

# Friends of the Spit

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**Cold + Ice + Wind...** is often Winter at the Spit, but spectacular nonetheless!

We hope you've been enjoying your Winter excursions, and have been dressing well for the elements!

The daylight hours are lengthening, Spring will soon arrive (as it always has ! 😊 ). Sunday was a tease, a harbinger of things to come.

**A big welcome to all our new members!** Thanks for joining us and expressing your support for the Public Urban Wilderness, car-free and accessible for all. Your support makes us strong and effective!

We want to update you on the various governing bodies' plans for The Spit for 2022, and update you on other initiatives. We contacted the TRCA, the City, PortsToronto, and CreateTO, and after reading their responses, know that our path forward will be much the same as during the last two years: **continued strong advocacy for The Spit and its land to be respected, the structures maintained, and for education and ongoing deterrence measures to prevent damaging behaviours.** In particular, the new buildings and washrooms, and outhouses, need to be maintained. For months now, the Nature Centre has been without power, and no power restoration date is promised!! Any other park would have seen the power back on in days. Why the months and months of delays? It is a truism that all capital projects require maintenance, and that maintenance must be included in the budget! For too long, appropriate maintenance of the buildings and facilities at The Spit has been deferred: The Spit is Toronto's premier urban wilderness, and needs the commensurate funding for these essential services.

First: **Good news!!** As of this time, **NO commercial filming is planned** !!!!!!!

From the February 25th TRCA response: *"There have not been any commercial film inquiries for TRCA lands at the Spit this year; it's been quiet since late summer 2021."*

And, from PortsToronto, February 24th, *"To answer your question I am not aware of and have confirmed that at this time there are no requests to conduct movie shoots on lands PortsToronto leases from the MNRF at the Leslie St. Spit."*

**THANKS to all our members and supporters who raised their voices to object to commercial filming on The Spit!**

*From the TRCA, (edited for brevity), we received the following info...*

*“In August 2021, TRCA was awarded a grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Great Lakes Protection Initiative. Implementation, in spring and summer 2022, will include:*

- *Construction of 2 new Common Tern rafts –a second in the Embayment D wetland and one in Cell 3. [ed note: last year, the terns abandoned the “D” raft over the Victoria Day weekend – we suspect the reason was holiday human disturbance and fireworks, but there is no clear-cut proof. The TRCA will be closely monitoring the terns’ nesting this year.]*
- *Installation of a custom beaver baffle for the TTP Embayment D fish and water level control structure to maintain fish passage into the wetland while accommodating damming activities.*
- *Turtle monitoring and nest protection at TTP.*
- *Continued phragmites management and aquatic plant restoration at TTP wetlands and shorelines.*

*TRCA was also awarded a grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk for a project to improve habitat for Monarch butterflies. This project will include wet meadow restoration during spring 2022 on the east side of the Cell 1 wetland.”* [We confirmed that this is the water’s edge along the east side of Cell One, and will be similar to last year’s work along the west shoreline. The east trail will not be affected.]

*“Annual cormorant management will take place during spring 2022, as per the ongoing TTP Cormorant Management Strategy. Double-crested cormorants are encouraged to nest on the ground, and staff will use deterrents to discourage nesting in healthy trees.*

*Tommy Thompson Park received a budget increase for 2022 that will maintain TRCA’s service standard delivered in 2021.”*

*From PortsToronto, (again edited for brevity), we received the following info;*

*“With respect to operations, PortsToronto are currently in discussions with the City and TRCA regarding annual dredging of the Keating Channel. At this point we do not have a specific timeline identified for this operation. At this time I am not aware of any other operational changes occurring at the Spit.”*

*“From a Capital Projects standpoint, PortsToronto do not have any projects currently programmed to occur within the lands PortsToronto lease from the MNR within the Leslie St. Spit. “*

*“PortsToronto do have a number of projects identified to occur at its Outer Harbour Marina (OHM) in 2022. Of particular note, PortsToronto expect construction to commence on the new Youth Rowing Facility at the OHM in 2022. We anticipate the start will be sometime in May. “*

(This is the project that Friends of the Spit challenged at the City Committee of Adjustment, and lost by a split-vote, but, as part of the conditions, we were fairly consulted regarding environmental, planting, and bird-friendly concerns. Given that a building was approved by the City Committee, we believe and hope that our concerns have been addressed, and that its impact on The Spit will now be minimal.)

*“PortsToronto have programmed a number of infrastructure renewal projects at the OHM in 2022 including:*

- *Replacement of fuel tanks*
- *Extension of dock mooring piers to address climate change*
- *Refurbishment of sanitary lift stations*
- *Renewal of dock electrical feeders*
- *Refurbishment of the Vessel Waste Evacuation system*
- *Upgrades to Security cameras and Wi-Fi*
- *Pavement rehabilitation*

*These projects are anticipated to occur throughout the year. Finally, PortsToronto will be conducting a number of condition studies of infrastructure at the OHM in order to inform the capital program for future.”*

### *From the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry, and Recreation:*

*“Parks does not have any operational changes planned for TTP for the upcoming season. We are planning to address all of the under-warranty issues (plumbing, heating, electrical) in the new washroom building [ed. note: the Entry Pavilion] this spring. Before next winter, we are hoping to have some curb stones installed around the garden beds in the parking lot to better delineate them and protect the plantings within.”*

P, F, & R made no mention of the ongoing maintenance issues with the portable toilets; but they did explain earlier to us that the two of the four Entry Pavilion washrooms were closed to reflect winter use volume. Let’s hope those are opened for the Spring, and stay open! Four were built, four should function!

The Nature Centre structure requires maintenance, and just plain cleaning, but first and foremost, the power must be restored. This we understand is the TRCA’s responsibility; however, in the complicated way of TTP management the graffiti removal is the City’s task. Unfortunately, the city’s response was to paint the Cor-Ten steel, and paint the concrete: materials that were both originally selected for their cleanability. We are calling for the paint, and the underlying graffiti, to be removed.

**Building something also entails maintaining it !!**

*From CreateTO, (again edited for brevity), we learned of the following regarding the proposed Leslie Lookout Park (the park slated for the west side of Leslie Street, north of the Spit Baselands):*

*“The design of Leslie Lookout Park project has been developed through stakeholder engagement with community representatives, Indigenous community stakeholders, various Port Lands representatives, and the City of Toronto. Feedback received through this engagement process was used to further refine the details of the park design, which is now at 100 percent completion.*

*In fall/winter of 2021, construction hoarding was installed around the park property, and site preparations began at 12 Leslie for demolition, dock wall repairs and environmental*

*remediation. Environmental remediation will continue into Spring 2022, with park landscaping set to begin this summer. “*

Stunningly, this park is proceeding to construction without any washroom facilities. Friends of the Spit, as “neighbours”, provided extensive commentary and feedback to the park designers, and were pleased to see the plantings and natural elements were revised to be more in keeping with The Spit; but our concerns about parking and lack of washroom facilities fell on deaf ears. We are told there is no money for washrooms. We are also informed that once CreateTO builds the park, that maintenance will be handled by the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation department. Given that P,F, & R is already stretched totally, where are the budget monies for this park? We think The Spit is underfunded by the City: what then for this new park?

### In other matters:

Last call for Dragonflies’ and Damselflies’ (Odonates) information.... one of our expert members is nearing completion of the first ever Odonata Checklist for The Leslie Street Spit ! If you have any sightings or records that you think we should have, send them now, c/o our email address.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Bird Checklist is now being prepared by a TRCA-led committee of volunteers, including a number of FOS members. This is the first update since 2014. The total number of species seen, provided the most recent 2021 observations are all accepted by the Ontario Birds Record Committee, will be 333 !

TRCA Volunteer naturalists: in response to some recent special wildlife events, the TRCA has implemented a “Wildlife Ambassador” Program, and is looking for volunteers for that, as well as for their turtle monitoring project. Here’s the link, if you are interested. [Volunteer Positions - Toronto and Region Conservation Authority \(TRCA\)](#)

We continue to monitor the City and TRCA service standards. We have stressed that, to minimize destructive behaviours, a continued program of education, deterrence, and, as a last resort, enforcement, must be in place. This will ensure that that we all can enjoy The Spit as a Public Urban Wilderness, as per the long-established principles of the Master Plan. Do keep us informed as to any issues or problems you observe, or any suggestions you might have.

With your help, we’ll all stay ever vigilant about the ongoing issues – boundaries, private vehicles driving on The Spit, commercial activities on The Spit, maintenance, inappropriate plantings, etc., etc.

In closing, we hope all is well with you and your families and colleagues, and that you continue to enjoy The Spit as a car-free public urban wilderness!

**See you on The Spit!!**