

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, March 26, 2021 Meeting

FROM: Sameer Dhalla, Director, Development and Engineering Services

RE: **LAUNCH OF WATERSHED AND ECOSYSTEMS REPORTING HUB**

KEY ISSUE

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is launching an online tool as the modern version of TRCA's The Living City Report Card to communicate up-to-date information about environmental conditions of the Toronto region to our partners and stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS TRCA issues reporting products to communicate the environmental conditions of the Toronto region to partners and stakeholders every five years, including The Living City Report Card;

WHEREAS TRCA's Board of Directors and its partners have requested that it provide more frequent plain language information about the environmental conditions of the Toronto region;

WHEREAS TRCA has developed an innovative online tool, called the Watershed and Ecosystems Reporting Hub, that allows TRCA to clearly communicate the environmental conditions of the Toronto region on an ongoing basis using interactive displays and other digital media;

AND WHEREAS TRCA intends to launch this online tool on April 22, 2021, to coincide with Earth Day;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA's Board of Directors endorse the Watershed and Ecosystems Reporting Hub and authorize staff to proceed with its launch;

AND FURTHER THAT Board members help promote the online tool through their networks and use it to inform decision-making.

BACKGROUND

At Authority Meeting #5/17, held on June 23, 2017, Resolution #A127/17 was approved as follows:

THAT a report on the state of each one of the nine watersheds and the waterfront in the TRCA jurisdiction be presented by staff on a regular basis;

AND FURTHER THAT the scope, content and communication format of these reports, as well as potential alignment with the mandate of the proposed Regional Watershed Alliance, be developed by staff in consultation with a select group of Authority members interested in this initiative.

Item 7.3

In response to requests for more frequent plain language updates about environmental conditions of the Toronto region, TRCA has developed an online tool that will be a modern version of The Living City Report Card.

The Watershed and Ecosystems Reporting Hub (Reporting Hub) presents a digital transformation in the way TRCA reports environmental conditions to our partners and stakeholders. This online tool was developed using Esri's ArcGIS StoryMaps, allowing TRCA to clearly convey environmental conditions of the Toronto region using photos, graphics, and interactive displays.

The Reporting Hub allows the user to interactively explore data at various scales, including by watershed, region or local municipality. It uses plain language to explain the importance of different environmental indicators for understanding watershed and ecosystem health. Reporting for each indicator includes targets (where applicable), current conditions, and how conditions are changing over time, using the best available data. The Reporting Hub further provides users with the ability to dig deeper to better understand the methodologies and data behind the reporting, with links to Open Data.

When this project was first envisioned, a meeting was held with TRCA Board member Ronald Chopowick, the mover of the motion noted above, to ensure that it would meet the intent of the motion and to better understand what would be desired from the ultimate product.

More than 30 staff members from 10 business units across TRCA provided input on content development. Feedback on early drafts was provided through consultations with TRCA's regional municipal partners, members of the Toronto and Region Remedial Action Plan and the Regional Watershed Alliance.

RATIONALE

Indicators included in the Reporting Hub have been re-scoped from the metrics originally developed for The Living City Report Card. The scope of the Reporting Hub contents is aligned with core program areas for which TRCA collects and stores environmental data, including:

- Natural Hazards
- Future Climate
- Land Use
- Natural Heritage Systems
- Water Resource Systems
- Water Quality
- Lake Ontario Nearshore

This change in the scope of reporting in addition to the ability to update the data more frequently (annually, in some cases) will allow TRCA and its municipal partners to use the Reporting Hub to help inform decision making for watershed planning and environmental management. Data displayed in the Reporting Hub will assist in tracking progress toward our goals and demonstrate how successful we are in achieving watershed health through watershed planning and municipal policy implementation.

The Reporting Hub will continue to evolve as we receive feedback from partners and stakeholders, with regular updates to incorporate new data and science. Plans to enhance the Reporting Hub in the future include the development of new indicators in response to feedback from partners and the ability to track progress on watershed plan implementation.

Item 7.3

A demonstration of the Reporting Hub content and capabilities will be presented at the meeting.

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 2 – Manage our regional water resources for current and future generations

Strategy 8 – Gather and share the best sustainability knowledge

Strategy 9 – Measure performance

Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation

Strategy 12 – Facilitate a region-wide approach to sustainability

FINANCIAL DETAILS

TRCA staff involvement in the development of the Watershed and Ecosystems Reporting Hub has been supported through TRCA capital account 416-40, which is funded by the City of Toronto, Peel Region and York Region.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA has developed a Communications Strategy to help promote the Watershed and Ecosystems Reporting Hub. The communications campaign will roll out with the launch of the Reporting Hub on April 22, 2021 with ongoing promotions as the content is updated. The launch will include a press release along with social media. TRCA's municipal partners will be provided with access to the Reporting Hub through business-to-business communication. Board members may wish to be informed of new content updates to the Reporting Hub. In addition, Marketing and Communications will keep the Board informed and provide access to messaging as the Reporting Hub is promoted.

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