



## GDA Update for November 2021

We've been silent on the newsletter front but hard at work. This update will get you up to speed with our accomplishments and activities in 2021.

First though, our **Annual General Meeting** will take place on **Saturday November 20 at 1:30 pm**. It will be conducted by Zoom. You can join us after lunch that day with a cup of tea in the comfort of your own home. We are sending the newsletter out now so you can see what we've been up to and thus save a little time reporting on the day of the AGM. Closer to the date we will send out last year's minutes, an agenda, and other information usually associated with our AGM. Our goal is to keep the business portion of the meeting to less than 30 minutes.

If you haven't already renewed your 2020/21 membership and you wish to participate in the voting, now is a good time. It's also a good time to renew your membership for 2021/22. You are welcome to sit in on the AGM regardless of whether you have renewed your membership, but to vote you must have a current membership.

And now for our update:

**Provincial Lands** – For years now GDA has tried to secure a permanent plan for the roughly 1300 acres which lie between the town of Uxbridge and the larger network of trails situated south of Highway #21. These lands are owned by the Province as part of a land swap arrangement that dates back to 2004. Since that time, we have worked to have these lands permanently protected and to expand the availability of green space south of Uxbridge. We have come close to fruition more than once. As we reported last year, we have been working hard in yet another attempt. We remain optimistic that our efforts will be fruitful thanks to the skill, talents and time of certain GDA members. We have the support of our MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy and of Uxbridge's Mayor Dave Barton. Stay tuned!

Key to this project is the donation of land by GDA member John McCutcheon. His lovely property is adjacent to one of the large properties currently owned by the Province and will form a key part of the trail network we envision. John announced this at last year's AGM and continues to work with the Town to complete the process of donating the land.

**Miller Situation:** East of these properties and directly across the road on the 7<sup>th</sup> Concession of Uxbridge is a large aggregate pit known as the Boyington Pit, operated by the Miller Group. The Miller Group proposes to change oversight of 37 of the 196 hectares from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Aggregate Resources Act to oversight by the Township of Uxbridge, to import 1,000,000 cubic metres of fill over a 10-year period and build an equipment storage building which is 3716 square metres. The proposal is currently being considered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and by the Township of Uxbridge.

GDA has contributed submissions expressing our concerns to the MNR and to the Township of Uxbridge about this proposal. GDA received significant assistance of time and expertise from several GDA members who were key in helping us develop a response. With their help we also retained a reputable municipal lawyer and commissioned legal research to ensure our concerns are valid and our responses are sound. We have shared this information in our submissions to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Township of Uxbridge. At this time there is no new information to share but we continue to follow the situation closely.

**NorthEast Pickering lands:** Continuing south, a large acreage adjacent to the Oak Ridges Moraine continues to be under development pressure. Last year we were delegates to the Region of Durham when a Minister's Zoning Request was being considered for development on these same lands. In previous years we have submitted comments to the Region of Durham and the City of Pickering about proposed development of these lands.

This year the development group has changed its name from Dorsay Development to the North East Pickering Landowners Association and has offered to donate some of these lands to become the site of a new hospital in Durham.

Below is a photo of the land in question, known as the Carson Farm, looking north towards Uxbridge:

These lands are adjacent to the existing Greenbelt and are valuable for agriculture, one of Durham Region's most important industries. They are part of the Agricultural System, which has been mapped



and which we hope will be adopted as part of the Greenbelt expansion. They also include the headwaters of Carruthers Creek, a watershed which is under stress from urbanization. A recent report by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority predicts flooding problems downstream should development occur here. We believe that development will follow a hospital if it were to be built on this land. Earlier this year we submitted comments to the Province's initiative "Growing the Size of the Greenbelt" suggesting that these lands become permanently protected for agriculture and added to the Greenbelt. A good summary of the situation can be found in this article: <https://thenarwhal.ca/carruthers-creek-ontario-greenbelt/>.

We have submitted comments to the site selection committee for Lakeridge Health, and before the end of the year we plan to send a letter encouraging the Province to permanently protect the Carruthers Creek watershed and the agricultural lands in northeast Pickering.

If you would like to add your voice, comments about the hospital can be emailed to the Lakeridge Health Site Selection Committee: [siteselection@lh.ca](mailto:siteselection@lh.ca). A letter about permanently protecting these lands can be sent to MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy: [peter.bethlenfalvyco@pc.ola.org](mailto:peter.bethlenfalvyco@pc.ola.org). In the 2018 provincial election, incumbent and current MPP for Ajax Rod Phillips [publicly stated his support](#) for adding the headwaters of the Carruthers Creek to the Ontario Greenbelt; you could also email MPP Rod Phillips at [rod.phillipsco@pc.ola.org](mailto:rod.phillipsco@pc.ola.org). And you could sign a petition to save the Carruthers Creek headwaters in Pickering from development and have these lands added to the Greenbelt by clicking here: <https://www.change.org/p/save-the-carruthers-creek-headwaters-in-pickering-on-from-development>

**Federal Lands:** Just to the west of the contentious agricultural lands lie the Federal Lands, 18,600 acres expropriated in the 1972's by the Federal government for an airport. As you know, GDA's origins lie in the early fight to prevent an airport from being built. Our focus broadened to include nearby areas, but we continue to have an interest in what happens to these lands and work closely with the dedicated and energetic folks of Land Over Landings. To mark 50 years, LOL has created a wonderful 10-minute video entitled The Accidental Oasis and it is worth a viewing (watch for a few familiar faces too!): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xb2RbYUVtgs>

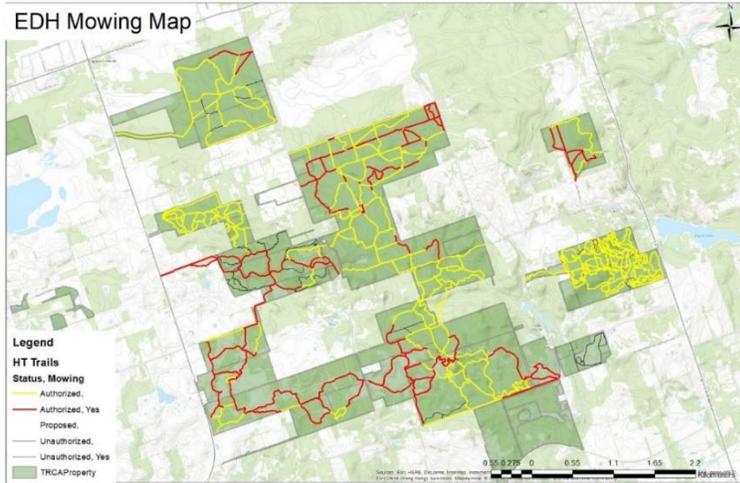
**Parking lots:** Early this spring a new parking lot was built at the northeast corner of the Walker Woods, known as the Towers parking lot, thanks to a grant application completed by GDA to the TransCanada Trail Foundation. The grant funds were transferred to the Town of Uxbridge as the Town was in a better position to coordinate construction. The site now has the best view of sunsets in the area and most weekends is full. The problem of trail visitors parking on the road at this location has largely ceased.

GDA recently submitted a big grant application to Ontario Trillium Foundation to enlarge and improve the parking lot known as Three Rocks, situated at the southeast corner of Walker Woods and Glen Major. We expect to hear back on our proposal by January of 2022. Keep your fingers crossed!

Several of you have reached out about the need to repair a boardwalk deep in Glen Major. And you have likely noticed that a beloved bridge is also damaged. It's taken awhile to sort out a plan but we now have one. In the short-term TRCA has done some temporary repairs to the bridge and the boardwalks to address public safety issues. Over the longer term, as part of the grant application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation we hope to not only expand the parking lot but also replace the bridge and replace the two damaged boardwalks with a sustainable trail.

**Mowing:** You may recall that we have provided financial assistance to TRCA to maintain the trails to a better standard than they can achieve without our funding. We give TRCA about \$10,000 per year towards mowing the trails of the East Duffins Headwaters. Last year we received a grant from TransCanada Trails to purchase 2 heavy duty lawnmowers. TRCA

created some area maps of trails to target and took responsibility for mowing the most heavily grassed areas. Working with Oak Ridges Trail Association and Durham Mountain Biking Association, we divided up the remaining areas to mow and organized teams which mowed from May to October.



We mowed three times - in some places four times - throughout this past season. In one of the more remote, difficult-to-access areas we mowed once with a heavy-duty specialized machine owned and operated by one of our volunteers. One of our new mowing machines was a casualty when it hit a stump, a reminder of the importance of having a spotter walk ahead.

This year was an experiment to see if volunteers could take on more mowing and support the TRCA with time and effort instead of money. Aside from the damaged lawnmower, it was a resounding success – so many of you stepped forward and helped and have indicated you are willing to take on more next year. A small grant is available from TransCanada Trail this Fall, and we are planning to apply for funds to replace the damaged mower.

Many thanks to our great and growing team of volunteers, and to ORTA for their leadership in helping us to get the mowing organized. ORTA volunteers have been mowing trails for years and we really appreciate their efforts, their expertise, their energy and their leadership.



**Trail counters:** We purchased 8 trail counters earlier this year and installed them at entry points to the Walker Woods, Glen Major Forest and Dagmar. We are working with TRCA to monitor the increasing numbers of visitors to the trails. TRCA have the expertise to analyze the data and are sharing information about peak times and days of use and locations. We hope the data will help all interested trail groups, the Township of Uxbridge and the TRCA in applying for grants, and in advocating for better funding towards basic trail maintenance. We believe the trails in the East and West Duffins Headwaters areas make an economic contribution to the Region through tourism and deserve investments in trail maintenance and amenities such as parking lots, signage, removal of fallen trees, and keeping the trails safe for travel.

**Other volunteer activities:** This Summer, teams of volunteers assisted TRCA with the installation of several new trail entrance signs to help the ever-increasing numbers of visitors find the various smaller trail entrances more easily.

GDA sits on a Stewardship Committee for the East and West Duffins Headwaters properties. The committee meets several times a year and includes representatives of TRCA, and groups including DMBA, ORTA, GDA, and Uxbridge Horsemen's Association. It is through this committee that much of the work involved in maintaining the EDH trails gets organized and coordinated.

One recommendation of this committee is that the many small trail entrances in the East and West Duffins Headwaters properties should have emergency "green" numbers at each entrance to assist emergency responders in the event of a problem on the trails. Uxbridge Township has supported the idea, and TRCA is now taking the lead in coordinating this task with staff at the Region of Durham.

**Trail connections:** There are several key trail connections we are hoping to obtain which will help to keep walkers and cyclists off the roads and improve access to trail networks. Every new connection requires multiple meetings with the landowner and other relevant parties and can take many years to achieve. We are always alert to new opportunities and are actively working on a couple of connections at this time. We will keep you posted on our success.

**Lastly:** Huge thanks to all of you for your interest, for your generous donations of funds, for the time and physical labour you have donated, and for the expertise you have so generously shared. We are a small, low-profile organization (no paid staff, no office, and you will notice our website badly needs updating!) but we have achieved so much over the years thanks to our collective efforts. It's been another productive year. Thank you and Onward!