

## Newsletter Spring 2022

The bluebirds have returned to the area and ice on the trails is starting to melt. It's time for an update!

**A note to trail users – the trails are soft and vulnerable to damage at this ice melt time.**

**Official Plan Revisions:** You are likely aware that municipalities are reviewing their official plans as they must do every 5 years. This time they have been mandated by the Province to include plans for a decade beyond usual projections, and release lands forecasted as possibly being needed for development all at once, instead of gradually. GDA has contributed comments where possible and appropriate during the review process. Go to this link [Envision Durham - Region of Durham](#) where the review process and commenting opportunities are outlined. There are two current opportunities to comment:

 **Land Needs Scenarios** There is an opportunity to have your say about land use and how we choose to accommodate a growing population. Complete a survey regarding five different Land Needs Scenarios and contribute your voice: [SurveyMonkey Powered Online Survey](#). **Submit by April 14**

Guidance on how to complete the survey has been created by [Take Action | Stop Sprawl Durham](#). We support their recommendation of choosing Scenario 5 to save farmland and encourage more density and better land use planning. Scenario 5 also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and keeps district energy and transit options on the table. **Here in Durham Region**, Ajax Council has unanimously passed a motion supporting a no urban expansion scenario (Scenario 5) for population growth. Pickering Council has endorsed Scenario 2, which would require 6400 acres of additional land to support expansion.

 **Natural Heritage Systems** The flip side of good land use planning is the preservation and enhancement of natural spaces, linkages and connections between natural areas. Natural heritage preservation, including green infrastructure, supports sustainable tourism, fish and wildlife quality of life, human health, a sustainable economy, and provides free ecological services – carbon sinks, flood mitigation and water re-charge. Today, Durham is home to just under 700,000 people. By the year 2041, our population is expected to grow to 1.2 million people. Nature could use our help and GDA members can contribute by adding their opinions and ideas. **Submissions are due May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

There are two ways to comment – directly onto a map (explanation #1 below), and via letter (#2 below)

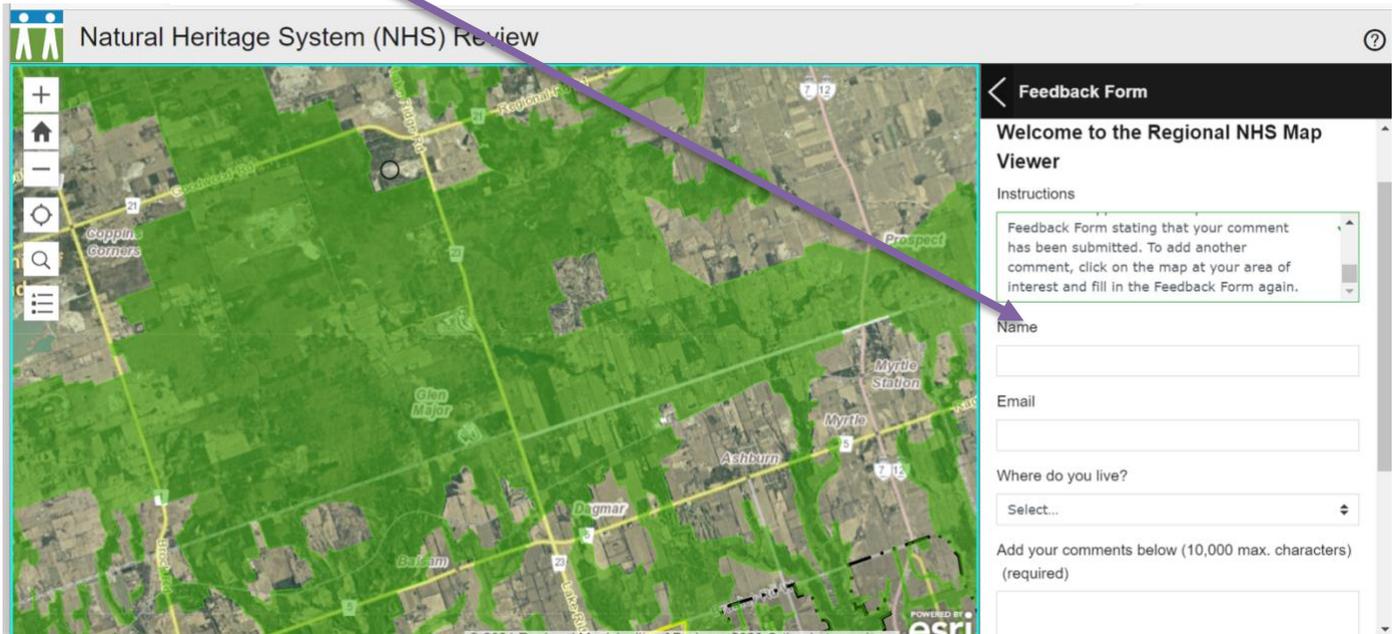
**1)** A map shows potential areas which could be restored or added to the Natural Heritage System [Draft-Regional-NHS--Enhancement-Opportunity-Areas.pdf \(durham.ca\)](#)

You can submit a letter in pdf format to [EnvisionDurham@durham.ca](mailto:EnvisionDurham@durham.ca) with your comments about this map, or about anything else you want to contribute to the discussion.

**2)** Here is how to submit a comment about the Natural Heritage Systems map  
This is not a user-friendly survey but once you give it a try, it's not so bad. We've put together a short primer and a few thoughts you might consider when commenting.

Go to this website: [Natural Heritage System \(NHS\) Review \(arcgis.com\)](#)

A map will come up, with a comment box on the right-hand side: Enter your name, your email address and your municipality



Zoom in on the map to an area you are interested in. Look at your neighbourhood, your community, and places you know. Click on the map and a circle will appear which marks the place you want to comment on. Write your comment in the box. Click on the “Report it” button and your comment will be submitted. Repeat this action as many times as you wish

**Some ideas to consider** How is the Region keeping track of our natural heritage? Is there an inventory which is regularly completed? Is there a budget for monitoring, with metrics for environmental monitoring and remedial action where needed?

How can landowners help nature thrive? Invasive species are spreading, how do we deal with them? Who can landowners turn to for such advice? Natural Heritage is a connected system which is broken up by roads. How can we help wildlife move safely across these busy roads? What can we do to help sustain our threatened bird and insect populations?

How is the Region ensuring that these Natural Heritage areas are protected when development is being considered? Do municipalities consider Natural Heritage when approving plans for development? Do they have maps of the natural heritage areas we hope they will protect?

Could conservation easements and land trust arrangements help add to the green areas? Could the Region target the landowners adjacent to lands already identified as Natural heritage lands and make more of the map green? How can we help farmers to make some of their lands wild again? How can we encourage aggregate pit owners to rehabilitate their pits faster and add to natural heritage areas?

**Grow the Greenbelt:** On March 24, 2022, Minister Clark released a notice announcing a "Phase 2 consultation" to grow the Greenbelt [Proposed Amendment to the Greenbelt Area boundary regulation - Growing the size of the Greenbelt | Environmental Registry of Ontario](#). The proposal does not appear to incorporate recommendations of many groups, including GDA, that Carruthers Creek headwaters and other lands be added to the Greenbelt. The proposal does not protect wetlands, watersheds, farmlands and natural areas which are vulnerable to development; it adds only land

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which is already protected from development. Comments about this consultation are due April 24, 2022. Ontario Greenbelt Alliance has offered comments about this proposal, click here to read them: [Ontario Greenbelt Alliance](#).

**Trail Hub** opens Friday April 8. We are excited about having Trail Hub as a community partner. Owned by long time trail volunteers Rick & Cindy Batty, and John & Lee Fisher Trail Hub is situated in a key location within in the trail system south of Uxbridge and will contribute much by offering parking, washrooms, food and beverages, meeting and event space – all of these are in short supply and are much needed as the number of visitors to the area continues to increase. Trail Hub will be the site for an upcoming trail running race and GDA was chosen to be a recipient of funds donated by participants in the 5Peaks race on May 28<sup>th</sup>. If anyone would like to be a face of GDA on race day at a table at Trail Hub, get in touch with us at [info@greendurham.ca](mailto:info@greendurham.ca). Trail Hub’s grand opening to the public is Friday April 8 11 to 8, Saturday April 9 9 to 8, and Sunday April 10 9 to 6 (closed Monday and Tuesday). Food and drink will be on tap. We hope you can come out and show your support for this amazing new addition to our community.

**Website** Our website is in need of updating and so revisions are underway. Most people now use cell phones to access the internet, which means brevity is important. We hope to have the new website up by late spring. We are deeply indebted to GDA member Lynn Laflamme who while serving as a GDA board member got our old website modernized and has continued to help with adding new information.

**Celebrating the Oak Ridges Moraine:** A series of videos have been made which celebrate the Oak Ridges Moraine and highlight its history, beauty and ecological functioning. The videos will be released throughout this spring. The project was funded by the Greenbelt Foundation. GDA participated in the segment which talks about aggregates. [Videos | Mysite 1 \(stormcoalition.com\)](#)

**Aggregate pits and fill:** The Province has proposed that aggregate pits be used as a place to deposit excess fill. This sounds reasonable at first glance but upon “digging deeper” some alarms are raised. The core issue is lack of municipal control about location and oversight. Currently municipalities have -expertise about appropriate sites and best practices but in this proposal they are left out, giving no local voice or oversight. There are also some concerning aspects related to protection of groundwater – the proposal suggests putting soil in aggregate pits where mining has taken place below the water table. Experts in this area have stated that there is no justification for putting soil in groundwater. You can read the proposal by going to this link: [Proposed regulatory changes for the beneficial reuse of excess soil at pits and quarries in Ontario | Environmental Registry of Ontario](#). GDA contributed comments about this proposal.

**Trail counters:** You may recall that GDA purchased 8 trail counters to be placed on East Duffins Headwaters lands managed by TRCA. The idea was to obtain data which would assist with articulating the volume of trail use many of us have observed. The counters were installed last June, and TRCA reports that the counters (which show only the number of trail visits, not individual trail users) indicate that EDH properties are among the top 4 highest use places in the entire TRCA jurisdiction. TRCA is now also employing a second technology called Geofencing which will round out this data. Geofencing uses information from cellphones which can identify where trail users have travelled from.

## For our Volunteers

**Mowing** – The trails are still muddy and melting but we’ll be mowing soon - the first mow must occur before mid-May in grassy areas in order to protect ground-nesting birds. After that, rain and sun will dictate where and when. Last year was a big success thanks to volunteers who generously gave time and sweat. We’ll send a note out to our mowing team from last year as we get closer, but reach out sooner if you are interested by emailing us at [info@greendurham.ca](mailto:info@greendurham.ca).

**Chainsaw course** May 14 or 15: Our agreement with TRCA to help maintain the trails allows us to remove trees which have fallen across the trail. Volunteers who use chainsaws must have proof of chainsaw certification. Three years ago GDA sponsored a 1 day chainsaw safety workshop provided by Ontario Parks, which was valid for 3 years. GDA covered

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the training costs in exchange for participants' help with fallen tree removal when possible. We are sponsoring training again this year and covering training costs. Get in touch at [info@greendurham.ca](mailto:info@greendurham.ca) if you are interested in continuing to help out and want to re-certify, or want to take the training for the first time. Ontario Parks will tailor the training based on our request for a maximum of 10 people. The training will be one day, either May 14 or 15 and will be offered locally.

A note of thanks to Ranald McKay, who has been volunteering his time to keep a spreadsheet with locations of fallen trees. Trail users please continue to get in touch with us about downed trees, and we will let Ranald know so he can send out a note to our chainsaw team. One of the team responds about when they can get the job done, and reports back once the task is complete. This last step in the communication chain is crucial, as some of the fallen trees are in remote places. It can be a long trudge in and out, carrying a chainsaw and wearing safety gear. It's happened more than once that a volunteer has trudged in, only to find the tree has been dealt with!

**Boardwalk repair:** East Duffins Headwaters Stewardship meeting happened this week – this is a group of volunteers who participate in maintaining the East and West Duffins Headwaters properties. Membership includes representatives of GDA, Durham Mountain Biking Association, Uxbridge Horsemen's Association and TRCA staff. Our big project this year will involve removing 2 boardwalks along the Trans Canada Trail in Glen Major and replacing them with a more sustainable surface. Stay tuned for more information.

**Road Cleanup Day April 23 9 to 12** Durham Mountain Biking Association sponsors a road cleanup every year, and GDA helps out. Volunteers will be picking up the debris in the ditches along 6 and 7 Concession from Goodwood Rd to the Uxbridge Pickering Townline, Chalk Lake Rd from Lakeridge to Concession 7 and this year will also help clean up the Ruth Nature Preserve. Wear gloves, closed-toe shoes, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. DMBA has safety vests, but please bring them if you have your own. We will also have strong garbage bags, but if you have any, please bring them with you as well. If anyone has a pickup truck that could be used to help pick up all of our treasures to bring them to Durham Forest for the Township of Uxbridge to pick up, please let John Fisher know: [john.fisher@durhammountainbiking.ca](mailto:john.fisher@durhammountainbiking.ca)

**Annual General Meeting:** We hope to get caught up this year and return to our usual June date. We'll let you know. Covid has made the world unpredictable. Stay safe everyone!