

Updates on TRCA Land Dealings

Dagmar: The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, ["TRCA"], and Mr. Nagy, the owner of the Dagmar Ski operation, have agreed to a land exchange that would allow the TRCA to connect their Dagmar South property (along the townline roughly across from the TRCA parking lot for the Glen Major Forest) to their Dagmar North property that is essentially landlocked. The Dagmar North property is currently leased by the Dagmar Ski operation for their cross country ski program. Mr. Nagy wants the land to expand his pond for snow making. This along with the need for the winter lease puts the TRCA in a good bargaining position. The outstanding issue was the survey of the property the TRCA is to acquire. The survey is now complete which currently includes a cabin Mr. Nagy had wanted the TRCA to pay compensation for even though they had no interest in it which would become a liability if acquired. Mr. Nagy has backed away from this request so the land swap can proceed. The TRCA intends to take it to their Board for final approval in January 2015.

Nesbitt: The Nesbitt property is the 300 acres formerly part of the Gan Eden proposal just south of Regional Road #21 and north of the Lafarge Regan Pit that runs between 6th and 7th Concessions. The province owns the land and is willing to have the TRCA manage it on long term leases. The contract has been written and the lawyers on both sides have done their due diligence. This transfer has been "just weeks away" for over a year now. Once again the devil is in the financial details in that the current issue is who will pay for the improvements to the foundation of a tenant house on the property. The TRCA is understandably reluctant to take on this unknown cost and they will need the house in good condition to find a tenant to defray the cost of managing the property when transferred. Once again we are told this is not in any way a 'deal breaker', the province will finish the work on the house, and that the TRCA should start 2015 with that property in their stable.

Pleasure Valley and the Wilder Forest Property: The TRCA have reached agreement, subject to raising the funds required, to purchase approximately 60 acres of Jackie's Convery's 104 acre property located on Brock Road. We were hoping the TRCA would be able to purchase the entire property but 60 acres is better than no acres. As part of the deal Ms. Convery retains lands which the TRCA owns off Brock Road and would have used to build a parking lot adjacent to the driveway and a trail running east to the TRCA owned Wilder Forest and Wildlife Tract.

Fortunately the Wilder family have provided a solution that gives the TRCA and GDA a way to build a trail head including a parking lot that will provide the means to access this magnificent property. They have done this by giving the TRCA a lease, on very generous terms, of the land required to build the trail head and a trail that runs eastward to connect with the trails on the Wilder Forest properties. GDA have committed \$25,000 to help finance the cost of this work. We expect construction to commence this fall and be complete by the late spring of 2015. The lease will run to 2025 to coincide with the termination of Ms. Convery's exclusive rights to trail usage on the 130 acre property adjacent to the Wilder Forest, part of the original deal between Ms. Convery and the TRCA. The exclusive rights will expire on both properties when Ms. Convery sells the balance of her lands or in 2025, whichever occurs first.

Federal Lands

Green Durham's key priority on the Federal Lands is to encourage Government to permanently protect the lands between the Rouge National Urban Park ["Rouge Park"] and the 8700-acre airport site. Our objective is to protect these lands for agriculture, establish appropriate environmental buffers and a nature/trail corridor linking the Oak Ridges Moraine with the Rouge Park and urban areas to the south, and to ensure environmental regulations and open space uses are consistent with Provincial policies as reflected in the Moraine and Greenbelt Plans. We have urged Government to follow up on that commitment, and in consultation with stakeholders, develop a Management Plan for these lands.

In August Transport Minister Lisa Raitt invited Green Durham, Land Over Landings, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust to present our views on the Federal Lands. Immigration Minister Chris Alexander and M.P.'s Erin O'Toole, Collin Carrie, and Corneliu Chisu were also in attendance. For more detail please see the attached submission which was well received.

We continue to pursue this strategy, however, in recent weeks a number of environmental groups including Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature, David Suzuki Foundation, and Friends of the Rouge Watershed have written the Federal Environment Minister expressing their concern that Bill C-40, the draft Federal legislation for the proposed Rouge Park, does not provide adequate environmental protection. Provincial Economic Development Minister Brad Duguid has stated he will not approve the transfer of Provincial land to Rouge Park until environmental protection is strengthened.

York Region Federation of Agriculture has also written to Mr. Duguid urging him not to hold up the transfer, along with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture urging that farmland in the park be protected.

Parks Canada has just completed a series of open houses requesting comment on their Draft Park Management Plan. The Park's draft vision focuses on a number of elements including environmental and cultural protection fostering a 'vibrant farm community', providing visitors with 'engaging and varied experiences, and 'linking Lake Ontario with to the Moraine'. Discussion at the open houses reflected a variety of differing opinions with a lot of the discussion focused on whether environmental protection should be given greater primacy over agriculture.

GDA has not taken a specific position on the appropriate balance between agriculture and environment. We strongly support environmental protection but also strongly believe prime farmland close to urban areas should remain as food land unless there are very strong arguments against it. We hope that in the months to come the sometimes heated rhetoric will subside and a compromise can be worked out making it more likely that government will be prepared address our key priority that being permanent protection of the non-airport lands east of the Park.