



Volume 9

Winter 2003

Issue 4

Visions for Taylor/Massey Creek

by Andrew McCammon

INSIDE :

**Trees
Count in
East
Toronto**

Many FODE members have a warm spot in their heart for Taylor/Massey Creek, a major tributary of the Don River. We have conducted many walks, clean-ups, and plantings throughout its southern reaches, which provide exceptional greenspace for about four kilometers, almost all the way from Warden Woods near St Clair and Warden through Taylor Creek Park to the Forks of the Don near the DVP at Don Mills Road.

Unfortunately, and in spite of the benefits of this length of relatively broad greenspace near the heart of the City, Taylor / Massey Creek (TMC) has

serious problems. Its upstream reaches, from just south of the 401 near Pharmacy to south of Eglinton, are narrow and often channelized, while too much untreated stormwater and sanitary sewage from combined sewer overflows enters the watercourse throughout its length.

In fact, the 1994 award-winning *Forty Steps to a New Don*, published by the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority, assigned TMC "the dubious honour of being the most degraded of the main tributaries of the Don watershed", contributing "up to 80% of the pollution

continued on page 2

Revisiting the Lower Watershed

by Jurgen Braunohler



photograph by Jamie Osbourne

Planting bulbs at Jackman School. See page 4.

With the February meeting on Taylor Massey Creek coming up, it was time to re-visit Taylor Creek Park, which follows the creek from Victoria Park Avenue to the Forks of the Don near the DVP and Don Mills Road, as well as Warden Woods, located between Pharmacy and Warden Avenue south of St Clair. Any good map of Toronto shows several access points and parking lots located off Don Mills Road, Haldon Ave, Dawes Road, and Pharmacy.

I began my hike at the Forks, and right away appreciated boulders recently trucked in to the creek to retain and

naturalize a small drop near the Forks. As I walked east, the peace and quiet of this wonderful area offered a nice escape from the bustle of the City, even though there were many others enjoying the fresh air. The odd trail through wooded areas beckoned, as I walked through the large ESA (Environmentally Significant Area) that extends both east and west of the bridge carrying O'Connor Ave. But there was something else too. Do you remember when the entire valley floor had its grass cut like a golf course? Now, there are extensive areas of waving grasses and plantings that provide a

continued on page 3

Update on Taylor/Massey Creek

continued from page 1

in the Lower Don...under certain flow conditions.”

Among other recommendations, *Forty Steps* suggested that TMC needed a sub-watershed plan to provide a framework for assigning priorities to address water quantity, water quality, and habitat improvement.

In addition *Forty Steps* recommended the creation of the Terraview-Willowfield regeneration site – itself an award-winning pond and wetland area completed in 1999 just south of where Pharmacy runs in to the 401, and which serves as a demonstration of how parts of the watershed can be restored.

Now, several long-term efforts are starting to provide an indication of how the watershed can be protected and restored.

First of all, TMC has been identified as implementation priority in the City’s draft Wet Weather Flow plan. Should this 25-year, \$1 billion plan be approved to deal with storm and melt-water runoff from across the whole of the City, including into the Rouge, Don, and Humber Rivers, TMC would be second in line to have a sub-watershed study prepared for it, after Highland Creek.

Based on the sub-watershed study and other work, detailed plans would then be prepared for a 15-year, \$60-100 million effort in TMC to reduce or manage the flow of stormwater, eliminate the overflow of sanitary sewage into the creek, address stream restoration, protect wetlands, create ponds, and involve the community in rain barrel, downspout disconnections, and other lot management stewardship programs.

On a second front, the Parks and Recreation Department of the City has been developing two other measures that will help protect and restore TMC. First of all, the City’s new Ravine Bylaw will help protect all of the ravines in the recently amalgamated mega-city, and be of particular help in protecting the southern third of TMC.

In addition, in recognition of the value of the greenspace located in the southern reaches of TMC, Parks is also working on a plan to establish restoration priorities for Taylor Creek Park, with runs from Victoria Park to the East Don River.

FODE invites members and others to join us for presentations by City of Toronto staff on these important efforts. Please see below for more information.

At the Forks

Volume 9, Number 4

Co-Editors:

*Andrew McCammon,
Don McLean, Erica Wilson*

*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.*



Andrew McCammon, Chair
Paula Davies, Vice-Chair
John Laraway, Secretary
Alice Panagopoulis, Treasurer
Michael Dennison, Director

Executive Director:
Don McLean
Volunteer & Communications
Coordinator: Erica Wilson
Trees Count Coordinator:
Allan Sinclair

AN EVENING ON TAYLOR / MASSEY CREEK

Wednesday February 26, 2003

S. Walter Stewart Public Library

170 Memorial Park Ave. (Near East York Civic Centre)

Free. Donation requested. Free FODE membership to all attendees.

7:00 Doors Open

7:30 Opening Comments and Introductions

7:40 Wet Weather Flow and Taylor/Massey Creek
Ann Rexe, Works & Emergency Services, City of Toronto

8:15 New Ravine Bylaw and
Restoration Priorities for Taylor Creek Park

Beth McEwen, Parks and Recreation, City of Toronto

9:00 Closing words

Revisiting the Lower Watershed

continued from page 1

more natural look, reduce the need for grass cutting, and provide improved habitat for wildlife, especially birds.

From O'Connor to Dawes, there are many small wetlands, now frozen, which need to be protected and can perhaps be expanded, as could the welcome but narrow plantings at the edge of the creek itself. And, even though I walked in December, I saw a pair of ducks swimming in Taylor Creek.

Eventually, I passed underneath Dawes Road and came to the Goulding Estate. The ravine here was once part of the Dentonia Park Farm, of which the estate is the last surviving structure. Owned about a century ago by the well known Massey family, the operation led the way in cleanliness and pasteurization. The Masseys gave their name to the creek as had the Taylor family earlier on. The land was obtained by the Borough of East York in 1965, and is now preserved as green-space. In 1995, the Goulding Estate was protected as a heritage site, and in 1997 FODE signed the Don Accord here, committing us to helping to protect and restore the environment, followed by a series of tree plantings by FODE volunteers in the ravine to create a migratory songbird habitat. I was pleased to see that the black ashes, button bushes, and berry-bearing shrubs

were doing well.

At Victoria Park Avenue, the Dentonia Golf Course takes up the entire valley corridor. However, you can get around it either by walking north and going along Donside Drive or by taking the outside

...the peace and quiet of this wonderful area offered a nice escape from the bustle of the City...

stairs and catwalk attached to the north side of the Vic Park subway station and then cutting through the apartment complex to get to Warden Woods.

This area, where the late conservationist Charles Sauriol first camped as a boy scout in 1919 and which is mentioned in his "Trails of the Don" as Silver Creek, is a delightful area that includes a footbridge that crosses the creek. The area looks pristine following two clean-ups by FODE and other volunteers in the last two years.

A third volunteer effort, a planting of 200 trees and shrubs performed with the Task Force to Bring Back the Don, can be seen about 100 metres south of where the trail emerges at Warden and St Clair.

Obviously, Taylor Creek Park offers a lot, and can offer more in the future.

Volunteers needed

FODE has many opportunities for volunteers. Consider helping us with:

- *Another Yard for the Don*
- *Trees Count*
- a FODE walk, birding event or treeplanting
- We also welcome photos and articles for the newsletter

For more information or to find out about upcoming opportunities, check our website or call Erica at (416) 466-9153

**Visit the website
of Friends of the
Don East
[www.web.ca/
~fode](http://www.web.ca/~fode)**

Join Friends of the Don East

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

Phone FODE
at (416)

466-9153

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: 358 Danforth Ave. Chester PO Box 65124, Toronto, Ontario M4K 3Z2



Jackman Garden Wins Gold Award

by Karen Whitehorn

On the day that Pierre Elliot Trudeau died, the children at Jackman School were being treated to the roar of heavy machines ripping up the asphalt at my daughter's school.

The concept for this effort to create a garden stemmed from an act of vandalism - a wooden playground structure that had been torched. Travelling around Toronto to see how other schools had modified their playgrounds, I discovered greening projects and teaching gardens, and was inspired.

In the 20th century, a school's play space had evolved into barren asphalt, void of any organic material or life. As we began the new millennium, however, the push was on to restore nature and wildlife to the schoolyard, with a vision of a playground of trees, native wildflowers, and an outdoor classroom/ amphitheatre where children could mingle with nature.

In our busy urban lives, we are disenfranchised from the natural world. We buy food from grocery stores, but how many of us have actually sown a seed, nurtured it, and come to know how grand a task it is to grow just one plant from a seed?

Perhaps, if they have a garden, our children will be more connected with the earth. Perhaps they will become more respectful of farmers, ecologists and environmentalists. Perhaps they will come to understand that the planet is our home.

Our principal, Jane Fletcher, pledged her support for the new vision, and introduced me to Zora, a Yugoslavian immigrant who committed to teaching her child that one must give back to the community, not destroy it. As a graduate of horticultural school, she was able to add her extensive knowledge and expertise to the project.

When the 13 trees arrived, I wasn't sure whether I shed tears of joy for the garden being created for my daughter and her



photograph by Karen Whitehorn

contemporaries - or was I simply mourning a prime minister who embodied my introduction to politics.

More recently, the Jackman Millennium Garden's response to the events of September 11 was to dig a trench forming a peace sign five metres across, in which more than a thousand bulbs were planted. Again, the project involved every child, teacher and staff member, as well as many community members who happened by. The thousand narcissus bloomed gloriously this past spring.

And so it snows outside, and the garden is asleep. Parents rendezvous at the amphitheatre, dressed in long underwear and down coats. The hard working Moms of the garden committee plan their next projects: a tall grass maze to enliven the middle of the remaining asphalt expanse; a green roof to fight the urban heat island. And they continue to raise funds by selling their video, made by one of the Dads, which documents the Millennium Garden Project.

We have created a living memorial to the new millennium, and we are thrilled.

Karen Whitehorn is part of the committee that created the Jackman Millennium Garden, which won a Gold award in FODE's 2002 "AnotherYard for the Don" program.

To find out more about the Jackman garden or Another Yard for the Don program, please call 416 466 9153.

Coming in March:

• *At the Forks special insert on our 2003 yard naturalization program*

• **Canada Blooms:** March 12-16, Metro Convention Centre

Visit our booth, or volunteer and get into the show for free! For more information, call Erica at (416)466-9153

Thanks to our sponsors for making this publication possible.



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

TORONTO
Atmospheric Fund

Domtar Inc.
Friends of the Environment Foundation