

Christopher Henry  
Uxbridge, ON

June 6, 2022

**TO: Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Executive Committee**

**FROM: Christopher Henry, Uxbridge Resident and Avid Trail User**

**CC: Township of Uxbridge Council, Green Durham Association, Ontario Nature, Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Lake Simcoe and Region Conservation Authority, Uxbridge Cosmos**

**RE: Executive Committee June 10, 2022 Agenda Item 7.5 - Uxbridge Trail Sustainability Fund and Paid Parking at TRCA Trail Heads**

This [report](#) on paid parking at TRCA's Uxbridge Trail Heads is long overdue. Even before my family moved to Uxbridge 10 years ago, we were frequent trail users and did so for free. At that time, it was common to walk for hours and not see anyone, but all of that changed with the pandemic. Now our trails are crowded by comparison – and we have far more litter and dog poop. But more worrisome than that is the steady degradation of some of the most ecologically significant lands in the Region via the uncontrolled spread of invasive plants. These are species that are not native to Canada, and therefore our wildlife did not co-evolve with them. They lack predators or any natural controls and are spreading unchecked within the beautiful habitats of East Duffins Headwaters (EDH) and the surrounding areas. I'm referring to species like dog-strangling vine that spreads via fluffy seeds and is especially prevalent along trails, which helps spread those seeds even further; garlic mustard that is taking over space that trilliums and trout-lilies should occupy and whose seeds can remain viable in the soil for 30 years; non-native honeysuckles that crowd out our native shrubs and offer far less value to wildlife that depend on them; Norway maple, a species that shades out practically everything and cannot support the insect diversity that our native maples do; and European buckthorn that takes over open fields and edge habitats emitting a toxin to prevent other plants reduce their germination. And these are only a few of the dozens and dozens that we should be very concerned about.

**Worldwide invasive species are the second biggest driver of biodiversity loss next to direct habitat loss.** In urban, and near-urban areas like Uxbridge, this couldn't be truer. These invasive plants impact habitat for species at risk currently present at EDH, like American ginseng and monarch butterfly, plus dozens of flora, fauna and vegetation communities of conservation concern as described by TRCA. And nothing is being done by TRCA, or any other organization working in EDH, to protect this incredible resource.

Most people are unaware of this threat when they walk Uxbridge's trails, but for those who are able to identify plants, things are getting worse every year. And the lack of action means that every year more habitat is lost to invasive infestations, and it gets more expensive to manage and restore these areas.

I am very disappointed that this Executive Committee report does not reference the intense threat that invasive species pose to EDH, and that it recommends that the funding be directed to more trail infrastructure. This is not a sustainable approach. The last thing these lands need are even more trails – TRCA cannot even maintain the ones they have now! **Rather, the paid parking initiative is the perfect opportunity to support TRCA's own [Invasive Species Management Strategy](#) (endorsed by the Board of Directors in [November 2020](#)) and direct much needed funds into the creation and implementation of an Invasive Plant Management Plan.** Ideally this would see the most sensitive areas of EDH protected via on-the-ground management, and efforts made to reduce trails and combat invasive plants along trails that are the pathways to invasion as several reports authored by TRCA describe. See: [Glen Major Study Area](#) (2008), [East Duffins Headwaters](#) (2010), [Goodwood Resource Management Tract](#) (2013), and [Goodwood Resource Management Tract and Surrounding Area](#) (2018).

My plea, and I'm sure one that would be echoed by your own staff and other ecological experts, is to read the above reports written by TRCA staff that describe the amazing natural heritage at EDH and the significant threat that more trails and invasive species present and direct **ALL** the paid parking revenue to trail and invasive plant management and eventual restoration of these impacted areas. I implore TRCA to be the conservation leader it claims to be and address the critical issue of protecting some of the most ecologically significant resource in your jurisdiction before it's too late. The opportunity is now – seize it!

Thank you,

Christopher Henry  
Concerned Uxbridge Resident