

Forestry Update

At this time of year, the focus is on the removal of large invasive trees. The most common species is Norway Maple, but there is also some Austrian Pine, etc. The main areas worked are near the greenhouse and south of the All-Star Café. Also, some invasive shrubs have been removed and their stumps treated on the Tablelands.

Plans for a prescribed burn this spring will be firmed up after the burn consultant's contract has been renewed. Three areas are being considered that were last burned in 2001, 2002 and 2007 respectively.

Dredging of Stormwater Ponds

The work at Wendigo Pond, conducted by TRCA, has been completed. Our committee's concerns with turtles, contaminant removal, foreign soil, Phragmites, etc. have been raised and thus far have been respected. We have alerted the City's Ravine Planner to this project and she will be involved in reviewing restoration plans. There may be an opportunity for volunteers to participate in the replanting of the areas around the ponds.

Howard Pond and Ridout Pond are scheduled next (the access road is being repaired first). In the final phase, when the anti-erosion work is undertaken, TRCA has indicated they will narrow the gravel path and restore the area between those ponds. The dredging of Upper and Lower Duck Ponds is scheduled for winter of 2015/2016.

Signage Projects

Phase 2 of the interpretive sign project was delayed by a technical issue that has been corrected. The final versions are posted [here](#). A map sign indicating the limited areas where fishing is allowed has been drafted and reviewed and still needs to be completed. Completion and installation of both types of signs is expected by or before this spring.

Environmentally Significant Areas in the Official Plan

Natural Environment Committee representatives attended a consultation session related to proposed amendments to the City's Official Plan. These include call for expansion of 14 of the 18 existing Environmentally Significant Areas, including High Park and, as well as the addition of 68 new sites, mainly in ravines. Attendees expressed concern about reflecting official protected status in actual practices. Once the amendments are adopted, official procedures are to be reviewed to give more protection to ESAs.

Concerns re Dog Impacts on Natural Areas

Countless hours of staff time and substantial City resources have gone into building and repairing fences and gates that are continually being vandalized. Plantings in the adjacent protected areas, meant to establish a natural barrier, have been destroyed by human/dog activities. The City's budget for bylaw enforcement is severely stretched, which means limited patrols, and these seem to be mostly confined to areas that can be patrolled by vehicle. The overall negative impacts on the natural areas are a matter of great concern. We are recommending that a thorough review be conducted to address this untenable situation.

Other Highlights

A Masters thesis about the possible eventual reintroduction of the Karner Blue butterfly to Ontario is now available [here](#). It includes research conducted in High Park.

Pan Am/Parapan Am Games: Cycling and marathon races will pass through High Park on the weekends of July 18, 25 and some date in early August, with practice days on the preceding Fridays. The map of the cycling route is available [here](#). The HP route is non-ticketed. Park Operations aims to keep crowds concentrated on manicured areas and away from natural areas.

Stewardship Activities

Three sessions of 'buckthorn busting' were held October-November 2014, followed by a potluck celebration.

In total, the Stewards have planted close to 20,000 plants in the last 8 years!

During the winter, various speakers will be addressing the group. Thanks to all of the volunteers. Special thanks to Aaron Wieland (web & other postings), Linda Read (Facebook updates, and organizer of the Elite Invasive Squad), Tanya Aggett (catering and financial services), Henny Markus (coordinating the revamp of the Boulevard Bed native plant garden), and Sharon Lovett (Chair). There are many ways for new people to contribute to this important work.

See the High Park Nature [website](#) for more details of upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.