

Rouge Park Receives New Lands From Ontario Government

What is Rouge Park?

Rouge Park is Canada's premiere urban wilderness park. Over 11,500 acres (46 km²) in size, it is protected park land in the Rouge River, Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds, in and near Toronto, Canada's largest city. Rouge Park was created by the Ontario government in 1995 in response to public concerns about the protection of the Rouge River valley. The award-winning Park, and the watershed which is its home, have special recognition in Ontario's Greenbelt Plan (Section 3.2.6) and provide a reservoir of biodiversity in the Greenbelt and the only link to Lake Ontario in the Greenbelt in Toronto.

Rouge Park is open 365 days a year, with unlimited, free access to 12 km of rustic hiking trails, seasonal riverside camping, a sandy beach and spectacular views. Many areas are accessible by public transit. Visit www.rougepark.com for details. Go "Wild in the City!"

Park size and location

The 1,500 acres (6 km²) of new land dedicated to Rouge Park in February 2007 by the Ontario government will permanently protect valuable ecological connections to the Park, while helping to improve air and water quality in the Toronto area. The area is located to the east of the Little Rouge Creek corridor section of Rouge Park, and west of the boundary between the regional municipalities of York and Durham, reaching south to Steeles Avenue East and to the north to 16th Avenue (see map). This new area of the Park is a 15 per cent increase in parkland, almost three times the size of the Toronto Islands, and makes Rouge Park's total land base 18 times the size of the Downsview Park.

The headwaters, or source, of the 250 km-long Rouge River system are in the Oak Ridges Moraine, an important geologic feature north of Toronto. The Rouge River and its tributaries flow south into Toronto, through the marshes at Rouge Beach, and empty into Lake Ontario.

Benefits of New Lands

Ecological Connections

Rouge Park is about connections: ecological, cultural and recreational. The new park lands in the Duffins Creek and Petticoat Creek watersheds will connect to important forests, meadows, sensitive areas and valley systems east of the Park. The expansion of Rouge Park enhances the major ecological corridor joining the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario, bridging Steeles Avenue East. Planning for transportation in this area can now consider how to best maintain this link for the free and safe passage of people and wildlife.

Climate Change

Restoring forests in Rouge Park plays an important role in improving air quality in the Toronto area. Natural lands with healthy vegetation filter pollutants from the air and absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere, helping to reduce the undesirable impacts of climate change.

Protecting our Water Resources

The eastward expansion of Rouge Park into the neighbouring Duffins Creek and Petticoat Creek watersheds enhances the protection of these river systems through public ownership and the Park's ongoing ecological restoration work. The newly expanded Park will make a significant contribution to protecting the sources of our drinking water, minimizing negative erosion, and mitigating stream flow and water quality impacts from new growth in the surrounding urban areas.

Ontario's Greenbelt

Rouge Park is home to a variety of landscapes: forests, meadows, wetlands, river valleys and upland areas and provides a major reservoir of biodiversity in the most urbanized portion of Ontario's Greenbelt. The only working farms in the City of Toronto are also within the Park. With the addition of these new lands, Rouge Park will also ensure essential ecological restoration is completed, and encourage long-term, sustainable farming in York Region. Increasing the size of Rouge Park ensures that biodiversity and rural landscapes are protected over the long term. Rich in cultural heritage, Rouge Park is committed to protecting its legacy of human history that represents thousands of years of continuous habitation, and ethnically diverse neighbouring communities.

Rouge Park's leadership and success in ecological restoration has been recognized by many, including The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, which is funding restoration planning work, to enable Rouge Park to evaluate lands for priority ecological restoration and enhancement projects. This demonstrates the Park's ongoing efforts to protect this important mosaic of sustainable, natural, cultural and agricultural heritage.

Infrastructure

This significant increase to Rouge Park's land base by the Ontario Government demonstrates a new view: that a green infrastructure is as important for Ontario as conventional infrastructure of transportation, water and sewage servicing. Rouge Park's ecological and recreational benefits will be important amenities for Toronto as the area's population continues to grow. This park expansion will enable better connections between regional trail systems such as the Oak Ridges Trail and Trans-Canada Trail systems and Rouge Park's planned trails.

Our Vision

Rouge Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the Park. The Park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit.

Our Goal

To protect, restore and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural values of the Park in an ecosystem context, and to promote public responsibility, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage.

How is Rouge Park Governed?

Rouge Park is a partnership park, with land and funds from the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, municipal governments and other agencies. The board of directors for Rouge Park is the Rouge Park Alliance, a partnership of 12 government organizations and one not-for-profit group.

The Rouge Park Alliance is guided by the *Rouge Park Management Plan* (1994) and the *Rouge North Management Plan* (2001). Plans were created in 2006 for two areas of the Park which required special consideration: the Little Rouge Creek Corridor and Bob Hunter Memorial Park.

Rouge Park Alliance

Organization	Member
Government of Canada	Derek Lee, MP (Scarborough-Rouge River)
Province of Ontario	Brad Duguid, MPP (Scarborough Centre)
Region of Durham	Regional Councillor Bonnie Littley
Region of York	Regional Councillor Jack Heath
Town of Markham	Councillor Erin Shapero
City of Pickering	Councillor Jennifer O'Connell
Town of Richmond Hill	Councillor David Cohen
City of Toronto	Councillor Raymond Cho; Councillor Glenn De

	Baeremaeker
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	Councillor Clyde Smith
Toronto & Region Conservation Authority	Dick O'Brien, Chair
Toronto Zoo	Calvin White, General Manager
Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corporation	Honourable Pauline Browes, Director
Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.	André Flys
CHAIR	Gord Weeden (appointed by the Province of Ontario in 2005)

Some Interesting Facts about Rouge Park

1. Rouge Park is Toronto's largest park, and is already 13 times as big as New York's Central Park, or 33 times the size of London, England's Hyde Park.
2. Outcrops of rock formed during the last glacial period are found in Rouge Park and are important to geologists studying seismic activity, in particular the risk of earthquakes in the Toronto area. Faults are visible indicating significant earthquake activity between 80,000 and 13,000 years ago.
3. Rouge Park is home to the eastern arm of the Nationally Historic "Carrying Place" trail, which was an original portage route between Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe.
4. An active farming community is part of the legacy that Rouge Park preserves, protecting the only rural landscape and working farms in the City of Toronto.
5. The mouth of the Rouge River stays frost-free one month longer than northern areas of the river system on the Oak Ridges Moraine.
6. Rouge Park has the largest and best examples of Canada's rare Carolinian habitat in Toronto and is the only officially recognized site in the Toronto area.
7. Inspired by the scenery during the 1950s, FH Varley, one of Canada's renowned Group of Seven painters, captured the banks of the Rouge River in Markham on canvas as a lasting memory of their beauty.
8. Rouge Park's natural setting has provided filming locations for decades, posing as a backdrop for an array of landscapes, from the far north to the bayous of Mississippi. A Canadian filmmaker had a studio in the Park for many years, filming underwater beaver activity and simulating birds in flight.
9. Rouge Park is the only place where the Ontario Greenbelt reaches Lake Ontario in the City of Toronto.

Heritage Project Funding

Two programmes provide start-up funds to groups for projects which protect, restore and enhance Rouge Park and the Rouge River watershed. The Natural and Cultural Heritage Project Fund is intended for larger projects, which are reviewed by a panel of experts to assess and prioritize a project's merits for funding. The Small Grants Programme helps groups conducting smaller scale projects. Both funds require the applicants to solicit partner funding.

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