

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Authority
Meeting #5/18, Friday, June 22, 2018

FROM: Chandra Sharma, Director, Watershed Strategies

RE: **CARRUTHERS CREEK WATERSHED PLAN**
2018 Update

KEY ISSUE

Annual update to the Authority on the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS Resolution #A106/15 requires staff to report on the progress of the Carruthers Creek Watershed Planning process to the Authority annually, or more frequently as need arises, and at the completion of the Watershed Plan;

THEREFORE IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan staff report be received.

BACKGROUND

On April 1, 2015 Durham Region Council authorised staff to engage Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in a consulting capacity to update the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan on the Region's behalf. The Watershed Plan will be completed in two phases over a four-year period.

TRCA staff updates the Authority annually, or more frequently as needed, in keeping with Authority Resolution #A106/15. The history of reporting to the Authority for this project includes the following resolutions:

- Authority Meeting #6/15, held on June 26, 2015, Resolution #A106/15
- Authority Meeting #6/16, held on July 22, 2016, Resolution #A128/16
- Authority Meeting #8/16, held on October 28, 2016, Resolution #A169/16
- Authority Meeting #8/17, held on October 27, 2017, Resolution #A194/17

Technical Work

The last update to the Authority in October 2017 followed the completion of Phase 1, which involved gathering data in the field and desktop analyses, and culminated in the completion of seven peer-reviewed technical reports which characterise the watershed's existing conditions:

1. Aquatic Crossing and Barrier Assessment;
2. Aquatic Habitat and Community Characterization;
3. Fluvial Geomorphology Assessment;
4. Headwater Drainage Features;
5. Hydrogeology;
6. Surface Water Quality Characterization; and
7. Terrestrial Natural Heritage.

Item 9.1

Immediately after the completion of Phase 1 in October 2017, staff began Phase 2. An overview of the work for the second phase is outlined in the report which was received by Durham Regional Council in May 2018, available using this [link](#).

Similar to Phase 1, all work completed in Phase 2 will be subject to a peer review process. The Peer Review Advisor for the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan released a letter of endorsement of the planned Phase 2 technical work in May 2018 to the Region of Durham (Attachment 1), and will continue to be involved throughout this phase to oversee the entire peer review process. Phase 2 of the Watershed Plan consists of seven major components over a two-year period, scheduled for completion in late 2019. While identified as “steps” it is best to consider the technical work components to be iterative rather than linear, as the process to develop and revisit the findings which will inform the management recommendations has a series of checks and balances to ensure the work is robust. The key tasks are summarised as follows:

- Establish updated Goals and Objectives for the watershed.
- Based on the conditions observed through Phase 1 and other watershed health assessments, develop Targets for the watershed and identify the Management Actions required to achieve the Goals and Objectives.
- Establish watershed response methodologies / assessments to measure how the watershed could be expected to respond to changes in land use and other factors, such as climate change.
- Develop, model and evaluate five scenarios for the watershed, consisting of historic conditions, existing conditions, approved development per current Official Plans, approved development and an enhanced Natural Heritage System, and a scenario with prospective development post-2031 and an enhanced Natural Heritage System.
- Formulate and evaluate candidate Management Actions to achieve the desired state of watershed health.
- Develop Management Recommendations and an Implementation Strategy.
- Deliver the final Watershed Plan.

Consultation

In support of the Phase 2 technical work, TRCA will undertake extensive stakeholder and public consultation as outlined in the [strategy](#). The current stage of consultation focuses on reviewing the Vision and Management Philosophy created for the 2003 Watershed Plan which will be the guiding principles of the new Watershed Plan. Staff anticipate that while the overall intent to protect, restore and enhance the watershed still resonates with people, the language may need updating to reflect issues which have taken prominence over the last 15 years, such as climate change.

TRCA's partners, the general public and stakeholders are asked to review the Vision and Management Philosophy and suggest changes and/or additions by taking the online survey accessible through the project website. The website (<https://yoursay.ca/carruthers-creek>) was launched in March 2018 and provides background information on the watershed and the Watershed Plan, including the technical reports from Phase 1, and a project timeline. The website is also set up to share information and gather feedback at key stages throughout the Watershed Plan development process through the use of a project email list, an online survey, and an email address to receive comments for the duration of the project: carruthers@trca.on.ca.

Item 9.1

For the first few months of Phase 2, specific major consultation activities included the following:

- TRCA staff hosted a workshop in December 2017 to consult municipal staff from Ajax, Pickering and Durham Region to discuss the proposed Phase 2 work, including plans for the first stage of public and stakeholder consultation.
- In February 2018, TRCA staff completed a coordinated response to detailed written comments from the Town of Ajax regarding the Phase 1 reports.
- The start of public and stakeholder consultation in March 2018 with the launch of the project consultation portal at <https://yoursay.ca/carruthers-creek>.
- In May 2018, Durham Regional Council received the Regional staff report containing an update on TRCA's Phase 2 technical work key tasks and consultation plans (Attachment 1).
- Media coverage in May 2018 included one article which quoted Authority Members Ajax Regional Councillor Colleen Jordan and Pickering Regional Councillor Kevin Ashe, as well as Regional Chair Gerri Lynn O'Connor, on the importance of the Watershed Plan; another article resulted from a TRCA staff presentation to Ajax Council, by invitation from Councillor Jordan, and promoted the public consultation currently underway.
- Stakeholder group meetings began in March and will continue into summer 2018. Presentations to the TRCA's citizen advisory group, the Regional Watershed Alliance, as well as the Ajax Environmental Advisory Committee, Durham Environmental Advisory Committee, Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, and other local citizen advisory committees were scheduled for June.

Going forward, general public consultation in the form of outreach at venues throughout Pickering and Ajax will begin this summer and continue to September 2018.

RATIONALE

TRCA staff updates the Authority annually, or more frequently as needed. This report to the Authority in support of the attached outline of Phase 2 work comprises the annual update the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan development process.

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan is a four-year project with a total budget of \$1,089,431, funded by the Region of Durham through a service agreement with TRCA.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

The first stage of consultation will conclude at the end of September 2018, and once results are available, staff will update the Authority.

Major components of the technical work for Phase 2 now underway include:

- Land use scenario modelling: hydrology, hydrogeology, water quality, fluvial geomorphology, all models include consideration of the impacts of climate change;
- Green infrastructure and ecosystem services valuation;
- Surface water quantity assessment;
- Aquatic and terrestrial habitat suitability;
- Urban forestry;
- Flood line mapping;
- Ecological Restoration and land stewardship opportunities;
- Target and baseline setting;
- Integration to ensure the Plan utilizes a holistic approach to watershed management.

Item 9.1

As noted above, all Phase 2 work will be subjected to peer review. Later in the watershed planning process, the technical analyses will inform management recommendations, and staff will also develop an implementation schedule. Staff will continue to update the Authority and the Region of Durham on the status of this study as it progresses through the annual update report and other reports requested by the Region.

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Date: May 30, 2018

Attachments: 1