

# Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Communications and Consultation Strategy

## 1.0 GOAL OF THE COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

The goal is to inform and consult with the public and stakeholders in and neighbouring the watershed to create awareness about the new Watershed Plan, and to review and consider input on the vision and management philosophy, draft management recommendations, and finally the draft Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES FOR THE REVIEW AND WATERSHED PLAN UPDATE

The primary objectives of the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan are:

- To update the understanding of existing conditions in the watershed through scientific research and analysis of the physical characteristics of the watershed.
- To identify important watershed management priorities and action in urban and rural areas of the watershed for the present and into the future.
- To continuously build on and refine, sustain, and reinforce the 2003 implementation framework. The vision and management philosophy for the watershed will be updated and supported with new goals and objectives based on the study findings.
- To ensure that Durham Region has the right information and knowledge base to make decisions which affect the watershed.
- To ensure that this Watershed Plan meets or exceeds new provincial guidance for mandatory Watershed Plans to municipal land use planning.
- To showcase leading edge scientific methodology and analyses demonstrating TRCA's Watershed Plan development process as state-of-the-art, and exemplify our "next generation" of Watershed Plans.

## 3.0 KEY AUDIENCES

The focus of the communications is informing the general public, and consulting residents and stakeholders in and neighbouring the watershed. Stakeholders expected to be affected by, and who will have an interest in, this Watershed Plan will be identified as consultation progresses. A summary table on communication and consultation methods categorised by audience accompanies this strategy.

## 4.0 HIGH LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE WATERSHED PLAN

**Phase 1:** Completion of extensive scientific studies to update Carruthers Creek watershed's baseline physical conditions and establish the technical foundation for the Watershed Plan.

**Phase 2:** Build on the work completed in Phase 1, review potential land use scenarios, and short and long-term watershed management actions.

The starting point for this update is the Watershed Plan for Duffins Creek and Carruthers Creek (2003).

The management philosophy and past objectives and management actions will be the basis for developing the updated Watershed Plan. Key considerations for developing the new Watershed Plan include the following:

- Build an understanding amongst the public and stakeholders of what the Watershed Plan is, how it is being developed, the process and timelines.
- Explain how this Watershed Plan meets and exceeds the provincial requirements for Watershed Plans which serve municipal interests.
- Address the status of the 2003 Watershed Plan (*i.e.*, goals, objectives, and management actions, progress to date).
- Identify sensitivities of Carruthers Creek watershed's natural heritage.
- Communicate how the Watershed Plan's development will benefit from new information and studies completed since the 2003 plan.
- Demonstrate how the Watershed Plan will be used to guide and direct activities in the watershed in the future – including public and private use.

## **5.0 KEY MESSAGES ABOUT THE WATERSHED PLAN**

An important aim is to provide clear information about the purpose of the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan. Key messages will be used to develop website material, responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs), stakeholder materials, and information for online consultation and the news media. Key messages will focus on the anticipated needs of different audiences and be updated as necessary. Clear, consistent and direct communication on what the study is about, and what it is not, will contribute to greater public understanding about the watershed and the Watershed Plan.

Content for key messages to be used in the consultation materials will be prepared by TRCA in collaboration with the Region of Durham. The following key messages communicate the purpose, scope, and expected outcomes for the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan:

- The purpose of the Watershed Plan update is to undertake a review of the watershed considering the 2003 management actions, existing conditions, new information and studies since 2003, as well as current scientific thinking, in order to develop a comprehensive plan to protect, restore, and enhance the whole watershed – lower, middle, and upper reaches.
- The 2003 Watershed Plan included a set of eight goals and twenty-five objectives which made up the overall management strategy. There has been significant progress in implementing these recommendations. This plan is a unique investment by the Region of Durham in original work to understand the environmental conditions in the watershed that have evolved since 2003.
- The work is being undertaken by the TRCA on a fee-for-service basis on behalf of the Region of Durham. TRCA's role is to provide professional, scientific, and evidence based recommendations for the protection, restoration, and enhancement of Carruthers Creek watershed. This involves providing information, analysis, and management recommendations to assist the Region with its consideration of planning and infrastructure decisions, as well as protection of Durham's natural heritage and water resources.
- TRCA will ensure the final Plan meets and exceeds the provincial guidance for Watershed Plans.

- The recommendations from this update will be based on peer reviewed scientific research and analysis. Peer review is being undertaken by an independent third party to ensure impartiality and rigour in the review and findings.
- Land use planning decisions are outside the scope of the Watershed Plan. This plan is not about making land use recommendations or commenting on development proposals or Greenbelt designation in Carruthers Creek watershed.
- The update will examine alternative land use scenarios in order to analyse the potential implications associated with land use changes and identify measures for protection, restoration, and enhancement. The analysis will not recommend a preferred scenario but rather identify recommendations which are important to ensure the sustainability of the watershed regardless of land use changes. This will ensure that the Region of Durham has the best knowledge base in order to make decisions about planning policy.

## 6.0 PROPOSED CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The communications and consultation strategy for the Watershed Plan focuses on interrelated streams of stakeholder and public consultation. Specific deliverables include the following:

Phase 2 Consultation Methods and Deliverables	
1.	<b>Project Website</b> with notice that Phase 2 is underway, scope of work, timelines; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); mailing list for updates at key milestones; revisit 2003 vision statement and management philosophy with feedback mechanism for public comments.
2.	Use a <b>dedicated email address</b> on the project website as a one-window approach for receiving emails pertaining to the plan: <a href="mailto:carruthers@trca.on.ca">carruthers@trca.on.ca</a> . Respond to inquiries where appropriate.
3.	<b>Conduct online survey(s)</b> to receive input on the 2003 Carruthers Creek Vision and Management Philosophy and input on issues and opportunities (2018) and feedback on draft management recommendations (2019).
4.	<b>Create outreach/communication tools</b> <i>i.e.</i> , postcards for distribution by TRCA, area municipalities, and other groups, at public events over 2018/2019 to raise awareness of Watershed Plan (drive people to website for more info).
5.	<b>In-person outreach</b> to reach a wide array of audiences through “pop-ups” throughout the watershed (2018 - 2019). Potential Public Information Centre (2019) to receive feedback on draft management recommendations.
6.	<b>Stakeholder outreach</b> through small group meetings to provide information and discuss watershed management objectives and recommendations: TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance, Durham Environmental Advisory Committee, Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, Ajax Environmental Advisory Committee, golf courses, former Task Force members, ENGOS, other stakeholder groups.
7.	<b>Reports to Region of Durham Council</b> at key milestones at the direction of Durham staff.
8.	<b>Staff to Staff meetings:</b> Interactive coordination meetings with Durham, Pickering, and Ajax at key milestones.
9.	<b>Media and Social Media Communications</b> through the preparation of content for social media, news releases, and updates on study deliverables.

## **7.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

As the communications and consultation strategy is delivered, it will be adapted to meet project needs. The following actions have been identified upfront to minimise and manage risk:

- Establish principal point of contact at Region of Durham and at TRCA for inquiries about the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan and issues management.
- Use a dedicated email address as a one-window approach for receiving emails pertaining to the Watershed Plan.
- Monitor and adapt communications and consultation approach as needed. Undertake continuous improvement based on the response to issues.
- Review media coverage and outreach.