

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, March 21, 2025 Meeting

FROM: Anil Wijesooriya, Director, Restoration and Infrastructure

**RE: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH DUCKS
UNLIMITED CANADA**

KEY ISSUE

To obtain Board of Directors approval to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) staff be authorized to enter into a MOU, and other related agreements, with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) for the purposes of collaborative partnerships, delivery of fee-for-service work, and other programs and projects of mutual interest.

BACKGROUND

TRCA frequently partners with aligned organizations to leverage funds, resources, and expertise, to maximize the impact of funding partner investments and TRCA's work. TRCA has previously partnered with DUC on restoration projects, and both organizations continue to look for opportunities to work together on wetland conservation and restoration. As a result of recent discussions following successful joint projects, TRCA and DUC intend to enter a MOU to formalize the relationship between the two organizations. The MOU will lay out roles, responsibilities, and a process for working together on specific projects.

Since 1978, TRCA and DUC have collaborated in sharing wetland science and restoration expertise. In the 1980's and 1990's, DUC constructed wetlands on TRCA properties, including the Caledon Tract Wetland Management Area, the Kortright Centre for Conservation's Interpretive Wetland in the Humber Watershed, and the Ernest Thompson (ET) Seton Wetland along the Don River in the City of Toronto. The partnerships evolved throughout the 2000's to include a variety of individual wetland partnerships projects where TRCA utilized DUC's engineering and design

services to support TRCA's wetland implementation program. These included work on a privately owned wetland in King City, the Lake St. George wetland complex, the Reesor Wetland in Rouge National Urban Park, and the Corner Marsh Project in Duffin's Marsh.

Recently, the partnerships evolved further with DUC providing funding and partnering with TRCA, municipalities and the Province to support our wetland restoration programs. In 2023, DUC provided \$200,000 of funding for planting of the Brock North Meadow Wetland Complex and undertook corporate plantings with the insurance industry. In 2021, DUC also provided \$177,000 in funding to support creating the 1-hectare Church and Bayly Wetland in the Town of Ajax.

TRCA is currently working with DUC to complete the Kingston Road Wetland Restoration Project. The project involves restoring a series of fallow fields, once used for agricultural purposes, to seven hectares of wetland habitat. DUC provided funds to implement a portion of the project, with additional leveraged funds from the City of Ajax and MECP.

Building on the wetland restoration partnership, DUC and TRCA has had a close working relationship in the areas of education and community engagement, including TRCA delivering DUC's Healthy Wetlands, Health Communities program at the Kortright Centre, partnering on DUC's Wetland Centres of Excellence program, and participating in many forums, committees and boards within the environmental and sustainability education system.

As a result of many successful partnerships and projects, TRCA and DUC have engaged in detailed discussions and site tours to identify opportunities to expand and diversify our partnership and support a longer-term wetland restoration strategy. In December of 2024, senior management of TRCA, and DUC, with City of Brampton staff present, met and toured TRCA's wetland restoration work at Loafers Lake supported by the City of Brampton and MECP. Key actions from that meeting included developing a joint list of priority projects, with the intent to develop a long-term wetland restoration, research, and management program. The meeting included a joint commitment by DUC and TRCA to immediately commence work on the development of a MOU. The MOU has now been developed in draft to recognize the shared goals and mandates of our organizations and to act as a mechanism to enhance our working

partnerships, enabling both partners to quickly utilize a range of funding sources, and staff capacities to complete new joint projects.

RATIONALE

TRCA and DUC share aligned goals regarding restoration, conservation of environmentally significant lands to support wetlands, and greenspace management. TRCA and DUC continue to work together to pursue cost sharing opportunities, complementary joint funding applications, strategic planning, sharing of best practices, public engagement and awareness, and education and outreach.

Given the history of productive restoration and education partnerships between our organizations, TRCA and DUC have developed and are seeking approval to enter into a MOU in order to formalize the relationship between the two organizations, including to lay out roles, responsibilities, resources, areas of partnership opportunity, and a process for working together on specific projects.

This MOU would be an enabling agreement and would not bind TRCA and DUC to work together. Rather, the establishment of the MOU recognizes and enables the two organizations to partner on mutually agreed upon areas of work, such as restoration partnerships, funding partnerships and business development, invasive species management, greenspace securement, and wetland and conservation policy. The MOU is intended to complement existing TRCA processes and agreements and does not impact any budget processes with participating municipalities nor does it impact existing agreements, projects, programs, or partnerships. To ensure clarity around roles and to comply with purchasing and reporting requirements, specific agreements with project charters will be prepared on a project-by-project basis.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

4.3 Responsive relationships and a trusted brand with a reputation for excellence

Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:

1.3 Maintain healthy and resilient watershed ecosystems in the face of a changing climate

Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:

1.2 Leadership in greenspace conservation

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Work on specific initiatives, partnerships, or projects will be funded through the appropriate team accounts.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Restoration and Infrastructure staff have compiled a ten-year priority list of prospective restoration projects that have been identified as opportunities for partnership with DUC. TRCA and DUC staff are continuing to share information and work together on aligned projects and other opportunities. The Brock South Wetland Project is a priority on the project list and is being targeted as the next priority project to jointly move forward on. Concurrent with finalizing the DUC and TRCA MOU, staff will commence work on a project agreement and project charter in consultation with partners including municipal stakeholders.

Discussions related to education and community outreach are ongoing and designed to respond to specific opportunities or needs in terms of engaging specific communities.

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Date: January 17, 2025

Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: Ducks Unlimited Canada Slide Deck