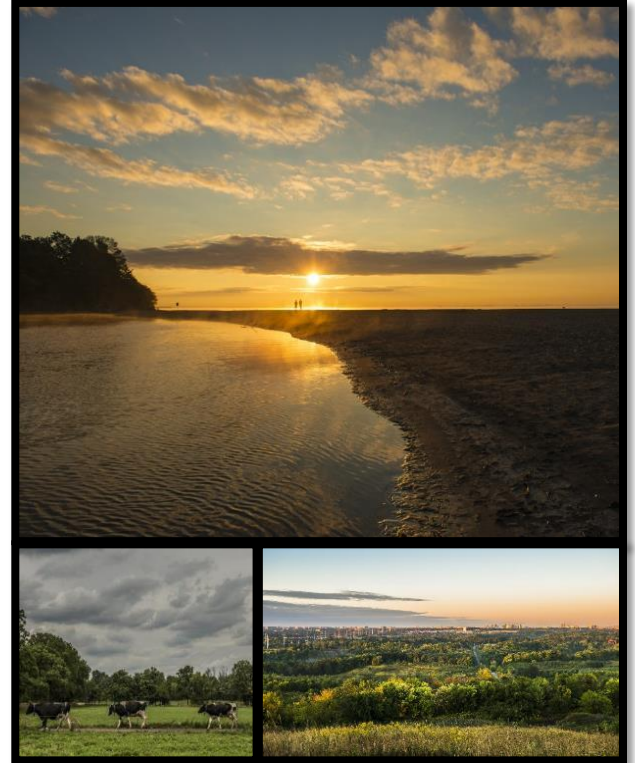


# Rouge National Urban Park

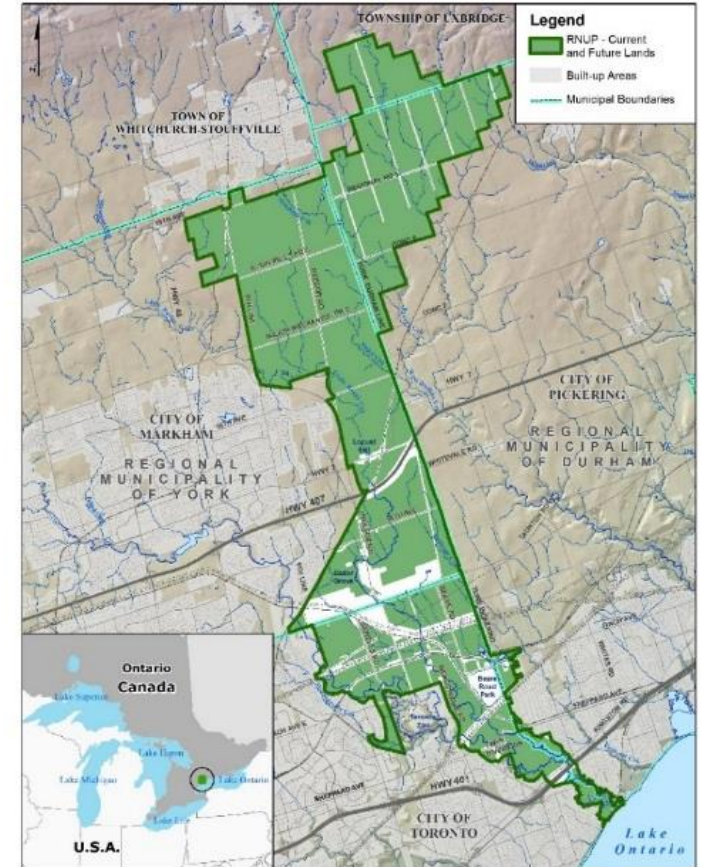
Presentation to Markham General Committee

November 20, 2017



## Park Area & Status of Completion

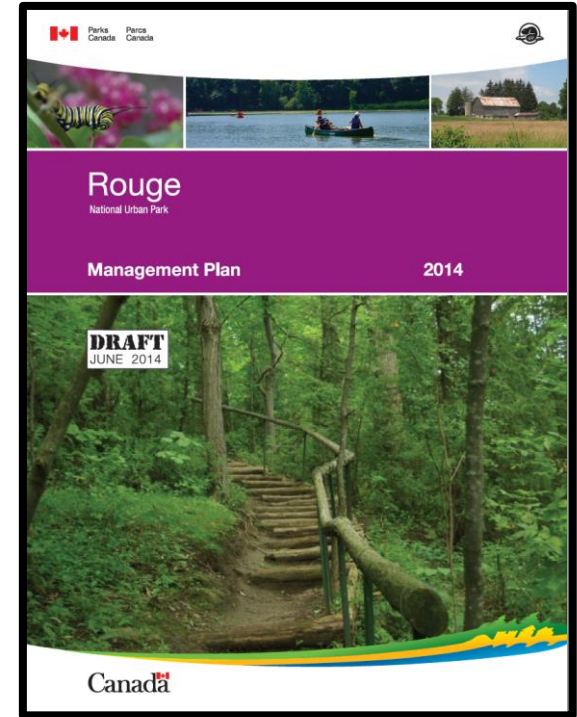
- Established in 2015; halfway in its transition to a fully operational national urban park
- Land assembly agreements in place with the Province, municipalities, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
- Parks Canada now directly manages or has an interest in nearly 80 per cent of lands identified for Rouge National Urban Park, including 5000 acres of former Transport Canada lands in Markham
- Once complete, the park will be 79.1 km<sup>2</sup> in size, making it the largest urban park in North America, 23 times larger than Central Park; 19 times larger than Stanley Park



Rouge National Urban Park  
Prepared: May 01st 2018  
 Note: All green lands are included here the park area.

# Legislative & Policy Framework

- Rouge National Urban Park Act (2015):
  - Identifies reasons for establishment (Clause 4–Purpose Clause)
    - Protecting and presenting natural and cultural heritage
    - Promoting a vibrant farming community
    - Encouraging Canadians to discover and connect with their national protected heritage areas
- Act was amended in 2017 to strengthen ecological protections and provide long-term certainty to farmers
- Draft management plan released in 2014; its preparation is a requirement under the Act; plan extensively consulted on; work on its finalization to resume shortly



## Protecting Natural & Cultural Heritage and Promoting a Vibrant Farming Community

- 31 restoration projects already completed in collaboration with farmers, TRCA, ENGOs, municipalities, and First Nations; natural and agricultural gains achieved
- Worked with farmers to define “vibrant farming community”:
  - A healthy natural environment;
  - A dedicated and functional agricultural land base with emphasis on producing products to help meet the nutritional needs of the region;
  - Opportunities for connecting people with and educating people about agriculture;
  - Cultural and historic resources and agricultural landscapes that are protected and presented;
  - A strong sense of community inside and outside of the park, including access to farm support services, businesses, and urban markets; and
  - A leasing environment that provides opportunities for economically viable farm operations including the ability to diversify and use innovative farming practices.
- Important cultural assets (such as Locust Hill Schoolhouse) are being identified, assessed, stabilized and recapitalized, in collaboration with partners such as the City of Markham and Heritage Markham



## Integrated Restoration & Enhancement in Action

- All work to date has been in the Markham portion of the park, north of 16<sup>th</sup> Ave & west of York/Durham Line
- Impressive results: improved water & habitat quality, new wetlands designed to collect water from tiled fields, better culverts & creek crossings for fish movement & farm equipment, and new grassed waterways to reduce flooding on farm fields
- More projects are planned for 2017 & 2018

**BEFORE**

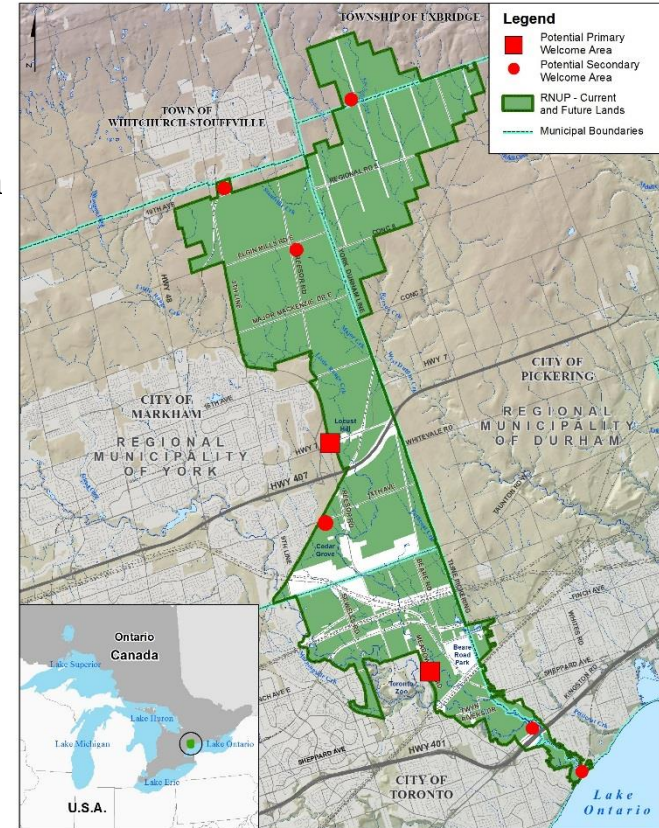


**AFTER**



## Facilities & Trails

- Parks Canada has opened two secondary (small) welcome areas in the park, including one at the corner of Reesor and Elgin Mills; staff also present in areas such as Bob Hunter Park
- Visitation to the welcome areas is up by 400%+ over last year
- Additional secondary welcome areas are being planned, including at 19<sup>th</sup> Ave (east of 9<sup>th</sup> line)
- Planning is also underway for primary (larger) welcome areas in Toronto and Markham, the latter in collaboration with the Cornell-Rouge National Urban Park Gateway initiative
- In addition to the newly-opened trails in the Bob Hunter park area, approximately 30 more kilometres of new trails are being planned for the Markham portion of the park
- Parks Canada staff are working with Markham planning and operational staff to ensure that park trails are connected to existing and planned Markham trails



Rouge National Urban Park 0 1 2 3 4 5 Km

## Park Bus

- Partnership between the Parkbus organization, MEC, Parks Canada and TD Bank, which provided a Canada 150 Grant for 2017
- Daily, from July to October; alternating stops, including Bob Hunter Park
- Parks Canada staff person on the bus, animating the ride
- Desire to continue and expand service in 2018 to include Markham pick-ups



## Public Outreach

- Hundreds of community events, including Markham Fair
- Expanded “Learn-to Camp” program
  - half-day and shorter sessions offered at Markham libraries, community centres, events and festivals
- Goal is for the Rouge to be the premiere “Learn-to” park in the country





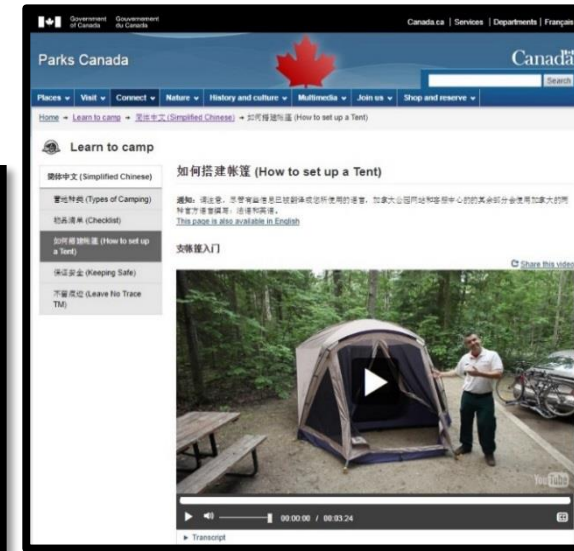
## Health Initiatives

- “Green exercise” as means of improving mental and physical health
- *Mood Walks* is a partnered program that supports youth who experience mental health issues
- Allows them to spend time in nature in safe surroundings
- In collaboration with local hospitals, volunteers and conservation groups



## Multi-lingual Park Materials

- Parks Canada is actively translating promotional and outreach materials into many languages, starting with those spoken in the communities nearest to the park



## Citizenship Ceremonies

- Held throughout the country at Parks Canada locations
- Rouge National Urban Park hosted its first ceremony this year, in the Markham portion of the park
- Helps foster long-term connections to the park on one of the most important days of a newcomer's life in Canada



## In Summary,

### Current Rouge National Urban Park Priorities:

- Participation in Canada 150 (more than 400 events)
- Management of lands already transferred to Parks Canada
- Completion of land transfer (provincial, TRCA and municipal lands)
- Development of new visitor facilities, including trails
- Revisions to the draft management plan
- On-going Indigenous and stakeholder relations



### **Rouge National Urban Park**

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[www.parks canada.gc.ca/rouge](http://www.parks canada.gc.ca/rouge)