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Items for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Meeting #1/20, Wednesday, March 04, 2020

FROM: Victoria Kramkowski, Government and Community Relations Specialist, Peel-York Watersheds, Government and Community Relations

RE: **2017-2021 REGIONAL WATERSHED ALLIANCE MID-TERM REVIEW**

KEY ISSUE

A mid-term review of the activities of the Regional Watershed Alliance and a proposed direction for the second half of the term.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT 2017-2021 Regional Watershed Alliance Mid-Term Review report be received;

THAT the Greenspace and Ecosystem Services Working Group and the Integrated Planning and Civic Engagement Working Group be consolidated into the Regional Watershed Alliance as a whole;

THAT the Regional Watershed Alliance continue to be engaged to provide valuable input into Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and partner initiatives, such as major studies, master plans and updates, and projects;

THAT the work of the Watershed Engagement Working Group be put on hold until November 2020 to allow Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff the opportunity to explore the feasibility of integrating the proposed watershed planning learning event into an existing conference;

THAT Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff be directed to update the Regional Watershed Alliance Terms of Reference accordingly;

AND FURTHER THAT Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Board of Directors Administrative By-Law be updated with the revised Regional Watershed Alliance Terms of Reference.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) was established in November 2017 as a multi-stakeholder advisory committee to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Board of Directors ("the Board"), resulting from TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan's call for regional engagement of a broad cross-section of the population at both local and regional scales within TRCA's jurisdiction. As such, in 2015, upon the completion of the existing terms for the Don, Humber and Etobicoke-Mimico watershed committees, the Board directed staff to update TRCA's community-focused engagement model in light of new trends and opportunities in civic engagement and to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

On June 23, 2017, at Board Meeting #5/17, the Community Engagement Strategy, along with a new citizen governance model, was adopted. The new citizen governance model includes the RWA, and its Working Groups, including the TRCA Youth Council. Terms of Reference for the

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RWA were adopted at the October 27, 2017 Authority Meeting #8/17 (RES.#A178/17). The RWA Terms of Reference specify that members are appointed for a two-year term with a possible extension of two more years (Regional Watershed Alliance Terms of Reference, #4.3 Term of Appointment).

Achievements of the Regional Watershed Alliance

Over the course of the past two years, the RWA, as an advisory committee to the Board of Directors, provided valuable input and feedback on over thirteen TRCA-led and TRCA-partnered projects, programs, proposals and initiatives. Some of these initiatives include:

- Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan: Phase 2
- The Meadowway
- TRCA Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Area
- 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Designation of the Humber River as a Canadian Heritage River (see below for further details)
- Sustainable Neighbourhoods Retrofit Action Plan (SNAP)
- World Rivers Day Activities
- Flood Risk Management Outreach
- Ecosystem Service Values of the City of Toronto Ravine System

The RWA has also been informed of, and/or provided input on, TRCA responses to Provincial and Federal plans, policies and proposals. These include:

- Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018 (ERO #013-4293)
- Proposed Open-for-Business Planning Tool (ERO #013-4125)
- New Regulation Under the Planning Act (ERO #013-4239)
- Preserving and Protecting Our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan (EBR #013-4208)
- MMAH consultation on Increasing Housing Supply in Ontario (ERO #013-4190)
- Modernizing Conservation Authority Operations – Conservation Authorities Act (ERO #013-5018) and Focusing Conservation Authority Development Permits on the Protection of People and Property (#013-4992)
- Bill 108, More Homes, More Choices Act (ERO #013-5018)

Further, the RWA has helped to promote TRCA's 2018 and 2019 watershed events and over 55 projects with public consultation or engagement components through their networks.

In addition to this work by the broader RWA, associated Working Groups have also undertaken various types of work relevant to their mandate.

Watershed Engagement Working Group

The Watershed Engagement Working Group seeks to support the engagement and outreach to stakeholders around key watershed themes through the design and development of an annual Watershed Forum event. The goals for the Working Group within the context of the Watershed Forum include providing new information on sustainability challenges and opportunities, sharing ideas with community groups, creating networking opportunities and positioning the RWA as a strong voice of civic leadership. Given that 2019 marked the 20th anniversary of the Humber River being designated a Canadian Heritage River, for 2018-2019, the Watershed Engagement Working Group focused on carrying out their goals within the context of the celebrations surrounding this anniversary.

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Events and initiatives to which the Watershed Engagement Working Group contributed in 2018-2019 included:

- Humber 20th Anniversary Launch Event: TRCA partnered with McMichael Canadian Art Collection to launch the Humber 20th Anniversary Celebration on April 12th, 2019
- Bolton Camp Discovery Garden: Working Group members provided input to the Bolton Camp Discovery Garden Design Charette hosted on July 11th, 2019
- Humber River Stories: Working Group members submitted their personal Humber River stories/narratives to the Humber's 20th Anniversary Engagement HQ webpage
- Humber by Canoe: Working Group members helped plan the Humber by Canoe Event on Sunday September 8th
- Humber Heritage Committee Exhibit: Working Group members helped to arrange an exhibit commemorating the Humber's 20th Anniversary, hosted at Lambton House, Toronto from August 1st to October 31st, 2019
- Open House at Doctors McLean District Park: The City of Vaughan hosted an event to celebrate the Humber River's 20th Anniversary on Saturday, September 21st 2019 which included wildflower plantings, guided nature walks and an opportunity to learn about the Humber River Urban River Valley and Vaughan's trail network

Youth Council

The Youth Council framework was approved at RWA meeting #2/17 held on February 21st, 2018. The framework described four objectives for the Youth Council:

- Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- Build a youth network and strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;
- Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners; and
- Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

The Youth Council has two tiers of membership: general membership, which is open to all youth in TRCA's jurisdiction and who can participate in Youth Council meetings and events, and Executive members, who are appointed through an application to the RWA Youth Council Working Group and are responsible for the development of priorities, communication with the general membership, organizing meetings, and the development of a work plan.

The 2018/2019 Youth Council Executive developed and carried out several activities, events and projects for the benefit of the broader Youth Council. These included:

- A comprehensive survey on youth perspectives;
- Developing a newsletter and engagement through yoursay.ca;
- A guided walk (9 Executive members and 10 general Youth Council members participating);
- An Earth Day Clean-up (9 participants and 271 pounds of litter collected);
- A free documentary movie night (Over 140 participants);
- Providing direction on building youth capacity in the environmental sector.

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Overall, the Youth Council Executive built strong partnerships with Evergreen Brickworks, Patagonia and Swim Drink Fish, and continue to engage the general membership through a series of newsletters.

The new 2019/2020 Youth Council was selected by the RWA Youth Council Working Group, with the new Executive being approved at RWA meeting #4/19 on November 13, 2019, which includes a mix of returning and new members.

Greenspace and Ecosystem Services Working Group

The Greenspace and Ecosystem Services (GES) Working Group seeks to increase the public's understanding and influence of the perceived monetary and intrinsic value of nature and greenspace, both regionally and locally. This includes increasing accessibility to nature, encouraging greening on private property, and improving the quality of greenspace in TRCA's jurisdiction.

The GES Working Group took on the role of providing input, guidance and direction on the development of the Claireville Conservation Area Public Use Activation Plan. This included attending an introductory tour to Claireville Conservation Area in November 2018, as well as providing input on various phases of the Claireville Conservation Area Public Use Activation Plan. TRCA staff also shared information with, and solicited feedback from, the GES Working Group on the Draft TRCA Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Area and the work done by TRCA on the valuation of ecosystem services.

Integrated Planning and Civic Engagement Working Group

The Integrated Planning and Civic Engagement (IPCE) Working Group seeks to improve the integration of environmental protection and community well-being in land use planning, design, growth management decisions and consideration of future climate change impacts, including increasing the preparedness and protection of communities from existing and future flooding and extreme weather events. This includes leveraging member networks to help the public navigate the planning system, maximizing opportunities for public consultation and engagement, and bringing together various stakeholders to achieve a common understanding of integrated planning.

The IPCE Working Group is the product of the amalgamation of the Integrated Community/Watershed Planning and Civic Engagement Working Group and the Flood and Extreme Weather Outreach Working Group. Over the course of 2018-2019, these Working Groups, and the amalgamated IPCE Working Group, received information on, and provided input to, the Carruthers Creek Watershed Planning process, the SNAP Program and TRCA's Flood Vulnerable Area Outreach work. As well, the Working Group circulated information on relevant components of these initiatives to their broader networks.

RATIONALE

The recommended direction for the RWA's second half of its current term focuses on maximizing the efficacy of the broader committee as a means of providing strategic multi-stakeholder input and feedback for important TRCA and partner projects, proposals and initiatives. TRCA staff and partners have recognized the value of bringing key projects and programs before the RWA for the following purposes:

- To increase the RWA's understanding of TRCA work, and of significant relevant work within TRCA's jurisdiction, in order to create an informed advisory committee to the Board;
- To disseminate and market relevant TRCA work and events through the extensive

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- networks of RWA members; and,
- To solicit feedback from the RWA on proposed work in order to obtain knowledgeable input from a range of TRCA stakeholders and partners

Originally, it was envisioned that these Working Groups would undertake self-directed work that could result in certain TRCA products or processes (e.g. outreach materials, reports or events). However, given constraints on TRCA staff resources and the time of RWA members, it may not be feasible to continue this expectation of the Working Groups.

It is also recognized that the IPCE Working Group and the GES Working Group have both provided valuable input into a variety of TRCA initiatives outlined above. However, it is recommended by staff that TRCA and our partner municipalities and agencies could benefit even more by bringing proposed projects before the RWA as a whole, in order to access the full spectrum of knowledge and expertise held by RWA members. As a result, it is recommended that the functions of the IPCE Working Group and GES Working Group be consolidated into the RWA general membership.

Furthermore, while the Watershed Engagement Working Group has been tasked with organizing and carrying out an annual Watershed Forum, staff have expressed interest in integrating a watershed planning stream into the existing TRIECA conference and/or another existing forum or conference, which would serve the same function as the proposed Watershed Forum. Integrating a watershed planning stream into an established and well-regarded conference, such as TRIECA, would achieve multiple benefits, including utilizing existing TRIECA processes and resources (e.g. marketing, conference logistics, staff) and having immediate access to an established and receptive audience. Therefore, it is recommended that the Watershed Engagement Working Group be put on hold while staff explore the feasibility of integrated the functions and themes of a Watershed Forum into TRIECA or another existing conference or forum.

Given the extensive activities being undertaken by the Youth Council Executive, the reach of the Youth Council general membership, the minimal TRCA staff and RWA member time required to support the Youth Council, and the benefit of having a clear link to the youth within TRCA's jurisdiction, it is recommended that the Youth Council Working Group continue their work through the second half of the current RWA term.

By focusing the efforts and energy of the RWA membership on the Youth Council and on providing strategic, informed input to TRCA work, it is expected that the positive impacts of the RWA will be maximized.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

Strategy 8 – Gather and share the best sustainability knowledge

Strategy 12 – Facilitate a region-wide approach to sustainability

FINANCIAL DETAILS

This report does not require additional TRCA funds or staff time, beyond existing allocations and roles.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

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Provided the recommendations in this report are endorsed, the Regional Watershed Alliance Terms of Reference will need to be amended to reflect the consolidation of the Integrated Planning and Civic Engagement Working Group and the Greenspace and Ecosystem Services Working Group into the broader RWA.

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