

Friends of the Spit

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NEWSLETTER

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- The progress of the Visitor Experience Plan (VEP)
- Environmental Offsets

How to make The Spit just like any other City park:

Simple: Plant nicely-trimmed nursery-grown conifers in regular patterns, to make The Spit just feel like any other Park.



This photo taken on May 23, 2026 at the Spine Road west side just north of Embayment D.

How to make The Spit just like any other City park:

Simple: Plant all the meadows with nursery-stock trees.



This photo also taken May 23, 2026 at the (now-former) meadows along the east side of the Spine Road.

These plantings show just how far away from the original premise of The Spit the TRCA has taken their environmental planting work. These plantings no longer celebrate what Nature brought. The Spit is no longer an Accidental Wilderness. No longer is “let it Be” a guiding mantra! The concept of succession and seeing how the ecological communities would naturally mature has been lost. Instant plantings for instant looks.

What made The Spit ecologically interesting was the evolution of vegetation and animal and bird life - over time.

Please: make your opposition to these on-going needless plantings known:

Email the VEP at ttpvep@trca.ca , and cc the TRCA at info@trca.ca .

The progress of the Visitor Experience Plan (VEP)

We had hoped that the Visitor Experience Plan would allow commentary on these ecological constructions as we believe visitors will be coming to see an accidental wilderness, not just another over-manicured city park. However.....

After, an Autumn “pop-up”, two Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings, another “pop-up” this May at The Spit, and an open house/public meeting held at Ralph Thornton Community Centre in mid-May, we have learned a lot.

First, the scope of the VEP is not as we had understood it to be, and not as we had hoped it would be.

At the second CAG meeting, we were told by the TRCA rep that the VEP would “*not* deal with Natural Resource Management” i.e the ecological work (plantings, etc.), the bird banding station, or the shoreline erosion control work. The latter we understand, as it is complex, and we have been told The Spit land will not be accepted by the City and the TRCA until Ports Toronto has completed their mandate of armouring and protecting the shoreline from future erosion. We understand the financial implications to the City and the TRCA of accepting a dynamically stable shoreline.

So, because of this latter item, we had thought that the VEP plan would become all that more important, as it would govern interim use, as the Master Plan does not kick in fully until the land is fully under the authority of the TRCA and the City.

Also, we felt the VEP plan would be important in recognizing that although the posted weekday admission hours are 4 PM to 9 PM, the land is in fact fully open to the public all the time on weekdays: this recognition must lead to proper staffing and maintenance all seven days of the week.

It has become increasingly obvious that the VEP will tell us what we know – that The Spit/TTP is a wonderful place for nature and ecology and a wonderful place to go to for solitude and enjoyment - *but [and wait for it?]* – will it be like the past when consultants forged on to say “here’s how it could be improved!” ? Aaaargh!

We have that natural fear that consultants must always come up with grand designs and suggestions for “betterment”!

For the VEP to have any lasting success, it must recognize the interim use, provide stable and adequate funding for staffing throughout the entire interim use period, and deal with the issues that arise through use, mis-use, ecological and habitat creation – in other words -----
a holistic plan that examines all aspects of the Spit/TTP within the parameters of the Revised Master Plan and EA. A visitor’s experience comes from all aspects of this wonderful place, and to limit this VEP to “bike racks and benches” misses the point entirely !!!

Thank you to all - and there are many many indeed – who have participated in the meetings, the pop-ups, completed the surveys, sent comments in to us: all send messages to the consultants.

At the time of writing, we have been told that the current plan is to hold another public meeting in “September/early Fall”. Stay tuned!!!

Environmental Offsets: why The Spit?

We believe that environmental offsets were legislated so that in a case where an agency or a developer could not comply with the environmental regulations, no matter how hard they tried, they could fund an offset for that endangered species, or that environmental feature, to be constructed in reasonable proximity to their development.

So, since when did The Spit become the place for agencies’ and developers’ environmental offsets? Is it because they all perceive The Spit to be vacant land? Is it because they are being encouraged to dump their obligations into the TRCA and the City’s laps?

A case in point, sprung on us all at the second Community Advisory Committee meeting (which begs the question: shouldn’t this case be something that would be “held”, and reviewed as part of the VEP mandate?) that troubles us greatly is that a Leaside developer was mandated to provide an environmental offset for a chimney swift tower: they are removing an actively-used chimney from their development site. (Chimney Swifts are a federally-listed threatened species). Until recently, the legislation required that this offset be placed within 2 km of the existing site. The Spit is more than 7 km from Leaside, so why at The Spit? Why not at City properties or CreateTO properties much closer to the site? And why are developers being cut such a favour? Couldn’t a new tower have been designed into the development?: that would have been the ideal. We’re pretty certain the developer has creative architects on board!

Further, the track record for success of these structures is mixed. (As, for example, is the dismal success rate for structures for barn swallow offsets).

In this particular case of the chimney swift tower, there is a time limitation, and there is pressure, so the tower may end up on The Spit. We have made it very clear that this is a last resort, and very clear that the only location acceptable would be in the already disturbed urban area around the entry pavilion right at Leslie and Unwin – specifically, that it must be north of the entry pavilion. The last thing we need is a chimney swift tower cluttering up the peninsulas.

Stop ad hoc planning. Let the VEP be all-inclusive and holistic!

In the next newsletter:

***How to keep The Spit unique, and unlike other Toronto parks...
And how a VEP could embrace and foster that uniqueness!***