets that are already jammed, and

competing for parking space that is already non-existent.

The proposal is the brainchild of Councillor Paul Sutherland and a group of private companies who hope to make money by tolling the new DVP lanes. They are appealing to the simplistic notion that a wider parkway will eliminate congestion and allow commuters to move more quickly.

Experience around the world, as well as right here in Toronto, proves

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**Don't Destroy  
the Don!**

*Rally and a tour  
of restoration areas  
in the Don Valley*

**Sunday Nov. 4 -1 pm**

**Riverdale Park**

(at bridge over DVP)

*info at 416-596-0660*

## Milne Hollow Donation

*by Brendan Flanagan*



*Councillor Jane Pitfield, Toronto Natural Areas Coordinator Garth Armour and FODE director Brendan Flanagan at Milne Hollow*

In a ceremony at Milne Hollow on October 13, Friends of the Don East (FODE) donated \$1,000 to the City of Toronto to assist in establishing a heritage garden around a nineteenth century homestead on the site south east of the Lawrence and the DVP. The morning's work included planting of 225 trees and shrubs by about 35 volunteers, many from Electronic Data Systems (EDS).

The donation was made in the name of Martin High, a generous benefactor of FODE before his recent death. The ceremony was attended by Martin's widow, Gale Ladd, and members of her family, as well as Councillor Jane

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# Milne Hollow Restoration Moving Forward

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Pitfield, who accepted the cheque on behalf of the City, and Garth Armour, the Natural Environment Coordinator for Toronto's Parks and Recreation Department.

A consultant is now preparing a plan for the garden which will reflect the era of the homestead in terms of horticulture and design. These will likely include species of domestic fruit trees from this period.

The following species were planted at Milne Hollow on October 13: Alternate-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) 50; Purple flowering raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*) 100; Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) 25; and Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) 50. Total: 225 trees and shrubs.

This is the first time FODE has made a donation in support of a City-led plan to develop distinctive native plant



*Volunteer planters at Milne Hollow communities in the Don Valley. Your views on this approach and on the plant species that we should be encouraging in the valley are welcome.*

## At the Forks

Volume 8, Number 3

Editor: Don McLean

*At the Forks is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Don East.*

**We invite you to join**

## **FRIENDS OF THE DON EAST**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone FODE  
at (416)**

**410-7153**

**or email us at**

**fode@web.ca**

Enclosed is my annual membership fee:  
(Family \$20, Single: \$15, Low Income \$5)

Membership: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Friends of the Don East  
Leaside P.O. Box 43506  
Toronto, Ontario M4G 4G8

### **Mission Statement**

Friends of the Don East is committed to the pursuit of local and regional actions that will preserve, protect and enhance the remaining natural areas within our city. We strongly believe that areas within the watershed such as the tablelands; the valley lands of Taylor Massey Creek, the Lower Don, the West Don and the East Don; and the diverse flora and fauna inhabiting these areas have an inherent value which should be preserved for their own sake. These natural areas within our communities are vitally important and often overlooked in the maintenance and improvement of human health and well-being within the community. We will strive to ensure that these natural areas remain viable as we journey down the long road towards a sustainable urban environment so that they may be enjoyed by continuing generations of the many species that call this place their home.

## **Friends of the Don East Directors and Executive**

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Erica Wilson



# Ecological Gardeners Honoured

by Erica Wilson



Blooms start to fade as plants and gardeners pack it in for another season. Yet many of the gardens nominated in this year's Another Yard for the Don program maintain their beauty and intrigue, for these gardeners take a different approach to their yards and gardens. They grow plants that maintain their colour and give interest to autumn and winter landscapes, leave seed heads on the plants to attract birds throughout the year, and provide food for wildlife.



One of the award-winning ecological gardens last year.

This year, more than 30 new gardeners are joining our growing circle of Another Yard for the Don winners. They have shown commitment to the Don Watershed by recognizing the role of their properties in the whole ecosystem and acknowledging the connections between the health of their properties, the health of the Don Valley and by extension their own health and that of their families and neighbours.

Our volunteer judges visited many exciting and innovative gardeners who creatively implemented environmental principles such as water conservation (put to the test this summer!), organic pest management, composting, mulching, and integrating plants native to this region into their garden designs. Some are diverting water from their downspouts into their gardens; others are maintaining bittersweet vines for the birds who nest in them.

The judges witnessed the transformation of walkways and

boulevards into wildflower and medicinal herb beds and saw evidence that people had made friends with all the creatures who share the valley with us including squirrels, chipmunks, skunks, groundhogs, birds, butterflies and insects of all kinds.

The winners for 2001 will be announced in late October. Check the FODE website at [www.web.ca/~fode](http://www.web.ca/~fode) for a complete listing.

The awards ceremony will take place on Sunday, November 25, at 7 pm, as part of FODE's annual general meeting at the East York Civic Centre at 850 Coxwell Avenue. Everyone is invited to join in congratulating these people for their hard work.

Another Yard for the Don is a joint program of FODE and the North American Native Plant Society. We would like to thank our volunteer judges, as well as all the nominees who welcomed us with great hospitality and shared their knowledge and enthusiasm for nature through their gardens.

We would also like to thank the businesses and organizations who donated prizes for this year's program. Their logos are reproduced on the left side of this page.

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# The East Don Gets Its First

by P

Rain is quite clean, but once it hits the ground the water becomes polluted as it picks up contaminants from streets, parking lots and lawns. These contaminants are usually attached to small pieces of soil, sand or dirt called sediment.

This polluted water passes through the storm drains to our rivers and the lake – generally without treatment. Many of the chemicals in the polluted water are carcinogens or mutagenic chemicals. As they travel through our rivers they eventually end up in Lake Ontario – the source of Toronto's drinking water.

Clearly, we should keep the water in the Don River (and all our rivers!) clean, not only for our own health, but also for the many plants and animals that live in the valley.

The first approach is to minimize the pollutants in our urban environment, such as pesticides, spilled automotive fluids and industrial waste products.

A second line of defence is to remove the pollutants before they get to the river.

A stormwater management pond treats rain runoff to help remove contaminants. It is a two-part structure that is intended to catch runoff after a rain.

The first part is a sediment forebay into which the stormwater initially drains. As this forebay fills, much of the polluted sediment settles to the bottom, while the cleaner water above spills out into the pond, the second part of the structure.

When the pond fills up, it spills through controlled outlets into the river. From time to time the sediment in the forebays is cleaned out so they can continue their function of storing water and removing contaminated sediment.

Stormwater management ponds are common in new developments in areas north of the 401.

The Don will soon get a major new stormwater management pond just south of Lawrence Avenue, on the east side of the Don Valley Parkway.

The Moccasin Trail pond will treat stormwater from about 70 hectares of nearby Don Mills including Don Mills Plaza. Another eight hectares from the new development at Greenbelt Drive is also included.

This stormwater management pond has two sediment forebays, with the pond in the middle between them. The plan for the pond shore area includes the planting of many native shrubs and trees, so that in a couple of seasons the vegetation will be lush and it will attract water loving birds such as ducks, as well as dragonflies and other invertebrates making it an interesting and positive addition to valley habitat.

The pond will drain under the Don Valley Parkway and into the East Don River.

FODE is pleased that the East Don River is getting its first major stormwater management facility. Terraview-Willowfield Park on Taylor Massey Creek was the first in the Don River watershed south of Steeles.

The design of the Moccasin Trail pond is somewhat controversial. It was



***Moccasin Trail  
facility will help  
clean runoff  
flowing into the  
Don River***

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# Stormwater Management Pond

vies



not matched too carefully to the site. Having two sediment forebays, one at each end, means having to provide excessive roads to access the forebays for maintenance functions.

Initially, at least one of these roads was slated to go right through a high quality part of the remaining forest, with the loss not only of many native trees, but also of wildflowers such as trilliums, may-apples and wild leeks.

This is uncommon habitat in the city and greater efforts should have been made to preserve these through a

more sensitive design. For example, putting access roads for the sediment forebays on the Don Valley Parkway side of the pond would have kept the zone that is perpetually disturbed all on one side.

It is also important to shade the water in sediment forebays because in the warmer parts of the year, the runoff is very warm and this is a problem for aquatic creatures including fish.

Excessively high water temperatures are obstacles to the survival of invertebrates such as caddisfly larvae and crayfish. Since they are at the base of the food chain, the health of the Don depends on these creatures having a healthy aquatic habitat in which to

live. Shading the water lowers the temperature, helping to create more appropriate habitat.

Thin, narrow sediment forebays and ponds can be planted in a manner so that over time as the trees mature, they will hang over the water and shade it. Unfortunately, the pond and forebays at Moccasin Trail will be too wide to allow for much shading.

FODE, along with The Task Force to Bring Back the Don, made many suggestions for improvements, and we were successful with some of them.

A channel, which conveys stormwater to the sediment forebay during rain events is a stream with good base flow the rest of the time and it will get some naturalized form instead of the "ditch" it once was.

The width of an access road will be kept to a minimum, and be relocated so that a little more of the nearby high quality forest can be saved.

FODE and others are concerned that the siting and design of this pond was not as carefully planned as it could have been, and that there was not a broader public consultation process for groups who care about the Don to have input at an earlier stage.

As a result, through the Don Regeneration Council where FODE is represented, a letter has been sent to the City expressing our concerns and suggesting that more careful siting, design and broader public input be ensured for any future stormwater management pond in the urbanized parts of the Don River south of Steeles.

In addition, we will be developing a series of policies and practices for use when projects such as stormwater management ponds are proposed.

Stormwater management is a step in the right direction if done properly. We welcome any ideas you may have in this regard.

***Shading helps keep water temperatures suitable for aquatic life***

# DVP Widening will increase congestion

*continued from page 1*

them wrong. Roads with more lanes are not less congested than those with fewer. They simply have more vehicles crawling along them. For example, widening the 401 to 16 lanes has not eliminated congestion. It has simply attracted much more traffic.

While Sutherland and others want us to dream about *less* congestion on the parkway, they can't hide the fact that they are demanding *more* capacity for the DVP. This will generate a traffic disaster on all the roads leading to and from this widened parkway, and on all the side streets leading to those roads.

Every vehicle using the parkway must use other streets to get to and from the parkway. If the parkway is expanded by two-thirds, the traffic on these streets somehow also has to increase by two-thirds. This will occur on Eglinton, Lawrence and Don Mills, just as certainly as it will happen on Bloor and Danforth.

Air pollution will jump dramatically, especially in the neighbourhoods near the parkway and its major feeder roads. Childhood asthma and other respiratory problems will get worse. So will heart attacks and other problems that already prematurely kill over 1,000 people a year in Toronto.

The scheme will also certainly cost city taxpayers millions in lost TTC revenue. Every additional driver on the parkway is one less passenger on the transit system.

At this point, the proponents are saying they *think* the new toll lanes will cover the costs of building and maintaining them, but they are not offering any hard numbers. Instead, they are asking the City to agree to a "feasibility study" run by none other than Paul Sutherland, the chief



*Widening the DVP will destroy trails and restoration sites planted by volunteers*

cheerleader for the scheme.

They refuse to produce a detailed cost-benefit analysis up front because they know it would expose major problems. Instead they want to slowly suck the Council into this swamp, knowing it will be harder and harder to get out later.

Last, but not least, Toronto will lose more of its remaining bits of forest and natural areas, including many of the walking and cycling trails, parks and other sites along the Don where thousands of volunteers have laboured for ten years to improve the natural areas along the Don Valley.

And for all of these "benefits", drivers will get to pay tolls to a private company.

FODE urges you to contact your elected representatives at City Council and ask them to oppose the widening plan. Here's the phone, fax and email info for the mayor, and deputy-mayor:

Mayor Mel Lastman - Phone: 416-395-6464; Fax: 416-395-6440, email [mayor\\_lastman@city.toronto.on.ca](mailto:mayor_lastman@city.toronto.on.ca)

Deputy Mayor Case Ootes - Phone: 416-392-4032; Fax: 416-392-4123 [councillor\\_ootes@city.toronto.on.ca](mailto:councillor_ootes@city.toronto.on.ca)

## Stop Spadina 30 Years Later

*A film night and rally to oppose the expansion of the Don Valley Parkway*

**Bloor Cinema  
Thursday Nov. 1  
7 pm**

*more info at  
416-889-2837*



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# A Chance to Save the Moraine

by *Debbe Crandall*

***The Oak Ridges  
Moraine is the  
rainbarrel for the  
Don and many  
other rivers***

***For more  
information  
visit STORM's  
website at  
[www.stormco.org](http://www.stormco.org)  
or call  
(905) 880-3465***

The government of Ontario has a chance to "do the right thing" for the Oak Ridges Moraine after six years of harmful indifference.

There is a collective anticipation that Chris Hodgson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will soon be bringing forward Oak Ridges Moraine legislation that will become law by November 17, 2001. Will it follow the recommendations of the government-appointed Advisory Panel or will it be stronger? Will it favourably "grandfather" applications and hearings still before the OMB under the new rules or are we back to square one?

On May 17th, 2001 Minister Hodgson announced a six-month freeze on development on the Moraine including the suspension of all matters in various stages before the Ontario Municipal Board. During the summer, an Advisory Panel developed a recommended planning framework for the ORM.

Using the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act and Plan as a model, the Panel recommended that four policy designations form the basis of an Oak Ridges Moraine Plan. Each policy area would establish permitted uses, identify ecological constraints and specific policies to protect 100% of the natural features and hydrogeological functions.

This plan is to be implemented through an *Oak Ridges Moraine Act* superceding the *Planning Act* within the boundaries of the Moraine. It was also recommended that an Oak Ridges Moraine Legacy Trust or Foundation with upfront funding of \$250 million would be created for strategic land securement and stewardship programmes. As well, the work of the Oak Ridges Trail Association was singled out as a key component of a long-term protection plan.

The draft recommendations were released for public comment on

August 14. In general, the public strongly supported this policy framework as a good first step to Moraine protection. However, the environmental community, media, and residents were unanimous in their call to stop urban sprawl on the Moraine by setting urban growth boundaries around existing settlement areas, and to preserve the Moraine as a large scale natural corridor with protected ground and surface waters.

The final recommendations of the Panel incorporated a majority of the public's concerns including the following key points:

- 92% of the Moraine to be designated as Core Areas (38%) and Linkage Areas (24%) and Countryside (30%)
  - No new residential development in these areas except for minor infilling in identified hamlets and villages
  - All new growth directed to Settlement Areas (8%)
  - No new aggregate pits in Core Areas
  - No amendments to Plan until 10-year review
  - No net increase in water-taking until water budgets developed
  - Mechanism to incorporate water policies from the Walkerton inquiry.
- Three issues that remain unresolved and as such are problematic include:
  - The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) as the appeals body on local planning matters;
  - New or expanded aggregate pits in Linkage Areas;
  - The extent to which the proposed provincial Plan should be retroactive.

There will be further opportunities to review the legislative package and provide additional comments at the procedural public hearings.

*Debbe Crandall is STORM's representative on the Oak Ridges Moraine Advisory Panel.*



# City Study Hails Crothers Woods

by Don McLean

A recent City-commissioned study is calling for increased protection and restoration work for Crothers Woods and adjacent natural areas in the Don Valley between Millwood and Pottery Road, west of the DVP.

It notes that the Crothers-Beechwood areas are "situated on the boundary between the Carolinian forest of the south and the deciduous forest of the north". Prior to Toronto's founding, "the region would have been blanketed with a rich and diverse forest".

Today, close to half this area is still forested. "Because of the presence of regionally rare plant species and high quality tolerant hardwood habitat", the Crothers Woods area has been designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA).

The study recommendations related to Crothers Woods call on the City to "protect the finest block of habitat in the entire study area" and improve and manage its recreational trails.

The study was prepared for the City's Parks and Recreation division by Kirk Biggar and Associates, a forest management consulting firm. It offers a detailed evaluation of this section of the Don Valley and specific proposals for improving it.

For example, it recommends that the City "cease snow-dumping practices" in the Beachwood area along the east banks of the river north-east of Bayview. It also calls for new forest and plant restoration projects, as well as greater care of existing restoration sites.

The study notes that this large area of

parkland attracts "a great number of public users" including local residents and "users in the Greater Toronto Area [who] consider Crothers-Beechwood a recreational destination."

Some of this use, especially by mountain bikers, has put stress on this area, causing erosion, soil compaction, trail widening and damage to plants and their root systems. The report suggests corrective measures.

The study is a welcome step forward in the City's approach to Crothers Woods and the adjacent valley areas. Just last year, there was discussion of reviving the old Leslie Street Extension under the guise of connecting Redway Road to Bayview Avenue. This new expressway would have plowed right through the middle of Crothers Woods.

Hopefully the new interest in protecting and restoring this area will take firm hold at City Hall and residents will not have to stop the expressway another time.

**Regionally rare  
plant species and  
high quality  
hardwood habitat  
in Crothers  
Woods**



## Your Parks, Your Future

The featured speaker at our annual general meeting on Sunday, November 25 will be naturalist and horticulturist Frank Kershaw of the City parks department. He will be describing the plans for further improvements in the Don Valley parkland. This will take place at the East York Civic Centre at 850 Coxwell Avenue.

The program begins with a potluck dinner at 5 pm, followed by our main speaker at 6 pm. This year's awards and prizes for the Another Yard for the Don ecological gardening program will be handed out starting at 7 pm. The evening will conclude with the election of the new Board of Directors of Friends of the Don East. Everyone is welcome to attend. Call 416-410-7153 for information.

*Thanks to our sponsors for making this publication possible.*

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TORONTO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
FOR TOGETHER FOR GOOD



EARTH DAY  
2001



Friends of the  
Environment  
Foundation