

Friends of the Spit

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Spring Bird Festival

Sponsored by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Saturday, May 8th, 2010

7:00 am – 4:00 pm

Visit www.trca.on.ca or www.springbirdfestival.ca

In this newsletter...

- Update on Park Infrastructure Projects
- Update on Embayment D Project
- Glacial pace benefits Spit and Spit Users

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010

As an Editorial #1

Preparation of this issue of the newsletter began in November 2009: but, as we wrote it, we realized there really had been no news to report. Autumn drifted through to winter and still no news, so we felt we would save mailing costs and hold on sending the newsletter until we finally had some news! News or not, we felt that Spring did require a newsletter.

As our newsletters have always been published according to need, and as our members have been very generous with donations and renewals, our steering committee has proposed that we not ask for membership renewals for 2010, but rather wait until January of 2011 for membership renewals. (If you already renewed on your own initiative, we will credit this to 2011!).

So, enjoy the membership that keeps on giving, and we will keep on advocating! Enjoy the Spit this Spring, Summer and Fall.

As an Editorial #2

A province shaped by glaciers an ice age ago – the same slow pace inflicts all initiatives on the waterfront. Nary has a word been heard since Lake Ontario Park was presented – it remains un-ratified by City Council, un-ratified by the TRCA.

No one, even in this age of stimulus spending – wants to touch the \$ 300 million - \$ 400 million - \$ 500 million?? price tag!!

In the meantime, life at the Spit rolls on: the seasons pass and the Spit and Baselands remain safe from development.

While the agencies take their time, more and more people visit the Spit, love it, and chant “Let It Be”.

The more Harbourfront East gets developed, in urban concentrations, the more obvious it becomes that The Spit and Baselands must remain public urban wilderness: people need this wilderness at the City’s doorstep.

Park Infrastructure Projects moving again ... It’s been a long saga...

As you recall from previous newsletters, the TRCA has proposed four modest infrastructure projects for the Spit, in accordance with the 1993 Master Plan for the Spit.

The first of the four is a small washroom/storage building with a large sheltering overhang and interpretive panels to be placed at Leslie and Unwin, along with a reorganized parking area separated from pedestrian and bike traffic. This structure will welcome visitors to the Spit. The second structure is a staff booth and sheltering area on the Peninsula neck, in the general location of the current control booth.

The third of the four is an environmental shelter, tucked under a berm at Cell 1, to be used as a gathering place and shelter for groups, and to house washrooms. The roof of this building will appear to be part of the berm, and will also be a lookout. The fourth structure is a small research building with enough space for bird banding and mammal research. It will be located near the Aquatic Park Sailing Club on Peninsula D.

These structures have been designed and modified many times, and have been discussed thoroughly at the Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee meetings, where we, Friends of the Spit, have representatives.

As you know from previous newsletters, the WaterfrontToronto Design Review Panel kept asking for “bigger”, and often gave conflicting criticism. Finally, in August, the Design Review Panel risked approving the Tommy Thompson Park Infrastructure Projects even though a full quorum wasn’t present! The panel members present that day did tour the Spit and did come to understand why these very modest projects, which are in accord with the Master Plan, might benefit the Spit and solidify the Master Plan!

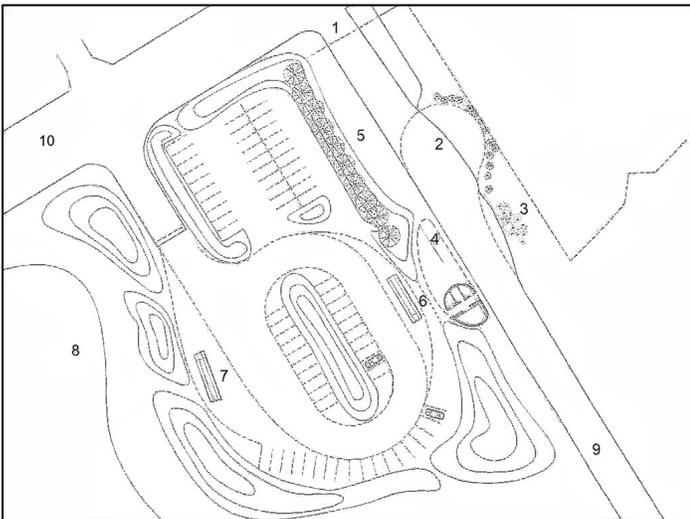
Since then, the TRCA’s architects have been refining the concepts further, and providing additional detail. These more detailed plans were then approved again by the WaterfrontToronto Design Review Panel in March 2010. The next hurdle for the projects will be to satisfy the various agencies’ regulatory requirements, including the City of Toronto Zoning and Building regulations.

The Conservation Authority hopes to have the structures built by March 2011, before the infrastructure funding runs out.

Friends of the Spit have supported these structures, as we feel that they are modest in scope, necessary in function, and, especially with the case of the entry pavilion, serve to define the Spit and indicate to first time users and casual participants that the Spit is, indeed, a park --- albeit a park of an entirely different nature!



THE GATEWAY:



The key to the success of the gateway is the reorganization of the existing parking lot, to allow a separate automobile access from Unwin Avenue. Then, the present main entry will become the pedestrian and cyclist arrival point. The small structure (approximately 900 sq. ft.) consists of washrooms, storage, and sliding display panels, all sheltered under a large, flat roof. This low-key entry, separated from the parking lot by a new berm with plantings, will give the park and the Spit enough of a presence to extend a welcome to a visitor, and yet have them realize that this is not your average City park!

1. GATE
2. SHUTTLE TURN AROUND
3. BIKE RACKS
4. SHUTTLE WAITING
5. EVENT TENT AREA
6. COACH BUS DROP OFF
7. COACH BUS PARKING
8. NATURAL DRAINAGE FLOW
9. SPINE ROAD
10. UNWIN AVENUE

Currently:

We have learned that the funding for this Gateway project has been “pulled”/“deferred”/“held-back”/“reallocated”.

OUCH!

STAFF BOOTH:

The staff booth will be located to the east of the present control booth and will be sited so that the existing spine road and primary pedestrian trail skirt it. Similar to the Gateway, the staff booth, interior spaces, and outdoor waiting area are protected and sheltered by a large roof. The interior space at the north end consists of the staff booth and facilities, storage, and a small interior gathering room/exhibition space. Also under the overhang is another set of sliding display panels. The enclosed space is approximately 1,050 sq. ft.



What Do You Think?

PLEASE email us your comments:

info@friendsofthespit.ca.

The design of these structures is ongoing – we will bring your comments to the next Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee Meeting.



ENVIRONMENTAL SHELTER - SITEPLAN
1:500



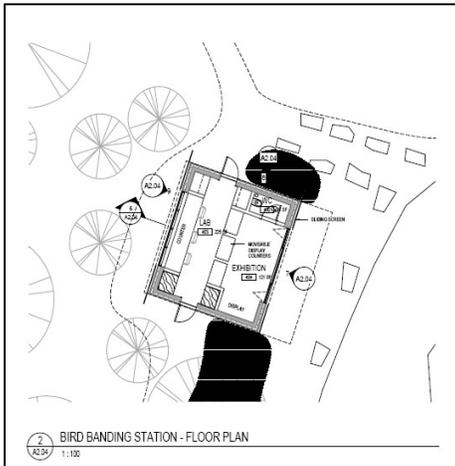
ENVIRONMENTAL SHELTER:

At the north end of Cell 1, the disturbed land will be graded up into a berm, to conceal the environmental shelter below. On top, all one will see will be a railing at a lookout over Cell 1. The space below (approximately 1,225 sq. ft.) will have two washrooms, a large open-fronted, sheltered gathering space, and some equipment storage. This structure will be very unobtrusive as it is completely set into the landscape.

All structures will have Corten steel cladding and all will be designed to comply with the City of Toronto's Bird Friendly Development Guidelines, as well as the City of Toronto's Green Standards.

BIRD BANDING STATION:

Again, a very small structure (6m by 7m) (approximately 20' x 23') (460 sq. ft.) consists of the working area and a small gathering/exhibition area. The structure is designed to be portable, as it could be moved at a future time.



BIRD BANDING STATION - FLOOR PLAN
1:100



All images courtesy of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Architects are MontgomerySisam.

Embayment D Berm Project Proceeding ...

For many years now, you have been aware of the small haul road leading from the spine road down to the north edge of Embayment D. This temporary road was constructed to allow trucks to create a barrier berm to enclose Embayment D.

A berm with a water control gate will be constructed, together with some outlying islands. Embayment D will then become a carp-free body of water and will have some restoration work to allow it to become a more productive wildlife area. The new islands being constructed to the harbour side of this berm will become tern nesting areas. Construction is scheduled to start in June and last for three months. The TRCA is in partnership with the Toronto Port Authority, who will pay the majority of the construction costs.

Along with the Embayment D work, additional fish spawning habitat will be created at Embayment C this June and July, as part of the ongoing Tommy Thompson Park 2010 Work Plan, organized by the TRCA.

Ashbridge's Bay CLC: Gone AWOL? On hold?

TRCA Ashbridge's Bay/Coatsworth Cut Erosion Control Project – Conservation Ontario Class Environmental Assessment: wow, this long title announced that WaterfrontToronto and the City of Toronto requested the TRCA to reinitiate the Class EA for Ashbridge's Bay to address the existing navigation risk caused by sediment deposition at the harbour entrance at the Ashbridge's Bay head land. However, after a brief flurry of meetings (in which FOS participated) in Autumn 2009, the entire project was put on "hold", for financial reasons.

How would this have affected the Spit? If designs had been selected, they would have formed part of Lake Ontario Park and have been integrated both with Lake Ontario Park and with the Baselands of the Spit.

As part of the coordinated federal and provincial environmental assessment process, a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was formed to facilitate public communication and identify issues of concern regarding the project. Friends of the Spit attended two meetings, and then everything went silent. The public meeting scheduled in October was cancelled, and since then, nothing has happened: the whole project has been on hold. We heard rumours that there were jurisdictional disputes about the process and what its aims were, and who, ultimately, would fund it. Should it ever be revived, your steering committee members will participate to ensure that the Baselands and the Spit are not compromised by the proposals.

Newspaper Error:

Many of you read the Globe & Mail's April 17th article on the Spit: rest assured that no chimney swift towers will be built.

Neighbouring Projects...

The Greening of Leslie Street:

You have probably noticed the construction barriers and work occurring on Leslie, south of Lakeshore, leading to the Spit: finally, after lengthy delays, the greening of Leslie Street, Phase Two, is underway! This project not only organizes the trails and sidewalks, but adds vegetation to increase the sense of the wildlife corridor leading from the Spit and Baselands up into the City. The entry experience to the Spit will be greatly improved. As Councillor Fletcher is quoted:

“I have also advocated for an attractive and welcoming entrance way to the Spit that will properly symbolize its role as unique and treasured greenspace in our City, and a vital part of Toronto's green corridor.”

Lake Ontario Park: Moribund? Hibernating? Who Knows?

Since the April 2009 newsletter, when James Roche, Project Manager of WaterfrontToronto was quoted "... the process is taking longer than what was hoped, but rest assured it is proceeding...": Actually, we've heard nothing further from WaterfrontToronto.

As the editorial notes, the project remains un-ratified by City of Toronto, un-ratified by the TRCA, and as far as we know, without funding.

One can only wonder and speculate what will eventually happen, if anything.

Conserving Nature in Urban Areas:

We were pleased to participate in last month's High Park Volunteer Stewardship Program Symposium on Conserving Nature in Urban Areas. It is always a pleasure to be part of a larger group, all of whom have similar goals!

Movies at the Spit

If you were out on the Spit in March, you probably noticed an odd cantilevered structure and old gas pumps in the area of the control booth. These were part of a movie shoot: evidently someone thought the control booth and these other structures might look like a good old-fashioned, cold war checkpoint.

Friends of the Spit have acknowledged the use of the Spit for filming in non-park hours, so long as essential natural habitat is not occupied or damaged, and as long as the props and debris are removed quickly and efficiently. The TRCA gains financially from these shoots: and have informed us that this money does not go into TRCA general revenue, but goes specifically into the monies being spent at the Spit.

Website: www.friendsofthespit.ca

Have you checked out our website recently?

Have you photographs you wish to share?

Our photo gallery has had some wonderful additions: if the photographs have been taken by someone other than a steering committee member, they are credited: hold the cursor on the photo, and the title and photographer's credit should appear.

Thanks to our webmaster Brent Bailey.