

Rouge Park

**Rouge Park
Governance Review**



Rouge Park



Rouge Park is...

- A major regional park in York and Durham Regions and Toronto, accessible by public transit throughout the GTA
- An important natural, cultural and agricultural landscape in the Rouge River, Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds.
- Big, the largest natural environment park in an urban area in North America, (over 46 km²) and growing!
- A major reservoir of biodiversity in Ontario's Greenbelt in York and Durham Regions and Toronto
- A singular example of federal, provincial and local cooperation.



Rouge Park



Rouge Park: Strong Alliance Support



Rouge Park



The Formation of Rouge Park

- In 1990 the Province of Ontario announced its intention to create a park to protect the Rouge River and adjacent lands in Toronto
- Upon the creation of the Park in 1995, the federal and provincial governments each provided \$10 million for the establishment of Rouge Park, to help protect the Rouge River Valley System.
- Rouge Park Alliance was formed as a voluntary, partnership board of directors that would oversee the implementation of the Rouge Park Management Plan.
- Strong citizen support for the protection of the Rouge River valley
- Lands sheltered from potential impacts of housing and commercial development.
- After the completion of the *Rouge Park Management Plan* in 1994, the Park was established in 1995 as a natural environment park.

Rouge Park



Rouge Park's Vision and Goal

Rouge Park Vision

Rouge Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the park. The park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit.

Rouge Park Goal

To protect, restore and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural values of the park in an ecosystem context, and to promote public responsibility, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage.

Rouge Park



Rouge Park Objectives

Natural Heritage

Cultural Heritage

Land Use

Management

Interpretation

Recreation

Agriculture



The Existing Governance System is Inadequate

- Rouge Alliance has been successful – but needs more authority to realize the Opportunity
- The Alliance does not have “natural person powers” and cannot carry on business in its own name
 - Cannot own land
 - Cannot contract on its own
- The Board is “advisory” in nature
 - It is not structured to give effect to “pay for say” principles
 - It is a “collection” of representative stakeholders, rather than an empowered group of decision makers
 - It does not have the power/responsibility implement the vision
 - It is not held accountable for decisions
 - There is no legislative linkage back to Alliance member organizations



Rouge Park is Under-Funded

Rouge Park Operating Budget is under funded by \$3 million annually

- The Park's annual operating budget is approximately \$1.4 million comprised of cash and in kind services
 - The analysis recommends an operating budget in the order of \$4 million annually to manage a park of this size and complexity
-
- **The investment needed on capital is on the order of \$43M over 10 years**
 - Capital investment between 2004-9 was approximately \$ 2 million
 - Parkland/environmental protection investment levels should be in the order of \$14,000+/hectare or \$30+ million
 - Capital facilities investments including an interpretation centre require at least \$12 million

Rouge Park



Summary of Major Findings

- **The Opportunity:**
 - A gateway to wilderness park experiences
 - It is within an hour's drive for almost 7 million Canadians – and accessible by public transit.
- **The Challenge:** To realize this vision, change is required.
 - New funding commitments
 - A new structure to give it a proper authority and accountability structure.
- **The Path Forward**
 - In our view the opportunity that is Rouge Park will not be realized without resolving the need for land, funding and better governance
 - A designation of the Rouge Park as Canada's first "near urban" National Park responds to both the Opportunity and the Challenge



The Governance Structure Must Evolve

- The Rouge needs an empowered Board:
 - Reflect “pay for say”
 - Accountable and transparent
 - Maintain community engagement
- The Board would “steer”
 - Set Vision
 - Approve Master and operating plans
 - Evaluate against benchmarks
- A CEO would implement the Plans
 - Direct staff or contracted entities

Form follows Function:

Many models can deliver this structure. The model selected will reflect the mix of funders, land donors and their accountability needs...



