

Newsletter Spring 2021

Greetings GDA members! The pandemic continues, spring is coming, and so are vaccines. May we all remain patient and healthy as we get through this last haul. This newsletter includes updates for members and volunteers. We don't yet have any big volunteer projects planned for the coming outdoor season but we do have news, and some tasks which may benefit from your help.

First, some background information: TRCA is a large landowner in this area, and at the time of the Walker Woods land purchase in 1993 was seen by nearby landowners as a neglectful absentee landlord, difficult to reach and slow to respond. GDA worked with the TRCA to determine how the local community could help overcome some of these challenges. In 2007 we began sharing in the costs of maintaining the properties to a higher standard than TRCA could achieve alone. We also advocated for and began funding a local liaison position to ensure a more responsive TRCA presence.

Liaison Position: The first liaison was David Taylor, who for 10 years developed relationships with the local community on behalf of the TRCA and worked on the trails. He was replaced in 2017 by Ranald McKay, who has further developed the role and has been a terrific liaison. Ranald is ready now to step away from the job and focus on his beloved bees and TRCA will soon be posting the position on its website. If you are interested in a part-time seasonal job which gets you outside, on the trails, and involved with the community, consider applying!

Get in touch with us at info@greendurham.ca and we can ensure you receive the link once the TRCA job is posted. Ranald welcomes contact if you'd like to learn more about his experience with the job, email him at ranald.mckay@gmail.com, so does David at davidtaylor2789@gmail.com. To clarify, TRCA is the employer, GDA's role is to ensure local interests are best represented and to subsidize the position.

Mowing Assistance: As part of our TRCA partnership we have been underwriting their mowing costs in the East Duffins Headwaters lands (Walker Woods, Glen Major mostly)thanks to a generous yearly donation from a long-time GDA member. Last year we applied for funding from TransCanada Trail Foundation to purchase two high quality commercial-grade Honda self-propelled push mowers. The idea is to stretch the funding we provide to the TRCA as far as possible by reducing the amount of mowing done by TRCA staff. There are certain outlying and hard-to-reach areas which add considerably to the time TRCA staff spend transporting equipment to different sites. There are usually 3 mows performed each year.

We are looking for a few people who would like to help with mowing. We are partnering with Oak Ridges Trail Association, who have trail mowing down to a fine art. Using a self-propelled mower, they work in small teams for 2 to 3 hours at a time. An outdoor picnic lunch on a hill somewhere along the route is usually part of the day. The work involves lifting the mower over the stepovers, a person to walk ahead with clippers and a hand saw to clear the path and check for stumps, while the other pushes the mower. The self-propelled mower moves at about the speed of an average walk. If we can do the first mow by late April and early May, it will keep the grass down and encourage ground nesting migratory birds to nest further from the trail. Get in

touch with us at info@greendurham.ca and we will connect you with the great folks at ORTA who love working on the trails to set up a mowing schedule.

Trailer Expertise: This year we plan to apply to TransCanada Trail Foundation to purchase a small trailer. Its purpose will be to tow the mower(s), it could also be used to haul supplies such as gravel and timber into remote areas on some of the trails. If any of you have thoughts about sources of trailers, models prices, please get in touch at info@greendurham.ca. We are eligible for up to \$5000 from TCT.

Trail Counter: We were offered the use of a trail counter by TransCanada Trail Foundation for the coming year. It has been installed not far from the Towers parking lot entrances to the trails. We are exploring the purchase of additional trail counters to install at other trail entrances. Trail counters could assist us with providing a clearer idea of the numbers of people using the trails. Our hope is that this data could help justify better funding for routine trail maintenance.

Parking Lot expansion: As you know, parking lots have been overflowing as visitors flock to use the trails. You will soon see work begin to expand the Towers parking lot, located at the northeast corner of the Walker Woods, and across the road from Durham Forest. GDA applied for funding from TransCanada Trail last Fall – there was a one-time opportunity to obtain up to \$40,000 towards capital costs. We were successful in our application but implementing the project to expand the Towers Parking lot was complicated for us. We were able to transfer the grant to the Township of Uxbridge, and will instead play a supporting role by providing financial support of roughly \$15,000.

Save the date – Webinar on Growing the Greenbelt April 13 @ 7pm

You may have been following the recent series of announcements about a suite of changes to various acts related to land planning. Most recently is a proposal to “grow the Greenbelt”. The GDA is pleased to partner with The Ontario Headwater Institute to bring our members a webinar on the provincial consultation on growing the Greenbelt, found at [Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt | Environmental Registry of Ontario](#). OHI has received a grant from the Greenbelt Foundation to help facilitate public engagement on the Grow the Greenbelt consultation. The webinar, called Regional Resilience, will provide background information, allocate time for Q&A, and link people to a submission you can support on-line and/or from which you can borrow for your own submission. We will send out an email with the link to participate closer to the date.

Membership Renewal: Thanks to all of you who have renewed your memberships, and a reminder to others to do so. Your membership helps us stay in touch with you, and lets others know there is a significant group of citizens which share a common vision for this special area.

AGM: We haven't decided yet but we'll let you know.

Lastly, a big thank you to TransCanada Trails Foundation, which has funded so many of our activities this past year.



We're doing something GREAT with our
Capital Improvement Plan grant funding!