



# Rouge

National Urban Park

## Management Plan

2014



**DRAFT**  
JUNE 2014

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# PART A: SETTING THE CONTEXT

## Introduction and Background

### **Introducing Rouge National Urban Park— the newest member of the Parks Canada family**

Canada is a nation rich in natural and cultural heritage. From the First Nations who have lived here for millennia to the first European settlements, from our majestic coastlines to our lush forests, we share a vast and wonderful heritage that not only defines who we are, it tells our story to the world.

Parks Canada has long been committed to preserving this impressive heritage, connecting Canadians with the natural wonders and historic sites that helped forge—and continue to shape—our nation. It's a legacy that began in 1885 with our first national parks at Banff, continued in 1917 with our first national historic sites, and saw the creation of our first national marine conservation area in 1987.

This legacy continues with the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan, a bold initiative to connect Canadians to nature, restore ecosystems, and conserve Canada's lands and waters. Today, Parks Canada is excited to make a tangible and unique contribution to the National Conservation Plan with the latest addition to its family, Rouge National Urban Park (see Map 1).

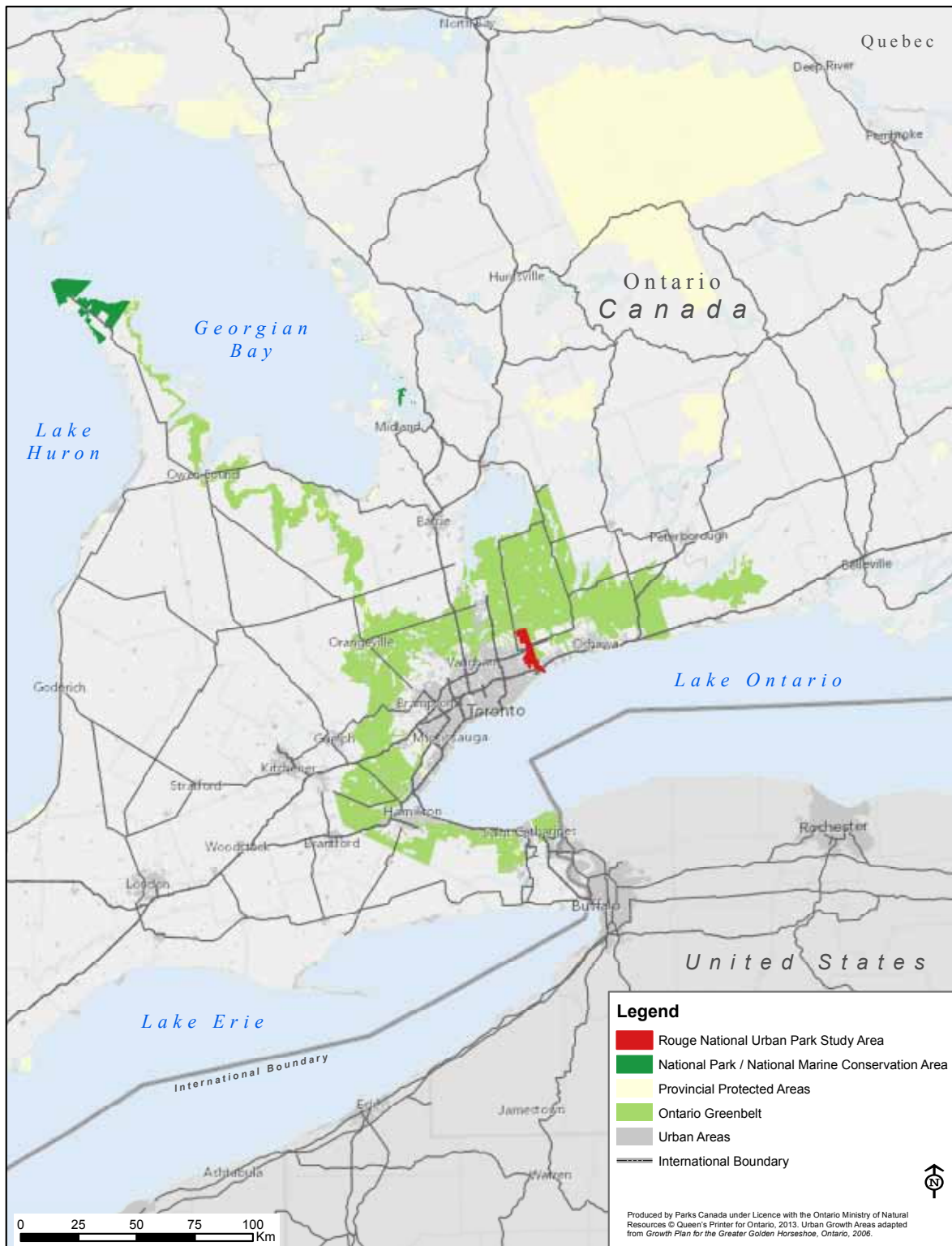
### **A New Park, a New Opportunity**

Situated in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)—the largest, most culturally diverse metropolitan area in Canada—Rouge National Urban Park is a historic undertaking for the Government of Canada and for Parks Canada. As Canada's first-ever National Urban Park, this new park offers an unprecedented opportunity to support all three priorities of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan, and most especially its *Connecting Canadians to Nature* priority—"to help foster an appreciation for nature and to build a "community of stewards" among Canadians of all ages." Rouge National Urban Park provides exciting possibilities to showcase and share our nation's natural and cultural heritage with Canadians—particularly with new, urban, and young Canadians—and to restore and conserve a diverse range of important and unique ecosystems.

The existence of Rouge National Urban Park is a testament to the passion, persistence, and success of the many people, organizations, and government agencies that came together to protect the Rouge Valley and establish the former Rouge Park. Parks Canada is excited to join this community and dedicate our resources and energies to the creation of what will be Rouge National Urban Park—a true "People's Park." Rouge National Urban Park builds on nearly three decades of committed, collaborative park management. Based on this solid foundation of heritage protection, Rouge supporters should be reassured that there is now one dedicated, experienced organization to manage the park. And with Rouge National Urban Park readily accessible to nearly one-fifth of Canada's population, Parks Canada sees incredible potential for continuing to forge new connections—in stewardship, community engagement and volunteerism—for maintaining this federally-managed landscape. By working together with the people of the GTA, the beauty and health of the park will be enhanced and conserved for Canadians to celebrate and explore for generations to come.







MAP 1: Regional Setting

## The Story of Rouge National Urban Park

The story of Rouge National Urban Park is a truly Canadian story. It spans nearly 10,000 years and offers valuable insights into how these lands provided all the essentials our ancestors—and our country—needed to thrive. From Aboriginal settlements and travel routes, to early pioneer communities and agriculture, to 20th century recreational use, and more recent efforts to transform this place into a park, Rouge National Urban Park is rich in natural and cultural heritage values.

Today, this history is reflected in a unique mosaic of natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes and activities that remain relevant to the fundamentals of healthy, vibrant communities—fresh water, protected green spaces, good quality food, sustainability and social well-being.

More than a repository of Canadian history, Rouge National Urban Park is home to a remarkable mix of iconic landscapes and alluring features. Deep river valleys give way to glacial features, offering a glimpse of the natural forces that sculpted these impressive vistas. More than 1,700 species of plants and animals make their home here, including many rare species. Farms cover more than 50 per cent of the park area, providing both economic opportunities and fresh local produce for the GTA and beyond. And there is a striking array of archaeological sites, built heritage features and cultural landscapes that are both locally important and quintessentially Canadian.

This diversity is one reason why so many residents of the GTA have a connection to this special place—or some story to tell about it. For some, it's their First Nations roots. For others, it's the farms their ancestors tended. For the tens of thousands who visit each year, it is an urban oasis, a place for exploration and renewal. From a refreshing swim at Rouge Beach, to camping under the stars at Glen Rouge Campground, to hiking the park trails, this is one of the

GTA's most loved recreational destinations. These ties have fostered a long tradition of public engagement in the stewardship of what is now Rouge National Urban Park, including ecological restoration activities and research and monitoring of the wildlife species and flora in the park. The determination to conserve and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the park is strong and enduring.

The park's significant contributions to the Rouge River watershed, the headwaters of Duffins and Petticoat creeks, and to the bio-regional ecosystem, also give Rouge National Urban Park an important environmental role that extends far beyond its borders. Still, it is Rouge National Urban Park's tradition of agriculture that contributes greatly to its uniqueness among Canadian protected heritage areas and is integral to its future vitality. There is a determination to continue farming this fertile land, to carry on a way of life that reaches back beyond the settlers of the late 1700s to the First Nations before them. National Urban Park status offers more than the reassurance of permanency for this farming community; it allows park visitors to reconnect with farms and farmers, and provides opportunities to showcase new ways of farming. For all these reasons, this is a place worthy of celebration and preservation.

## The National Conservation Plan and Rouge National Urban Park

Parks Canada and the vast network of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas it manages are major contributors to the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan. Rouge National Urban Park provides a pioneering opportunity for a federally-protected heritage area to contribute to the three priorities of the National Conservation Plan, and advances Parks Canada's mandate of protection, education, and visitor experience in a new and meaningful way. With its unique



blend of nationally-significant natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage—together with its metropolitan location—the park offers exciting, unprecedented opportunities to connect Canadians in our largest city by learning and to help restore and conserve the park, our nation’s past, present, and future, and to its nationwide network of protected heritage areas.

## How National Urban Park Status Enriches the Rouge Valley

The creation of this National Urban Park is not simply a “passing of the torch” that will see Parks Canada take sole responsibility for its heritage and future. Instead, the park’s creation opens up a new and expanded mandate, one that will inspire, inform, enrich, and engage the whole urban community in a celebration of the nature, culture, and agriculture. National Urban Park status will offer:

- A large, strategically-situated park, with a 20 per cent increase in area that achieves the long-desired goal of connecting Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine
- An innovative approach to conservation that enhances the park’s ecosystem health by maintaining and restoring its native Carolinian and mixed-woodland forests, wetland, meadow, and aquatic ecosystems
- An expanded role for visitor experience and interpretation, offering GTA residents and other visitors opportunities to explore more areas of a larger park and to connect with Canada’s many protected heritage areas
- A secure, long-term future for the park’s farming community that will result in agriculturally-based experiences for visitors, as well as more economic opportunities and locally-based food production to benefit the GTA

- Investments in natural resources, cultural resources, and visitor facilities to enhance the health of park ecosystems, as well as the condition and use of the park’s cultural heritage and visitor experience opportunities
- An opportunity to enhance existing relationships and develop new ones that advance park stewardship, the conservation of natural resources and cultural resources, visitor experience, and research and innovation
- A place where Parks Canada’s long-standing commitment to First Nations involvement in protected heritage areas supports the celebration of their culture, collaboration, and future aspirations for the park

With this Management Plan, Parks Canada has a foundation and a vision to maximize the potential of these exciting new opportunities in support of the Government of Canada’s National Conservation Plan.

## Management Plan Overview

### What the Management Plan means for Rouge National Urban Park

The creation of Canada’s first National Urban Park calls for a new management plan that is specifically designed to protect this diverse landscape in the heart of our nation’s largest metropolis. The Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan will guide Parks Canada’s management of the park over a ten-year period.





Built on the principles of accountability, inclusiveness, and collaboration, the plan provides a framework for making decisions and launching initiatives that ensures that all public funds are used in the most effective way for the park's full benefit. Most of all, this plan is a promise that the natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes treasured in Rouge National Urban Park today will be there to explore and enjoy tomorrow.

The Management Plan is a wide-ranging document, with a vision, strategies, objectives, and actions that support natural and cultural resource conservation, visitor experience, external relations, education, agriculture, collaboration with partners, and other topics. It advances a highly inclusive governance structure that invites the entire GTA community to the table—from First Nations to local businesses—to help shape park management decisions. It illustrates the locations of key planned elements such as welcome areas and a conceptual trail system, and offers the community a vision for how the park experience will evolve. Finally, the plan lays out desired outcomes for the park for the first ten years—from its establishment and land transfers through the transition period and the continuing management of the park—along with how these outcomes will be measured so that everyone can monitor progress against goals.

Once this Management Plan is in place, areas of natural, cultural, and agricultural value will be defined, along with more detailed trail alignments. This will lay the foundation to make long-term commitments for the use and protection of the landscape in terms of farm, commercial, and residential leases, asset investments, the conservation of natural and cultural resources, and collaboration related to specific park initiatives. In short, this Management Plan provides a solid framework to guide all implementation activities so that they continually protect and enhance the park.

## Parks Canada's Commitment to Working in Collaboration

More than guiding Parks Canada in the management of the park, the Management Plan will foster a collaborative approach to decision-making for the benefit of everyone who loves, visits, or has strong ties to Rouge National Urban Park.

- *For visitors:* The plan facilitates the building of an enduring emotional connection to the park through meaningful experiences, activities, and stewardship opportunities.
- *For First Nations, stakeholders, partners and volunteers:* The plan sets out a wealth of opportunities for everyone to participate in park management based on their interests.
- *For park lessees:* The plan establishes how lands under lease will contribute to the park's future, provides guidelines for future lease opportunities, and describes the important role lessees will play in park management.
- *For owners of non-park lands inside, traversing and abutting the park:* The plan explores areas of potential mutual interest, such as boundary management, programming, and trail and ecosystem continuity.
- *For other governments:* The plan encourages planning coordination inside and outside Rouge National Urban Park in relation to infrastructure and land use, trail networks, natural and cultural heritage, and ecosystem connectivity.
- *For Canadians:* The plan offers an important opportunity to help implement the Canada-wide priorities of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan (connecting Canadians to nature, restoring Canada's ecosystems, and conserving Canada's lands and waters), and to help communicate national conservation achievements to GTA residents and visitors.





## How the Management Plan was developed

The development of this plan began with the 2011 Throne Speech, when the Government of Canada committed to the creation of Canada's first-ever National Urban Park in the Rouge Valley. Parks Canada then engaged the public in developing a concept for this ambitious new park through an extensive program of stakeholder meetings, a youth workshop, and First Nations engagement in 2011 and early 2012. Following the June 2012 release of the Park Concept document,<sup>1</sup> a second round of public engagement was undertaken, which was summarized in a report released in March 2013.<sup>2</sup> This highly collaborative process, coupled with input from municipal, provincial, and federal departments, and other government agencies, formed the basis for this plan.

Parks Canada drew further ideas and inspiration from the individuals and organizations who dedicated their time and energy to make the former Rouge Park possible, and from the plans they developed and put in place over the park's history for its use and protection. This included conservation authority plans, municipal and regional official plans, and special area plans. Parks Canada has also worked closely with the province of Ontario, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and municipal governments and will continue to do so over the life of this Management Plan to ensure the long-term health of the park.

## Overall Approach of the Management Plan

The Management Plan integrates the four cornerstone elements of the park concept: conserve natural heritage, connect people to nature and history, support a vibrant farming community, and celebrate the cultural heritage character of this special place. Additionally, it embeds the nine guiding principles developed by our partners and stakeholders (see box).

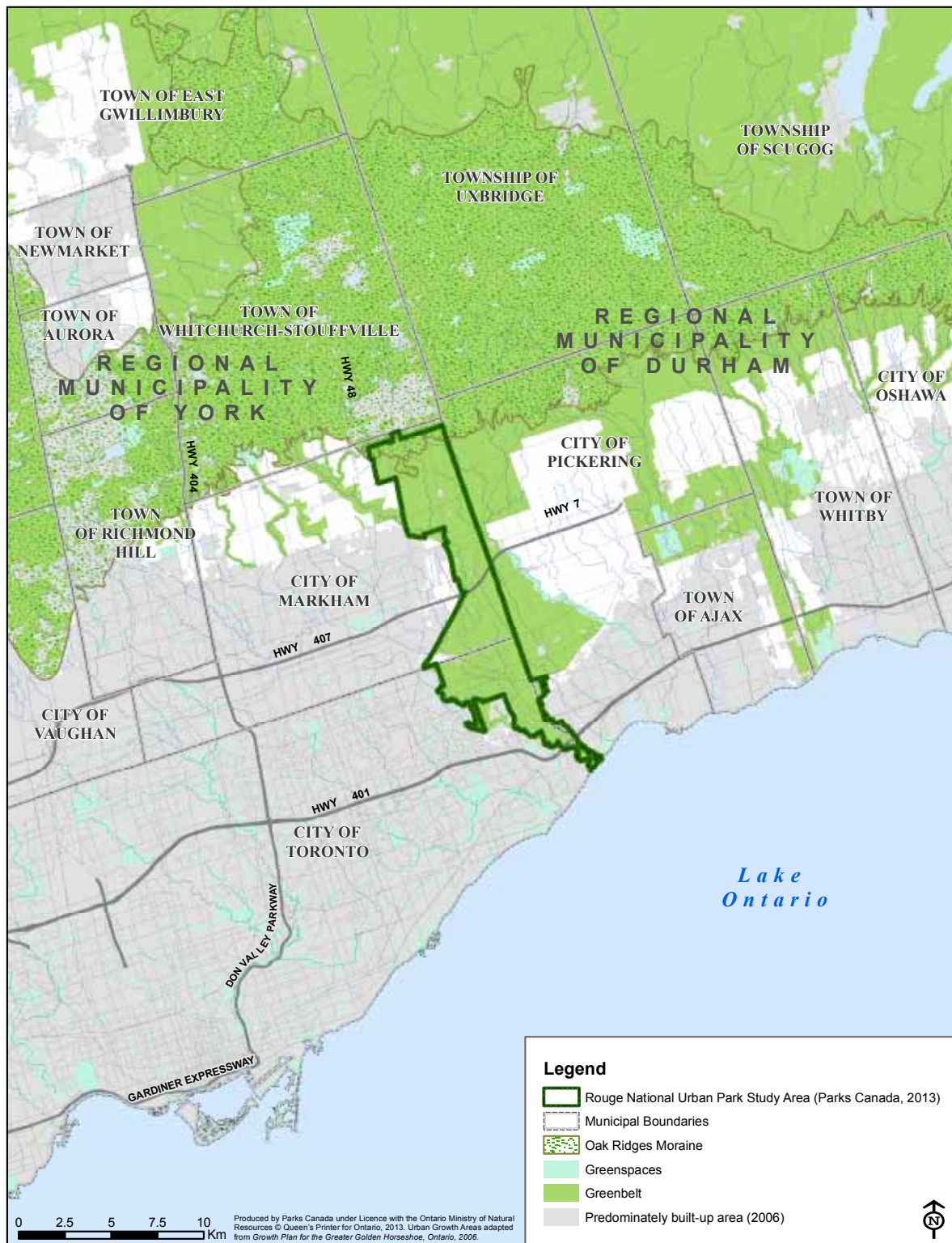
There are many important relationships essential to sustaining Rouge National Urban Park—ones that extend far beyond its physical borders (see Map 2).

### Guiding Principles for Rouge National Urban Park drafted by stakeholders during Concept Development

- Maintain and improve ecological health and scientific integrity
- Respect and support sustainable agriculture and other compatible land uses
- Inspire people to experience this park
- Encourage people (especially youth) to learn and connect with nature
- Foster a culture of community and youth volunteering, engagement, respect and partnership
- Honour diversity, local heritage, cultural inclusiveness ... past, present and future
- Collaborate to ensure multi-modal connectivity and access
- Inclusive, progressive governance led by Parks Canada
- Environmental leadership in park operations

<sup>1</sup> [www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/rouge/rouge1.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/rouge/rouge1.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/rouge/rouge1/rouge4.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/rouge/rouge1/rouge4.aspx)



MAP 2: Bio-regional and Urban Context

These relationships, which are reflected in the plan, include:

- **Natural**—watersheds, bio-regional connections between the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Ontario, and other natural heritage and green space systems
- **Cultural**—traditional travel routes, rural settlement and landscape patterns, and rural hamlets (such as Cedar Grove and Locust Hill)
- **Visitor**—regional trail networks, park access, nearby attractions (such as the Toronto Zoo and Beare Road Park), and protected heritage areas across the GTA, Ontario, and Canada
- **Agricultural**—the larger Greenbelt farm community, farm support services and businesses, urban markets
- **Collaboration, research, and innovation**—involving the public, volunteers, non-governmental organizations, governments, educational institutions, the park farming community, and other lessees in the park that will lead to new approaches to protected area management that benefit heritage resources across Canada
- **First Nations**—who have lived in and used the park landscape for millennia.

The park's strong relationships with its surrounding environment will ensure the continuity of natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes in nearby Greenbelt lands for years to come.

The urban setting that makes Rouge National Urban Park unique brings with it considerable benefits and challenges. Perhaps the biggest benefit is the population base. With one-fifth of Canadians living within easy travel distance of the park, there is a ready network of volunteers with the

will and resources to help protect it. Even so, continued urbanization, construction of infrastructure, and increasing traffic all pose threats to the park's health and connectivity. To reduce those risks—and capitalize on opportunities for positive change—the Management Plan has embraced adaptability in park planning, management, and implementation. This way, the park will thrive, retaining its rich diversity and beauty even as the GTA continues to experience rapid growth and development.

## The Park Boundaries

The Park Study Area, established in 2011 by Parks Canada, was based on the recommendations of the former Rouge Park Alliance 2010 governance report,<sup>3</sup> and served as a basis for discussions with governments and public agencies that owned land within the Study Area. A “Landholders Table” provided a forum for Parks Canada and public landholders to collectively define the general park boundaries and the terms and conditions for the transfer of public lands to Parks Canada.<sup>4</sup> The final configuration and boundaries of the National Urban Park will be confirmed after Parks Canada completes due diligence as set out in agreements signed in 2013 and in 2014.

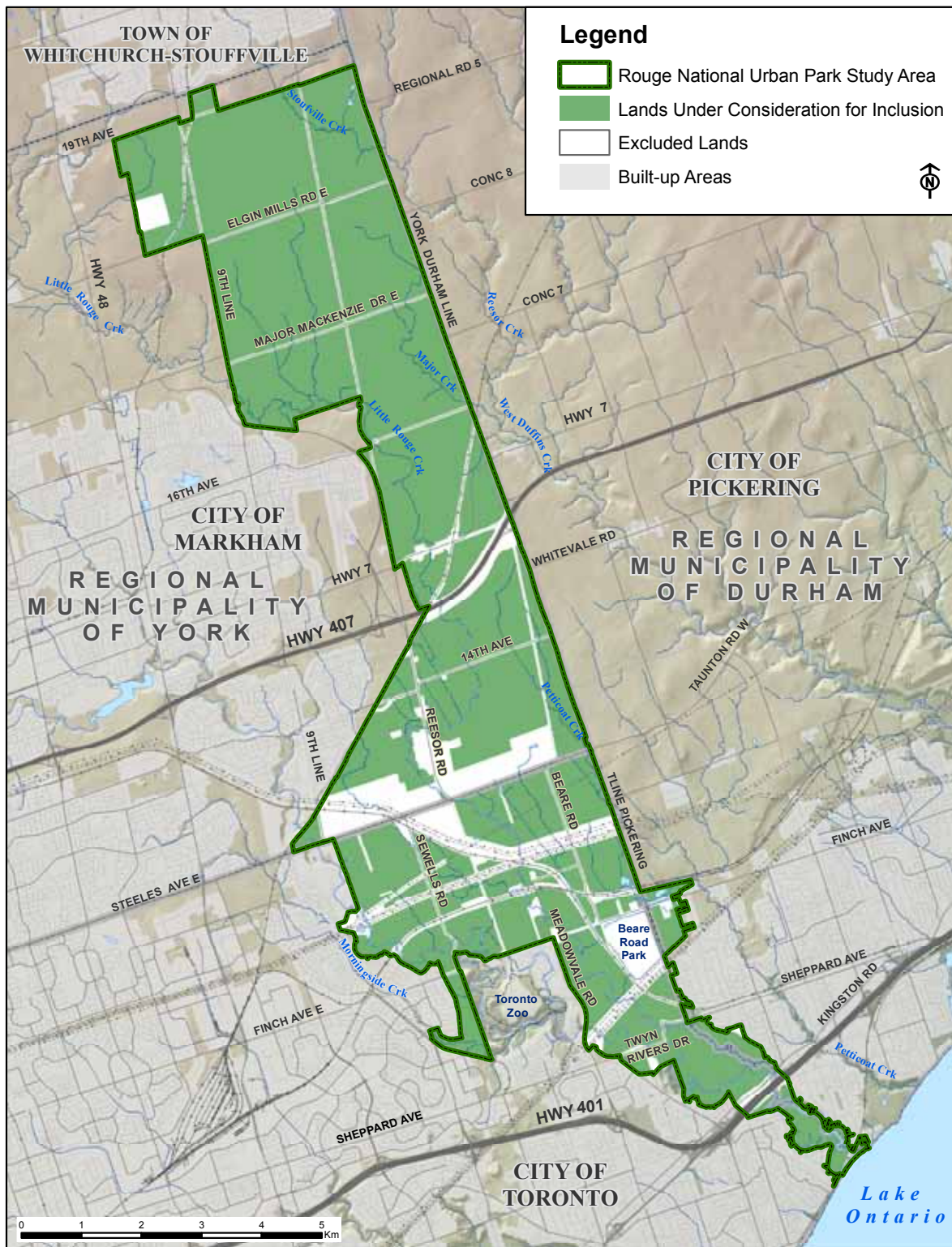
All lands within the Park Study Area identified on Map 3 are included in the park except for the following:

- The hamlets of Cedar Grove and Locust Hill
- Privately-owned lands
- Beare Road Park
- Above-ground provincial, municipal and regional infrastructure (roads and road allowances, railway lines, hydro transmission corridors, storm water management facilities).

<sup>3</sup> [www.rougepark.com/media/pdfs/RP\\_Governance\\_Report\\_by\\_Consultant.pdf](http://www.rougepark.com/media/pdfs/RP_Governance_Report_by_Consultant.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The Landholders Table comprised representatives from Parks Canada, the cities of Toronto, Markham and Pickering, York and Durham regions, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA), and Ontario.





**MAP 3:** Rouge National Urban Park Study Area and Lands Under Consideration for Inclusion



Parks Canada may acquire other lands in the future that are contiguous with the park on a willing-buyer-willing-seller basis, by donation, or by transfer of public lands for nominal value.

## Park Vision and Management Plan Structure

### The Park Vision—A People's Park

*Rouge National Urban Park celebrates and protects, for current and future generations, a diverse landscape in Canada's largest metropolitan area. Linking Lake Ontario with the Oak Ridges Moraine, the park offers engaging and varied experiences, inspires personal connections to its natural beauty and rich history, promotes a vibrant farming community, and encourages us to discover Canada's national treasured places. (Park Concept, 2012)*

This vision sets out a future for Rouge National Urban Park, one that reflects the contributions of many Canadians—First Nations, the general public, stakeholders, and partners. It is a concise and enduring statement of our ambitions for the park, and each element of this vision statement provides the context for the Management Plan's key strategies, objectives, and actions.

**“Celebrates and protects”**—Rouge National Urban Park is a place where all Canadians can enjoy and celebrate the beauty of the Rouge watershed and play an active role in its future. Canadians will contribute to the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems, native wildlife, and ecosystem health, and the conservation of cultural resources vital to the park's future. This will not only make Rouge National Urban Park a true “People's Park,” it will also pave the way for a new degree of public engagement in Canada's heritage treasures.

**“Diverse landscape”**—The park is a rich mosaic of natural, cultural, and agricultural features and values that requires an innovative approach to conservation, visitor experience, and education.

### **“Linking Lake Ontario with the Oak Ridges**

**Moraine”**—Rouge National Urban Park provides a continuous, protected connection between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine. It is the only connection of its kind in the GTA, offering a foundation for improving terrestrial and aquatic connectivity and riparian corridors that are critical to ecosystem health. It also provides continuity with regional, provincial, and national trail systems.

**“Engaging and varied experiences”**—The urban proximity of the park and its wide variety of landscapes and activities holds the potential for a wide range of visitor experiences: from outdoor recreation, to special events, to connecting with the natural and cultural history of the park, to contributing to the protection of its heritage.

**“Inspires personal connections”**—With ready access to Rouge National Urban Park, people living in the GTA have an opportunity to forge strong emotional bonds with this very special place. First Nations also have an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with a landscape that has been a part of their identity and culture for millennia.

**“A vibrant farming community”**—The Rouge has a tradition of farming that reaches back beyond the first European settlers to First Nations. This farming community has made invaluable contributions to the agriculture, health, and economy of the GTA and Ontario, and it will play a vital role in the park's future. Working hand-in-hand with this community, Parks Canada will make farming part of a park vision that embraces natural and cultural heritage protection and visitor experience. This means more long-term opportunities for park farmers to strengthen their family businesses and meet the changing nutritional needs of people throughout the GTA.



**“Discover Canada’s national treasured places”—**

Rouge National Urban Park offers GTA residents and visitors an opportunity to engage with and learn about Canada’s national network of protected heritage areas. It’s a chance to touch their hearts and minds and connect them to our magnificent, sometimes remote, national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas right where they live. With Rouge National Urban Park, they can share—right in their own backyard—that same sense of wonder and discovery that people across Canada experience every day.

**Management Plan Structure**

The four key strategies and park transition strategy that form the foundation of this Management Plan provide a solid direction for protecting and strengthening Rouge National Urban Park in its first decade. They are also intended to focus efforts and resources—both ours and those of our many dedicated partners and volunteers—toward achieving the park vision. The five strategies focus on the following themes:

- 1) To foster a new way of thinking about protected heritage areas and conservation in an urban setting, and to create a gateway to Canada’s protected heritage areas within Canada’s most culturally diverse city
- 2) To achieve a rejuvenated, resilient park with a mosaic of natural landscapes that is conserved and restored, and where natural, cultural, and agricultural values are managed in an integrated manner
- 3) To facilitate the strengthening of existing connections—and the creation of new connections—through experience, learning, and enjoyment
- 4) To create an environment conducive to partnering and engagement
- 5) To guide the former Rouge Park’s transformation into a National Urban Park

The first key strategy provides an overall context for park management, while the following three strategies provide direction for conservation, visitor experience, and collaboration. The park transition strategy guides the former Rouge Park’s transformation into a National Urban Park.

Each strategy features the following:

- An introductory statement and desired outcomes
- Supporting objectives that describe a desired condition at the end of the 10-year life of the Management Plan.

In turn, each objective features:

- A series of actions to guide park managers and plan users
- Targets that will enable the level of progress to be easily measured. Unless otherwise specified, targets are to be achieved by 2024, the end of the 10-year life of this Management Plan. Baseline conditions refer to 2015 unless otherwise indicated.



The strategies, objectives, actions, and targets in this Management Plan have been carefully designed to integrate the delivery of the Parks Canada mandate for protection, education, and visitor experience in a way that takes into account the unique characteristics of the park. The result is a vision for Rouge National Urban Park that will see it inspire a sense of belonging, well-being, and identity among GTA residents—and all Canadians—for years to come.

## PART B: KEY STRATEGIES

### Key Strategy 1: *A Canadian First— Fostering a New Way of Thinking about Protected Heritage Areas in an Urban Setting*

Stretching from the shores of Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, and from Lake Erie to the Arctic Circle, the Parks Canada family of protected heritage areas is as vast as it is diverse. Each of the national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas that comprise our family contribute something fundamental to our understanding of what it means to be Canadian. Our history, our culture, our people—everything we are—is intrinsically tied to these places. They continue to define us and to tell our story. And no two are alike.

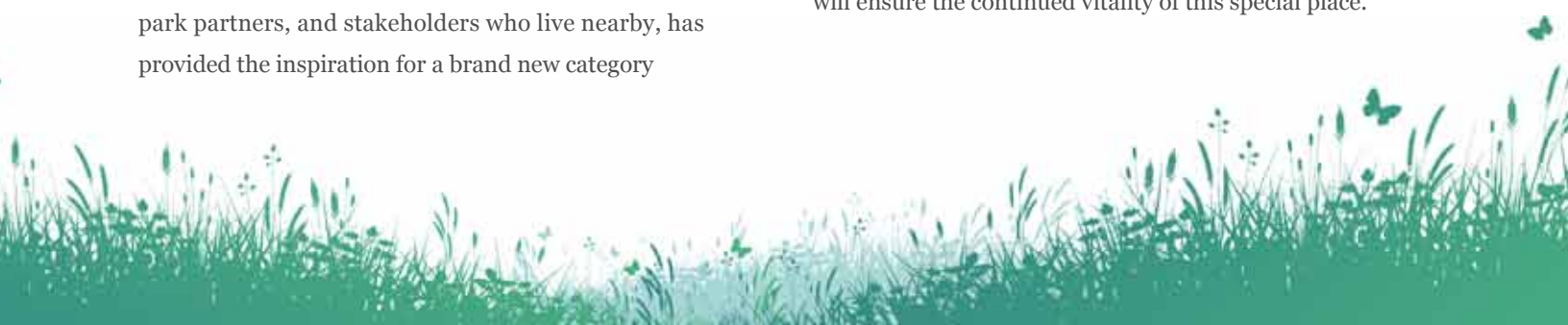
Even with all of this diversity, Rouge National Urban Park stands out among Parks Canada's network of national treasures. It is the newest member of the Park's Canada family—our first-ever national urban park—and marks tangible and immediate progress on the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan. The national urban park's location in the heart of the GTA makes it ideally suited to advance the *Connecting Canadians to Nature* priority. This quality, combined with the park's range of natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes, and the many visitors, park partners, and stakeholders who live nearby, has provided the inspiration for a brand new category

of protected heritage area. Canadians can celebrate and protect this park and further their appreciation of our nation's natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage.

With the creation of the National Urban Park category comes a whole new approach to park management. Defined by its unique mix of natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and as a lived-in landscape, Rouge National Urban Park's setting and features pose opportunities and challenges never before encountered in any other site or place under Parks Canada's protection.

In that spirit, this new model of protected area management embraces an ecosystem health approach that recognizes the park's increasingly urban surroundings and its working farms, major roads, rail lines, and hydro corridors. This dynamic urban and agricultural context has long driven change both within and surrounding the park, and will continue to do so. Parks Canada will manage the park not so much toward a particular end state, but in an adaptive way, so that it remains healthy and strong in the face of changes within and beyond its borders. The protection, conservation, and restoration of the park's natural, cultural and agricultural resources are integral to all decision-making related to park management.

Yet the biggest opportunity for a new approach to protected heritage areas in this urban setting lies in the potential for collaboration. With so many people living near, and within, the boundaries of Rouge National Urban Park, collaboration is not only essential, it also has the potential to connect people to this park and its future to an extent previously unimaginable with other federally-managed public landscapes. From the greater community to the land lessees, everyone can play a role in achieving objectives for the park's natural heritage, agriculture, visitor experience, and cultural heritage. And that will bring new thinking to the table that will ensure the continued vitality of this special place.





The desired outcomes of this strategy are that:

- Rouge National Urban Park contributes tangibly to the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan by connecting Canadians in the GTA to nature, and by furthering their appreciation and understanding of the conservation of lands and waters, ecosystem restoration, and Canada's network of protected heritage areas.
- A unique approach to conservation enhances ecosystem health by way of a harmonious and dynamic mosaic of natural lands that embraces agricultural and cultural landscapes and the presence of people living and working in the park.<sup>5</sup>
- Farming is integrated with other park objectives in a way that supports the park farming community as a permanent and valued part of the park.



MASTER PERSPECTIVE OF A HYPOTHETICAL PARK LANDSCAPE MOSAIC: SMALLER “VIGNETTES” FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE ARE FOUND IN SUBSEQUENT SECTIONS OF THE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN TO ILLUSTRATE SPECIFIC IDEAS

<sup>5</sup> The IUCN protected area management category that best describes the overall park is Category V “where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

[www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap\\_home/gpap\\_quality/gpap\\_pacategories/gpap\\_category5/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_quality/gpap_pacategories/gpap_category5/)



**OBJECTIVE 1: Rouge National Urban Park is a cohesive and evolving mosaic of diverse landscapes, demonstrating national leadership in the management of protected heritage areas in an urban context.**

**Actions**

- Manage the park to enhance ecosystem health by way of an adaptive management approach that focuses on protecting existing ecosystems and restoring, to the greatest extent possible, functioning, resilient ecosystems.
- Manage the park in an integrated fashion so that the protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources, the facilitation of visitor experiences, and the expansion of economic opportunity for the park farming community occurs in a mutually-supportive manner.
- Manage lands under lease for commercial, agricultural, residential, and utility use and those directly managed by Parks Canada to support the achievement and integration of park objectives.
- Engage a broad diversity of park volunteers, stakeholders, partners, and lessees as key contributors to the achievement of the park vision.
- Coordinate the planning and management of the park with other jurisdictions in this rapidly growing urban region, so that the park becomes an even more important and valuable contributor to the social, economic, and natural health of adjacent communities, watersheds, and the larger Greenbelt and region.
- Capitalize on opportunities to implement the Management Plan's long-term vision by:
  - Seeking to implement multiple park objectives in an integrated fashion when making decisions on future land use in the park
  - Designating park lands that become available to further the integration of park objectives for ecosystem health, agriculture, cultural resource conservation, and visitor experience, such as facilitating ecological restoration, consolidating existing farms and welcoming new farms to strengthen and diversify the park's agricultural base, adaptively reusing built heritage for contemporary use, and furthering the development of the park's trail network.



Diversified Farming—Orchard

**Targets**

- The park features a mix of natural, cultural, and agricultural resources.
- The Park contributes to larger watershed objectives.

**OBJECTIVE 2: The concept of a National Urban Park is understood, supported, and celebrated.**

**Actions**

- Highlight the national urban park's role as a contributor to the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan priorities of conserving Canada's lands and waters, restoring Canada's ecosystems, and connecting Canadians to nature.

- Communicate the park's distinctive qualities that require a new protected heritage area category, such as:
  - Urban context and diverse and evolving landscape mosaic of natural and cultural heritage and farming
  - Important role within and contributor to surrounding watersheds
  - Connecting Canadians to our nation's natural, cultural, and farming heritage, through the park's premiere "Learn To" role, its agro- and cultural heritage tourism, and its conservation involvement
  - A lived-in landscape
  - Opportunity for collaboration on research and innovation with a wide range of academic, First Nations, corporate and community partners
- Raise awareness to inspire interest in, visitation to, and stewardship of the Park through promotion that employs a diverse range of media, builds relationships with tourist organizations and GTA attractions, includes attendance at GTA trade, consumer, and community events, and cross-promotes the park with Parks Canada and other protected heritage areas.
- Implement priority Parks Canada national initiatives and programs (e.g., availability of diversified accommodation, youth programs), and use the park as a model to test and showcase new initiatives related to the Parks Canada brand and target audiences.

### Targets

- By 2020, 80 percent of visitors recognize Rouge National Urban Park as a distinct member of the Parks Canada family of protected places.
- The number of virtual contacts with the National Urban Park (e.g., through the Parks Canada website, social media, app downloads) has increased by 40 per cent.

## OBJECTIVE 3: Rouge National Urban Park is a gateway for urban Canadians, encouraging discovery of national conservation initiatives and the network of protected heritage areas in Ontario and across Canada.

### Actions

- Communicate the park's contributions to the National Conservation Plan as well as other NCP conservation initiatives that are relevant to the park.
- Collaborate with other organizations such as First Nations, municipalities, TRCA, Ontario Parks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and other Parks Canada protected heritage areas to showcase protected heritage areas, practices, achievements, national heritage celebrations (such as Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday), and commemorations.
- Be a lead contributor to the delivery of Parks Canada's urban outreach strategy by:
  - Encouraging GTA residents, especially new Canadians, youth, and young families, to visit the park, to become stewards of the park, to be inspired to visit other protected heritage areas, and to build their awareness of and support for Parks Canada
  - Delivering national initiatives (e.g., Xplorer, oTENTik<sup>6</sup> accommodation) to reach these new audiences by promoting and cross-promoting, branding, undertaking outreach, advertising, and cultivating relationships with the tourism industry
- Recognize and affiliate natural areas and green spaces in municipalities adjacent to Rouge National Urban Park, and celebrate the park's gateway role to the Rouge watershed and the Greenbelt through trail linkages, park programming, signage, and multimedia.

<sup>6</sup> Xplorer is a program aimed at engaging children at Parks Canada protected heritage areas by way of a booklet filled with fun activities that guides their discovery of each unique place they visit. oTentik is a permanent structure, a cross between a rustic A-frame cabin and a rustic tent.

- Promote and market the park as Parks Canada’s premiere “learn to” park, introducing new, urban, and young Canadians to nature, culture, and agriculture in a “classroom without walls” that includes hands-on outdoor activities such as guided hikes, camping, farm visits, workshops, seminars, and conservation camps.

#### Target

- On average, 80 per cent of park visitors feel they learned something about protected heritage areas in Ontario and across Canada.

## Key Strategy 2: *A Dynamic, Cohesive Rouge—Managing Change in Support of a Healthy and Resilient Park Landscape*

Rouge National Urban Park has been witness to millennia of change. This change has occurred through evolving climate, hydrology, geology, and soils—and their interactions with flora and fauna. It has also occurred through the movement, settlement, and changing uses of the land by people—from the First Nations, to early European settlers, to urbanization, to the community that came together to create the former Rouge Park. Now, as the park begins a new era, it is important to understand these changes and how they have contributed to the rich natural and cultural heritage found here.

The natural changes that shaped this park created a great diversity of vegetation and geological features comprising a range of ecosystems from the rare Carolinian forest to the Oak Ridges Moraine. The assemblage of forests, wetlands, streams, watercourses, fields, and meadows that has evolved provides welcome habitat for many wildlife species,

including several species-at-risk. As these ecosystems have evolved, so too has our ability to understand and manage them in a way that recognizes and respects their different ages, types, and rates of change. Today, Parks Canada and our partners embrace overlapping scales of ecosystems, from small streams and woodlots, to the watershed, to the bio-regional mosaic.

Meanwhile, thousands of years of human movement, settlement, and use have also left an indelible imprint on this land. Consider the park’s farming community. Though it retains a strong connection to its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century European roots, the community has evolved considerably in how it tends the land. These farms are increasingly driven by technology, principles of sustainability, and the demands of expanding urban communities nearby. There is recognition that the future potential of these farms is tied to the protection of natural and cultural heritage, visitor connection, and the evolving needs of those nearby communities.

This legacy of change continues with the creation of Rouge National Urban Park—the next evolutionary step in the management of this special landscape. By renewing and maintaining its ecological functions, structure, cultural heritage, and its fertile soil, Parks Canada will ensure that Rouge National Urban Park continues to sustain the plants and animals that live here while providing a solid foundation for long-term farming and compelling visitor experiences. This strategy integrates the three priorities of the Government of Canada’s National Conservation Plan by conserving and restoring the park’s natural heritage in a way that connects Canadians to nature. This strategy also works to conserve cultural heritage, to conserve the park’s soils for farming, and to engage the farming community in maximizing ecosystem health. These efforts will be undertaken in an integrated manner, and will help all facets of the park adapt in the face of changes, such as climate





change, continued urbanization, and the evolution of agricultural markets. Through integrated management and public stewardship, the ecosystems, agriculture, and cultural heritage of Rouge National Urban Park will endure and thrive.

This strategy promotes a strong understanding of trends in the park's condition as a basis for identifying, facilitating, and integrating desired change that conserves its abundant and diverse natural, cultural, and agricultural resources. The objectives promote adaptive management that capitalizes on opportunities to strengthen the park, and recognizes its lived-in nature, the changes taking place beyond its borders, and the crucial role that the greater community can play in safeguarding its future. It will ensure that the changes that unfold over the coming years serve to enhance the health and resilience of this landscape, and the natural and cultural heritage that make it nationally significant.

The desired outcomes of this strategy are:

- A high level of adaptability and resilience in the park's natural ecosystems, cultural heritage, and agricultural systems.
- A high level of functionality for the park that contributes to the larger natural, cultural, economic, and social value of the watersheds and region in which it sits.

### **OBJECTIVE 1: The health and resilience of the park's ecosystems and cultural resources are enhanced through conservation.**

#### **Actions**

- Apply Parks Canada Principles and Guidelines for Ecological Restoration in Canada's Protected Natural Areas<sup>7</sup> that are consistent with the following three International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) principles for the restoration of protected areas:

◦ *Effective* ecological restoration is restoration that re-establishes and maintains protected area values by:

- Enhancing the health and resilience of terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems within the park, including a mosaic of appropriate habitats to serve a wide variety of wildlife species, to increase the amount of underrepresented native habitats, and to protect, enhance, and connect natural areas
- Focusing on restoring hydrological functions, protecting water quality, and undertaking small-scale enhancement of wildlife habitat on farmlands in the rural portions of the park
- Undertaking restoration interventions as formal "field experiments"—to learn and adapt practice.



Hedgerows, contour plowing, smaller farm plots, ponds, trails within natural corridors respecting farming

◦ *Efficient* ecological restoration is restoration that maximizes beneficial outcomes while minimizing the cost in time, resources and effort by:

- Identifying restoration criteria and priorities (used to choose and evaluate projects) that encompass the integrated delivery of park objectives, relationship building, and public engagement.

<sup>7</sup> [www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/guide/resteco/index\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/guide/resteco/index_e.asp)



- o *Engaging* ecological restoration is restoration that collaborates with partners and stakeholders, promotes participation and enhances visitor experience by:
  - Working with government and non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, and volunteers to implement restoration projects
  - Implementing elements of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resource's 2011 draft Fisheries Management Plan for the Rouge River that apply within the park.
- Protect and conserve species-at-risk through a multi-species, ecosystem approach that:
  - o Continues to meet the legal and conservation obligations for the protection and recovery of species under the *Species at Risk Act*
  - o Assesses the conservation status of federally and provincially listed species-at-risk at the park level, as well as establishes and implements priority conservation activities<sup>8</sup> that support the recovery of species-at-risk in the park
  - o Applies standardized methods to characterize and evaluate threats (e.g., as developed by the IUCN and The Conservation Measures Partnership)
  - o Where appropriate, involves communities in and around the park in species recovery, monitoring, and habitat restoration, including the park farming community in the integration of beneficial management practices on agricultural lands that sustain species-at-risk.
- Identify, conserve, and communicate the cultural heritage values of the park, including such cultural resources as buildings and engineering works, archaeological sites,

and cultural landscapes, as well as heritage values, such as community values, traditions, and stories of past and present inhabitants, by:

- o Encouraging various uses of cultural resources in ways that will support public enjoyment and their long-term conservation, based on the principles of understanding heritage value, sustainable conservation and benefit to Canadians (as set out in Parks Canada's Cultural Resource Management Policy)<sup>9</sup>
- o Working closely with park lessees and communities to identify the value and conserve the character-defining elements of cultural heritage in the park, as well as to integrate them with other park objectives



Built Heritage and trail integrated with visitor experience and natural heritage

- o Setting priorities for cultural resource management by considering: Parks Canada's corporate direction, park historical themes, heritage value, physical condition and threats to condition, adaptive re-use, visitor experience potential, importance to Aboriginal people and local communities, and program and financial return for required investment

<sup>8</sup> Species-at-risk in the park are found in a wide range of park habitats, including wetlands, meadows, grasslands, forests, leased agricultural lands, and cultural resource areas.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/poli/grc-crm/index.aspx#grc-crm>

- In collaboration with First Nations, preparing a Commemorative Integrity Statement for Bead Hill National Historic Site that provides a first step in understanding and integrating the site's protection requirements and interpretive potential, as well as presents the story of the Toronto Carrying Place National Historic Event.

### Targets

- Aquatic and terrestrial connectivity in the park is improved by 2024
- At least three restoration activities are undertaken annually, and by 2024 are completed in the following environments: farmland, riparian zone, aquatic, forest, meadow/open habitat, wetland
- Conditions suitable for cold water species in and beyond headwater streams are improved and expanded
- All known archaeological sites and cultural artifacts are recorded and protected
- The condition ratings of built heritage and cultural landscapes in the park is improved

## **OBJECTIVE 2: A sustainable, vital park lessee community is built on community relationships, economic viability, diversification, and environmental stewardship.**

### Actions

- Support the continuation of current farming operations in the park while gradually introducing a range of diversified agricultural operations.
- Implement a comprehensive long-term leasing strategy that establishes a greater sense of security for the park farming community and facilitates innovative approaches to achieve mutual benefits for farming, the park, and Parks Canada.



Community garden, traditional farming, and trails

- Set clear expectations by mutual agreement in new agricultural and commercial leases that contribute to the integrated delivery of the Parks Canada mandate in the conservation of natural and cultural resources, visitor experience, and education.
- Establish priorities for commercial leases to provide services to park visitors and local residents and to facilitate meaningful visitor experiences and educational opportunities that are aligned with the park character and mandate.
- Facilitate ways for people to live and work in the park to enhance their livelihoods, promote a sense of park community, and support integrated park goals by:
  - Encouraging farmers to live in the park by attaching residential leases to farm leases, where appropriate
  - Recognizing the cultural heritage of the families that have been farming in the area and encouraging new farmers to make similar connections to the land
  - Collaborating with local farmers, local farm groups, and municipalities to pursue opportunities for small-scale business ventures that are appropriate to the character of the park and that provide services or education to park visitors
  - Allowing some residential units to be used for “cottage industry” type commercial operations.

- Parks Canada will promote sustainability and resilience in park farming by:
  - Nurturing community relationships between the park, the larger Greenbelt farming community, and adjacent expanding urban area markets to strengthen the economic and cultural bonds between local farms, local food suppliers, and local communities
  - Facilitating diversified farming and associated agri-tourism opportunities through community-based agricultural models, including incubator programs, community-shared agriculture, and community gardens, when and as lands become available.
- Implement beneficial management practices<sup>10</sup> on park farmland by:
  - Requiring farm implementation plans in new leases to carry out the rural landscape plan at the farm level and to integrate farm operations with beneficial management practices, ecosystem improvements, and other park objectives
  - Providing in-kind support, such as staff assistance, links to outside expertise, and encouragement for park farmer participation in third-party grant programs
  - Promoting agricultural research and innovation in the park.

### Targets

- Increase in the diversity of farm types, sizes, and crops grown in the park.
- All lands under agricultural lease are actively farmed using beneficial management practices.
- At least one incubator farm or community-shared agriculture operation is established by 2017.

### OBJECTIVE 3: A dynamic, adaptive management system facilitates well-informed decision-making to improve the health and resilience of the park's natural, cultural, and agricultural resources.

#### Actions

- Continually update and build upon the solid base of information established by previous park administrations.
- Implement a sustainable monitoring and reporting program for natural, cultural, and agricultural resources that:
  - Uses indicators, supporting measures, thresholds, and targets
  - Considers various sources of scientific and community-based knowledge, accommodates different ways of knowing and learning, and involves communities (e.g., First Nations, park farming community, park users, volunteers) in the monitoring of the park's natural, cultural, and agricultural resources
  - Evaluates the conservation status of, and trends in, the park's natural resources and the effectiveness of management actions (e.g., restored native vegetation communities, riparian cover targets, water quality, soil conservation, landscape connectivity)
  - Monitors and reports on cultural resources of national historic significance and of other heritage value, including buildings and engineering works, landscapes and landscape features, archaeological sites, and objects
  - Monitors and reports on the implementation and effectiveness of the park leasing strategy, including the visitor experience and ecological contributions of agricultural lands (e.g., beneficial management practices)

<sup>10</sup> Beneficial management practices are science-based farming activities designed to help minimize potential environmental impacts such as sediment and nutrient runoff into water bodies. Watershed Evaluation of Beneficial Management Practices (WEBs), South Nation, Ontario, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, January, 2008. <https://archive.org/details/watershedevaluat10314cana>

- o Measures the level and effectiveness of public engagement in natural and cultural resource monitoring, conservation, restoration, and stewardship.
- Develop a rural landscape plan in consultation with lessees, stakeholders, and partners to understand and guide the dynamic integration of nature, culture, and agriculture in the predominantly agricultural portions of the park. This plan will recognize that part of the heritage value of the park is found in its continued use and evolution over time as a lived-in landscape.<sup>11</sup>
- Ensure the park contributes to watershed and regional ecosystem objectives of other levels of government by:
  - o Establishing park-focused targets in relation to larger watershed and regional initiatives, as well as supporting the achievement of these targets in ecological restoration programs<sup>12</sup>
  - o Facilitating TRCA and other regional ecosystem health monitoring in the park (e.g., water quality)
  - o Ensuring that Parks Canada's park monitoring protocols are shared with other agencies, such as TRCA and the Ontario ministries of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Assess proposals for new activities, facilities, land uses, long-term agreements, and other interventions as required in terms of their support of park objectives through an Activity Assessment Framework (see sidebar), supported by park data, monitoring information, and cultural resource management and environmental assessments.

### Targets

- The full suite of monitoring, reporting, and assessment tools is guiding park management decisions by 2017.
- Park monitoring is able to detect current conditions and trends within five years following park establishment.

The following criteria will guide the application of the Activity Assessment Framework.

**Respect the Character of the Rouge**—recognizing the unique natural and cultural character and resources of the park and its vibrant farming community.

**Respect Natural and Cultural Resource Protection Goals** by:

- Contributing to more than one plan objective
- Respecting and supporting the direction of this Management Plan
- Being consistent with Parks Canada's mandate for protection, education and visitor experience
- Demonstrating compatibility with current provincial policies.

**Facilitate Opportunities for Outstanding Visitor**

**Experiences**—that are safe, stimulating, and contribute to a strong sense of connection to the park's natural, cultural and agricultural landscapes and to protected heritage areas.

**Enrich Public Understanding and Appreciation**—of protected heritage areas, as well as foster support of, and active involvement in, stewardship.

**Value and Involve Local Communities & First Nations**—in helping them shape proposals they may have for activities in the park, as well as in consultations relating to major park decisions.

<sup>11</sup> See Part C, Transition Objective 3 for details.

<sup>12</sup> At the time of the Management Plan's approval these included: the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, TRCA's Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy, the Rouge River Watershed Plan, the Fisheries Management Plan for Rouge River, A Watershed Plan for Duffins and Carruthers Creek, and the Petticoat Creek Watershed Action Plan.



## Key Strategy 3: *A Connected and Relevant Rouge—Forging Emotional and Physical Connections with the Park*

Connections are vital for all Canadians, not just our connections with each other, but our connections to our vast and diverse landscapes and heritage. These connections not only foster a sense of community or belonging; they give Canadians a sense of identity and a sense of national pride.

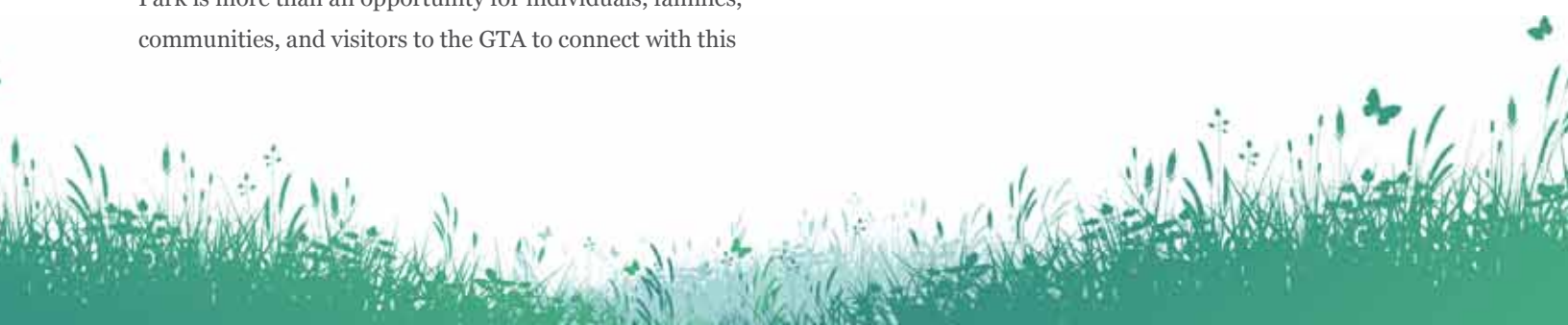
Parks Canada plays an important role in fostering these connections through our network of national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas. These are the places that unite and define Canadians—places that are intrinsically tied to our history, our sense of self, and the pride that comes from being able to call ourselves Canadian.

Rouge National Urban Park offers an opportunity to forge emotional and physical connections between Canadians and our natural and cultural heritage in a way never before possible: in the midst of Canada's largest metropolitan area. The park thus plays an important role in the *Connecting Canadians to nature* priority of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan. The GTA's large and diverse population holds the potential for expanded visitor interests and stewardship possibilities for Parks Canada's family of protected heritage areas—thus furthering the other two priorities of the National Conservation Plan, conserving Canada's lands and waters, and restoring Canada's ecosystems. In this way, the creation of Rouge National Urban Park is more than an opportunity for individuals, families, communities, and visitors to the GTA to connect with this

special place; it is an opportunity to connect them to all of Canada's protected heritage areas in innovative ways, both in person and 'virtually.'

Parks Canada is committed to ensuring every visitor to Rouge National Urban Park will be able to enjoy and explore its full range of experiences and benefits regardless of background, economic means, health, or fitness. Technology and other innovative approaches will help build emotional connections with this park that reach far beyond its borders, creating not only public awareness of its many features, but also strong support that provides for its stewardship and its future. Our hope is that by creating these connections, by engaging people in the protection of this space, thousands of GTA residents will start a personal journey of discovery that extends from Rouge National Urban Park to the natural beauty, historic sites, and shared heritage that define and unite Canada and Canadians.

Other important connections must be made to ensure the sustainability of the newest member of the Parks Canada family. Re-establishing the ecological and trail connections that have facilitated the movement of fauna, flora, and people between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine for millennia will ensure the continued health of the park. It also offers the potential for visitor experiences, learning, and stewardship that promote a better understanding of how our relationship with the park's landscapes has evolved from First Nations occupation to today. In fostering that understanding, there is an opportunity to deepen emotional connections to Rouge National Urban Park that results in return visits, a new generation of park stewards to safeguard it, and strong bonds among visitors. And once these connections form, the possibilities for the park, for the GTA, and for Canada's other heritage treasures are virtually limitless.



The desired outcomes of this strategy are:

- The majority of visitors feel an emotional connection to Rouge National Urban Park.
- Parks Canada's target markets (i.e., youth and new Canadians) comprise a growing proportion of park visitors and outreach audiences.
- Continuous ecological and trail connections facilitate wildlife and visitor movement between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Visitors, outreach audiences, and stakeholders from inside and outside the GTA feel a new and strengthened connection to the park.**

**Actions**

- Use social science research to better understand park visitors and outreach audiences, with a focus on the GTA and target audiences such as youth and new Canadians, in order to:
  - Support the park's role as a lead contributor in the delivery of Parks Canada's urban outreach strategy
  - Identify visitor opportunities that fit the character of the Rouge and appeal to current and potential visitors
  - Connect Canadians to the park and the national system of protected heritage areas.
- Identify and work with key organizations that are influential within priority visitor markets and outreach audiences in the GTA.
- Address all stages of the trip cycle (i.e., wishing, planning, travelling, arriving, visiting, departing, and remembering) in the services offered in the park, in outreach activities, and in Parks Canada's interactions with current and potential visitors.
- Continually explore the use of new technologies that enhance the ability of Canadians—and in particular

youth—to experience the park both remotely and in person, to enable them to share their experiences, stories, and interactions with Parks Canada and other visitors, and to avail themselves of park stewardship opportunities.

- Explore opportunities for providing multilingual services to park visitors and outreach audiences, as practical.

**Targets**

- On average, 60 per cent of visitors indicate they learned about the natural, cultural, or agricultural heritage of Rouge National Urban Park.
- The number of visits to the park has increased.
- The number of virtual contacts with the National Urban Park (e.g., through the Parks Canada website, social media, app downloads) has increased by 40 per cent.
- The number of on and off-site events and programs involving youth, new Canadians, and GTA residents has increased.

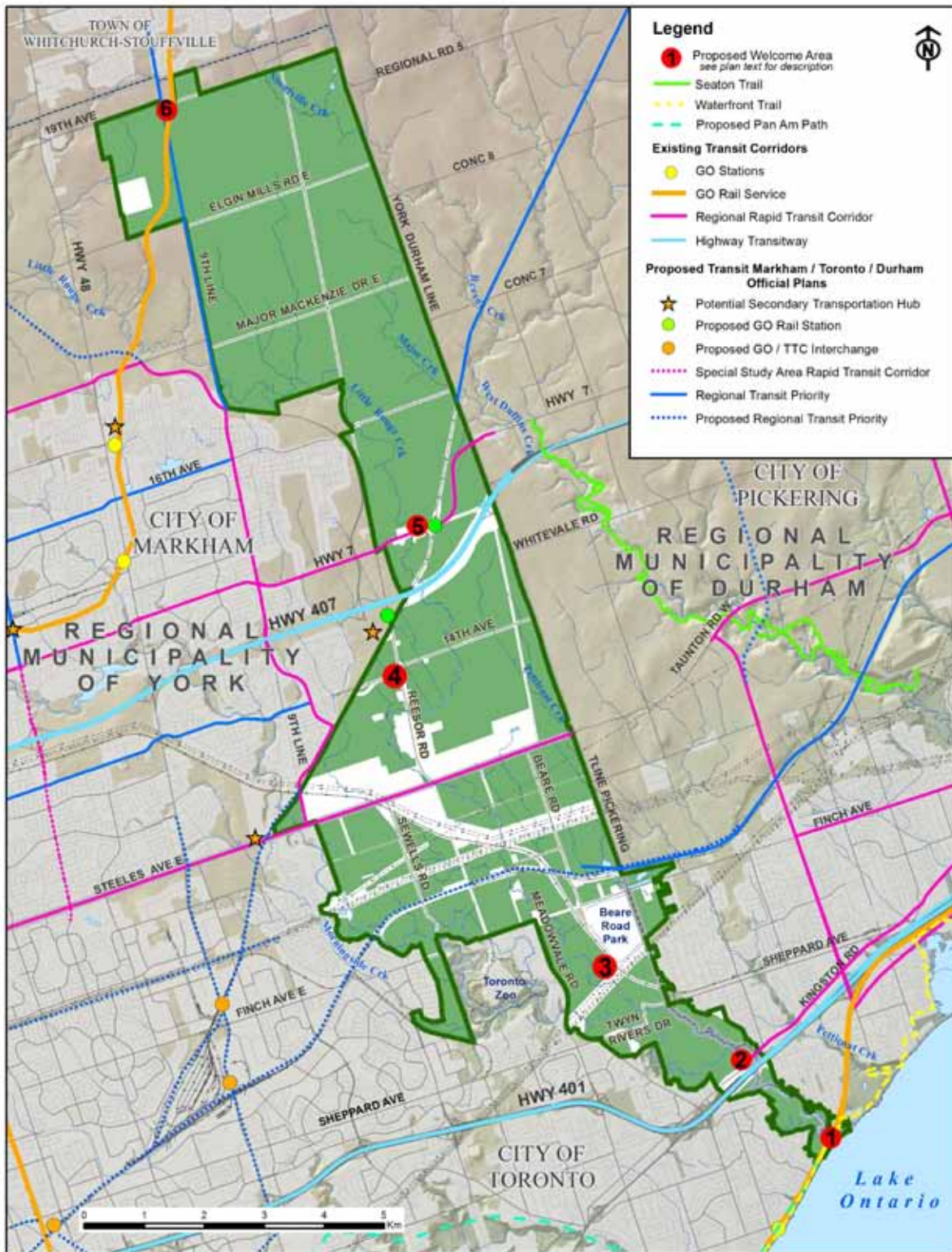
**OBJECTIVE 2: The park's welcome areas offer visitors a warm arrival and are accessible by various means.**

**Actions (see Map 4):**

- Work with partners to support convenient transportation options to the park from local communities and natural areas and green spaces in Toronto, Pickering, and Markham, the Toronto Zoo and Beare Road Park, and other parts of the GTA by way of:
  - Wayfinding and free “how to get there” mobile applications
  - Transit, bike lane, trail, and park shuttle networks that lead to and from the park's welcome areas
  - Car pooling options at Rouge National Urban Park parking lots.







MAP 4: Park Access and Welcome Areas



- Create a sense of arrival to the park via a network of “welcome areas” that provide a stepping off point for park discovery and include transit access, connections to the trail network, short interpretive loop trails, non-personal assistance and interpretation, parking, sun and shade shelter, picnic and washroom facilities. (Refer to Map 4 for numbered locations.)

- **Primary welcome areas** feature Parks Canada staff/volunteers, interpretive media, activity booking, and serve as a vital community asset

3 Between the Toronto Zoo and Beare Road Park:

- Explore the offer/request by the City of Toronto for a joint facility with the Toronto Zoo that could offer a multipurpose theatre/multimedia exhibits, educational centre, meeting/gathering space, park offices and storage (following an environmentally-friendly building design competition and community involvement in design and programming)

4 Bob Hunter Memorial Park/Cedar Grove:

- Capitalizes on trail and parking investments to connect to the park-wide trail network
- Features a potential gathering area and a Markham gateway (e.g., Markham Secondary transit hub)
- Offers programming and visitor services links to Cedar Grove (e.g., Lapps Cider Mill, food service) and Cedarena (e.g., winter programming)

- **Secondary welcome areas**, from south to north:

- 1 Beach Area: southern gateway to park, launching point for water trails, recapitalized building, marsh restoration
- 2 Campground area: recapitalized campground buildings, permanent camping structures (oTENTiks), kayak/canoe launch, interpretation of Bead Hill National Historic Site



Welcome area (parking/bus drop-off, trailhead/orientation, picnic shelter, interpretive loop trail, small amphitheatre, washrooms)

- 5 Locust Hill Area: future GO Transit gateway to the park and trail network, featuring adaptive reuse of existing buildings, agricultural focus, possible use of area to the north of Highway 7 near park east limits as an event area/group camping

- 6 North Area: an agriculturally-focused hub acting as a Stouffville gateway, featuring a farmers market, interpretation of park farming heritage, preferred welcome area for horseback riding

- Enhance the sense of place and park identity through boundary and other signage, avenue plantings in rural landscapes, virtual means (such as GPS) and other ways.

### Targets

- The proportion of park visitors arriving at and exploring the park by non-automobile means is increasing.
- On average, 90 per cent of visitors are satisfied with the options available to get to the park.
- An increasing number of visitors enter the park at welcome areas.
- On average, 90 per cent of visitors are satisfied with welcome areas.
- On average, 90 per cent of visitors are satisfied with their level of orientation to and in the park.

**OBJECTIVE 3: An evolving and diverse spectrum of activities and experiences enables visitors to develop personal connections with the park in a safe environment.**

**Actions**

- Maintain and/or improve current activities, such as walking, hiking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching, swimming, fishing, interpretation, nature observation/photography, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and on-leash dog walking.
- Assess and introduce cycling, cross-country mountain biking, geocaching, and horse-back riding in selected areas of the park, as well as assess new recreational activities using the assessment framework described in Strategy 2, Objective 1.
- Ensure visitor opportunities and services accommodate a wide range of physical and other accessibility challenges and are generally available across all sections of the park.
- Facilitate an enhanced range of group activities aligned with park objectives with a particular focus on connecting youth and new Canadians to the park by:
  - Fostering cultural exchange through such activities as arts, cultural, and music events (e.g., “silent” concerts<sup>13</sup>), charity and corporate events, seasonal celebrations, group picnicking and citizenship ceremonies
  - Connecting to nature through such activities as environmental stewardship, ecosystem restoration, and monitoring (e.g., the Bioblitz<sup>14</sup>)
  - Connecting to food production through such activities as outdoor farmers markets, farm tours, festivals, and outdoor workshops
  - Taking advantage of the park’s welcome areas, as well as areas suited for public gatherings and events, such as the Woodlands area and the former Twyn Rivers ski hill.
- Augment overnight accommodation by:
  - Recapitalizing and facilitating accessible accommodation for people with disabilities at Glen Rouge Campground
  - Using Parks Canada’s Learn to Camp program and introducing oTENTik camping accommodation
  - Establishing a camping area in the north end of the park in collaboration with the City of Markham
  - Considering more remote camping, such as hike-in camp areas and other accommodation opportunities along the trail network, to encourage multi-day experiences in the park
  - Facilitating third-party operated opportunities, such as farm stays and bed & breakfasts
  - Encouraging third-party provision of overnight accommodation in areas next to the park, such as Cedar Grove and Locust Hill.
- Guide history-based programming using the themes of First Nations presence, Euro-Canadian settlement, transportation corridors and infrastructure, urbanization/suburbanization, the emergence of environmentalism, recreation, food, and the evolutionary development of the park landscape across these eras.
- Facilitate traditional and innovative educational opportunities that appeal to a wide variety of urban residents’ interests, such as workshops on park stewardship, restoration, monitoring, and farming and food through collaboration with educational institutions, non-governmental organizations; and the park lessee and volunteer communities.

<sup>13</sup> Silent concerts broadcast electronically and are available only through headphones.

<sup>14</sup> An intensive bio-inventory event during which volunteers attempt to record all species of fauna and/or flora in a designated area.

- Make the Markham Museum one of the National Urban Park's museums of record and establish other museums of record, as needed, in the cities of Toronto, Pickering, and Whitchurch-Stouffville.
- Facilitate opportunities for park visitors and local communities to connect with the park farming community to learn about, discover, and celebrate farming, local food and the park's agricultural heritage through facilities, education programs, and agri-tourism experiences, including:
  - Establishing a program that offers food grown in the park for sale to local communities and park visitors
  - Engaging local communities to become involved in growing food (such as new crops) and helping to steward the park's agricultural resources through such initiatives as community-shared agriculture, incubator farms, community gardens, and volunteering
  - Facilitating the distribution of food to low income neighbourhoods
  - Encouraging farmers to provide educational opportunities for visitors such as workshops, mentoring and volunteering
  - Encouraging the use of locally grown food in park visitor experience activities and events
  - Exploring the potential for one or more farmers markets in the park. Feasible locations could be Lapps Cider Mill building on Reesor Road in Cedar Grove, the community use area just east of Locust Hill or as part of a welcome area.
- Plan for visitor safety and prevention training for staff and volunteers to promote visitor experiences that are safe and that respect park resources and the experiences of other visitors.

### Targets

- On average, 60 per cent of visitors indicate they learned about the natural, cultural, or agricultural heritage of Rouge National Urban Park.
- On average, 90 per cent of visitors enjoyed their visit.
- The number of accommodation spaces and options for park visitors increases over time.
- On average, 85 per cent of visitors consider the park is meaningful to them.
- Increased number of farms involved in direct sale of agricultural products to local markets.
- Five-year trend in safety shows a decline in accidents and other reportable incidents as a proportion of annual visitation.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: Park users of different backgrounds and abilities move easily through the park via a connected network encompassing different travel modes.**

#### Actions (see Map 5)

- Explore the feasibility and utility of a park shuttle that connects areas within the park (such as welcome areas) with links to public transportation hubs (such as GO/subway stations). Also consider a community bicycle program.
- Connect welcome areas, parking, transit, the hamlets of Cedar Grove and Locust Hill, and trails and cycling routes beyond the park with a trail system that facilitates interaction for visitors of all types and abilities with areas of natural and cultural significance, vistas, and areas of key visitor experience.
- Use the trail network as an opportunity to support natural and cultural heritage objectives that help to connect people to the park by:







- Integrating, interpreting, and showcasing built heritage and cultural landscapes in the trail network by, for example, referencing First Nations travel routes and past stewardship of the land and early Euro-Canadian settler use and adaptation of Rouge area trails
- Facilitating access to visitor-oriented commercial businesses in the park
- Developing self-guided tours for various travel modes using traditional and digital media.
- Apply Parks Canada design and management standards and industry best practices to achieve sustainable trail use, natural and cultural resource protection and education, and visitor enjoyment by:
  - Using Parks Canada's Trail Classification system to create trail types (from surfaced to natural surface trails) that feature different difficulty levels, serve different user groups, facilitate sustainable four-season use, and allow for single-use and multi-use trail opportunities
  - Providing clear and concise trail information through Parks Canada branding, signage (way-finding, trailhead, presentation, visitor safety, interpretation), maps, mobile applications, web, and welcome areas
  - Supporting the needs of a diversity of trail users through the appropriate design of facilities (parking lots, washrooms, picnic areas and shade/rain shelters, etc.)
  - Relocating trails away from erosion prone areas and steep slopes, and by improving the safety of road and rail crossings (such as the crossing at Twyn Rivers Drive).
- Provide an opportunity for collaboration in advancing sustainable park user transportation by:
  - Creating partnering arrangements to help integrate the various transportation networks serving park users; to create, enhance, maintain, and manage the trail network, as well as to assist in educational programming in these networks
  - Working with the park activities and experiences working group to help guide park user movement within the park (e.g., trail management, accessibility for people with disabilities, farm machinery movement)
  - Working with the Trans Canada Trail and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust to maximize synergies of their trail networks outside the park with the park trail network
  - Working with the park farming community to identify transportation/access improvements for agricultural practices.

### Targets

- On average, 90 per cent of park visitors are satisfied with the range of options for moving through the park.
- On average, 90 per cent of visitors are satisfied with their trail experience.

### **OBJECTIVE 5: Visitor experience is enriched by a Park trail network that supports ecosystem connectivity and health, cultural heritage conservation, and park farming.**

### Actions

- Recognize and work across different spatial, functional, and temporal scales to form a more continuous, diverse, and functional mosaic of park ecosystems, ranging from local ecosystem connectivity, to sub-watersheds and watersheds, to bio-regional level connectivity between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine.







Trails aligned with natural corridors, natural buffers, farming, and connected to visitor experience opportunities

- Improve ecosystem connectivity at the bio-regional scale between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine by:
  - Using a landscape mosaic approach incorporating various land types and uses as an opportunity to integrate ecosystem and trail network objectives for the Oak Ridges Moraine—Lake Ontario connection
  - Working with the province of Ontario, other federal government departments, the TRCA, and municipal governments to develop connectivity options, having consideration for ecosystem and trail connectivity objectives, ecosystem performance, implementation feasibility, and by recognizing and affiliating other natural areas and greens spaces in municipalities adjacent to the park, to help complete this connection
  - Identifying the range of compatible and sustainable activities, accounting for different scales of the landscape mosaic for buffers, agriculture, trails, and visitor opportunities
  - Developing implementation approaches that continue to involve local stakeholders, partners, and the park's farm community in enhancing the protection and restoration of the park.

- Use the trail network to direct visitors in and around areas of natural and cultural heritage value, to reduce the overall footprint of trails in the park, and to support ecosystem restoration and connectivity and the conservation of cultural resources.
- Integrate water trails along the Rouge River and Little Rouge Creek, where appropriate.



Water trail and wetland

- Use the trail network as a primary means for visitors to experience the park, through interpretation of natural, cultural, and agricultural resources, and hands-on activities such as trail maintenance and trail-related ecological restoration



Wetland and interpretive boardwalk



- Adopt implementation approaches that involve local stakeholders, partners, and the park's farm community in integrating the development of the park trail system with ecosystem connectivity and farming needs, as well as in raising awareness and support for sustainable trail development and use.

#### Target

- Tangible conservation gains are achieved as the trail network is phased in.

## Key Strategy 4: *Success through Collaboration—Nurturing Strategic Relationships to Advance Shared Objectives*

Collaboration is a powerful tool. It brings people together, uniting them around a common vision—whether it is the birth of a nation or the creation of a park—and inspiring them to work together to make that vision a reality. As people work together, they contribute their ideas, enthusiasm, skills, resources, and unique perspectives to make the final result much more than the sum of their collective contributions. Everyone has a vested interest or a sense of ownership. And everyone commits to protecting and building on it after the goal has been achieved.

That spirit of collaboration was seen in the former Rouge Park. People from all walks of life and from throughout the GTA came together to create the former Rouge Park. Then they worked hand-in-hand to see it through, developing plans to guide the protection and management of this landscape and its heritage.

Now, Rouge National Urban Park enters a new era of collaboration for this special place, one unprecedented for national heritage areas. Thanks to the park's urban location and its ready accessibility by approximately one-fifth of Canada's population, the potential for collaborative initiatives is greater than at any other location managed by Parks Canada. Collaboration will be an important element of the park's contributions to the *Connecting Canadians to Nature* priority of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan.

Parks Canada is embracing that potential, making collaboration the foundation for the management and success of this new park. Every activity, service, and initiative implemented will reflect the input and interests of the organizations and individuals who have strong historic and emotional bonds with this place and share, with Parks Canada, a desire to see it protected. To ensure everyone has a voice in the management and future of Rouge National Urban Park, there must be priorities and criteria put in place to guide Parks Canada in forging and fostering these relationships.

This strategy will harness the energy and enthusiasm of the people and organizations that made the former Rouge Park possible, as well as everyone committed to the future of the new Rouge National Urban Park. They are the lessees, the governments and their agencies, the volunteer networks and the environmental and other non-government organizations. They are the researchers, the park neighbours, the academic institutions and the First Nations. They live in the GTA and far beyond it. This is a diverse mix, but they all share an investment in this place and a dedication to protect it. Through continuing collaboration with this diverse community, Parks Canada will advance shared goals, forge long-term relationships and deep connections, and generate benefits for Rouge National Urban Park, for all of our protected heritage areas, and for all Canadians.



The desired outcomes of this strategy are:

- Rouge National Urban Park is a place where Canadians can participate in the management of their heritage and a place that works with the communities of interest to achieve shared objectives.
- Collaboration contributes to the achievement of park, community, and Parks Canada objectives.
- A wide range of people and organizations collaborate with Parks Canada through a diversity of mechanisms.
- Park management will be supported by an operations model in which Parks Canada manages the park and uses third parties to deliver many park services.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Strategic relationships support the objectives of the park and the organizations with which Parks Canada engages.**

**Actions**

- Pursue the following collaboration priorities:
  - Ecological restoration and monitoring
  - Delivery of park operations
  - Park farming
  - Cultural heritage
  - Green transportation.
- Work with partners and stakeholders to help manage, evaluate, and renew collaborations, having consideration for the following:
  - Alignment with park objectives and the objectives of collaborating organizations
  - The capacity of Parks Canada and potential collaborators to engage in the relationship
  - Potential involvement of Parks Canada priority audiences (e.g., youth, new Canadians).
- Seek a diversity of perspectives to inform the management of Rouge National Urban Park and promote shared understandings by way of multi-disciplinary committees and working groups.
- Engage the park lessee community in park management and establish clear lines of communication with regular mechanisms for dialogue.

**Target**

- Discussion of park priorities with park partners and stakeholders occurs on an annual basis.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Interested Aboriginal groups with direct historical connections to the park can build and maintain mutually beneficial working relationships with Parks Canada.**

**Actions, in concert with Aboriginal groups**

- The First Nations Advisory Circle provides the primary means by which to facilitate meaningful dialogue regarding interests and values that First Nations represented on the Advisory Circle would like incorporated in the park.
- Present the rich local Aboriginal culture in the Rouge Valley to the people who live there now and to park visitors, with a focus on Canadian youth.
- Facilitate use of Rouge National Urban Park by interested Aboriginal groups for spiritual and ceremonial purposes.
- Create opportunities with Aboriginal groups to share knowledge and expertise relating to their history and culture in the park. Examples include, but are not limited to, the park's pre-European settlement history, Bead Hill National Historic Site, the Carrying Place Trail National Historic Event, Aboriginal agricultural practices, cultural landscapes, and archaeology.



- Seek advice and input on the protection and presentation of cultural information and resources relating to Aboriginal heritage in the park, as well as in the park's planning and management of natural and cultural resources through, for example, traditional ecological knowledge.

#### Target

- Collaboration has occurred with interested First Nations regarding initiatives and products about First Nations history in the park, including the Bead Hill National Historic Site and the Toronto Carrying Place National Historic Event.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Third-party service delivery and a dynamic park volunteer community contribute significantly to successful park operations.**

#### Actions

- Enter into agreements with third parties (such as other governments, agencies and the private sector) for the provision of maintenance and other basic services within the park (such as garbage collection). The service agreements will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Engage the public, private and non-governmental sectors in providing services to help facilitate visitor experiences, education, and stewardship by:
  - Engaging with the private sector on commercial leases, food and rental concessions (e.g., bike, snowshoe, kayak, skate, ski), and the park shuttle system, via public solicitation overseen by Parks Canada
  - Exploring opportunities with third parties for public programming within Rouge National Urban Park
  - Continuing third-party delivery of Glen Rouge Campground and Rouge Beach.
- Identify and implement a Rouge National Urban Park volunteering program that includes volunteering opportunities directly managed by Parks Canada, as well as areas of engagement that will be mainly carried out by non-governmental or other organizations that involve volunteers.
- Maintain and expand a volunteers program in the following priority areas:
  - Park stewardship, restoration, and research including: monitoring; forest, wetland, and native grassland habitat creation and restoration; species-at-risk recovery; biological inventories (such as the Bioblitz); monitoring, and clean-up-up efforts
  - Facilitation of visitor experiences (e.g., guided hikes, events, and interpretation of natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage, and welcome area programming)
  - Management of the trail network (e.g., maintenance, rehabilitation, and use)
  - Park ambassadorship (e.g., participation in events outside the park).
- In collaboration with organizations offering volunteering opportunities in the park, continually promote the full range of volunteer opportunities to park visitors and communities surrounding the park.
- Connect with existing volunteer networks and establish new volunteer opportunities that complement Rouge National Urban Park management objectives.
- Coordinate communications and shared activities among the various volunteer groups active in the park.
- Foster close working relationships with law enforcement partners and apply an evolving suite of federal, provincial and municipal legislation to focus law enforcement operations on natural and cultural resource protection and visitor enjoyment, with consistency across jurisdictions, as the park moves through the phases of transition to and following National Urban Park status.





**Targets**

- On average, 85 per cent of visitors are satisfied with the availability and quality of park services.
- On average, 90 per cent of park visitors are aware of the availability of volunteer opportunities.
- Volunteer participation in the delivery of park programming is increased by 20 per cent.

**OBJECTIVE 4: Rouge National Urban Park's urban context and park vision are catalysts for recognized research and innovation that benefit the park and strengthen community involvement.**

**Actions**

- Give priority to research and innovation that supports the integrated delivery of park objectives, leads to improved understanding, and generates applied, implementable, and replicable results relevant to park management.
- Place particular emphasis on youth, technology, communications, and links to educational institutions (e.g., involve youth in research and innovation for visitor mobile applications).
- Work with farmers and farm associations, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, government departments, heritage organizations, Aboriginal communities, and entrepreneurs to shape the park's research agenda and collaboration model.
- Share and showcase best practices with other protected heritage areas, and seek out innovations developed elsewhere for adaptation in the park, such as:
  - Ecological restoration and productive farm landscapes that support ecosystem health objectives
  - A process to minimize the built footprint in the park by: first considering adaptive reuse of an existing building; only building a new structure if a suitable existing building is not found; ensuring any new

building is compatible with the character of the park; and exploring the use of "green" technologies when rehabilitating existing buildings or constructing new ones

- Green transportation to and within the park
- The recycling and composting of park waste
- Demonstrations/showcase leading-edge environmental technologies (such as energy-efficient lighting) and traditional activities that now have contemporary and leading-edge value (such as the adaptive reuse of heritage and heritage farming approaches)
- Working with other agencies to promote a "dark sky" approach to lighting in the park through the use of, for example, minimally-intrusive and shielded lighting.

**Target**

- By 2016, the park research agenda has been developed through collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

**OBJECTIVE 5: Collaboration leads to compatible land use and infrastructure abutting the park.**

**Actions**

- Participate in provincial planning, municipal land use, and other planning and environmental processes to advance the interests of ecosystem connectivity (e.g., water quality, road ecology, minimal light pollution), farm viability (e.g., movement of farm vehicles, roadside stands, tile drainage/salt spray), visitor experience (e.g., visitor safety/comfort, trail continuity), and cultural heritage.
- Work with relevant government agencies to recognize and affiliate natural areas and green spaces in municipalities adjacent to Rouge National Urban Park.



- Investigate options for ensuring that secondary uses of easements and hydro corridor lands are consistent with park objectives (e.g., trails and ecosystem connectivity), and encourage compatible vegetation management on railroad rights-of-way that traverse the park.
- Participate in planning processes undertaken by other federal government departments.
- Encourage connections to the park from abutting municipally-led improvements that attract visitors receptive to the park's mandate. Examples include community gardens, campgrounds, environmental education facilities, farmers markets, trails, parks, and sports fields.
- Work with the Toronto Zoo and the City of Toronto on shared objectives, such as the primary welcome area between the Toronto Zoo and Beare Road Park.
- Work collaboratively with the City of Markham and other governments to advance the shared goal of preserving and celebrating the important cultural heritage in and around Locust Hill and Cedar Grove, and ensuring strong vibrant communities with facilities and services that serve residents and park visitors by:
  - Supporting limited residential infill within hamlet boundaries, as well as the development of cottage industries, accommodations, and other visitor-related activities and services, where appropriate
  - Coordinating the identification of cultural landscapes that relate these communities to the park, as well as the protection of their character-defining elements
  - Working with municipalities and others to enhance visitor opportunities associated with the park.
- Involve municipalities in exploring ways to incorporate their interests in advancing awareness, support, and conservation of the park's cultural heritage.

### Targets

- Regular interaction between park staff and external planning authorities, including an annual meeting of the planning community, is undertaken.
- Collaborative land use planning initiatives with local municipalities are undertaken.



Hamlet adjacent to and linked with Rouge National Urban Park

# PART C: PARK TRANSITION

## Transition Strategy: *Enduring Spirit of the Rouge—Facilitating the Transition to Rouge National Urban Park*

Creating Canada's first National Urban Park is a significant undertaking for Parks Canada. It's both an honour and an incredible responsibility, one that is as exciting as it is challenging. Parks Canada recognizes that this effort must be carefully managed to ensure that Rouge National Urban Park takes its rightful place among our network of national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas.

The transition to a National Urban Park will bring many changes for the former Rouge Park. Parks Canada wants to ensure that these changes will protect and enhance the natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage of this landscape, as well as engage the support and assistance of the surrounding communities that have a vested interest in the park's future vitality.

This section of the Management Plan covers the transition of the park from its interim management by TRCA and other public landholders to its management by Parks Canada. During this period, Parks Canada will build the organization that will administer and manage the park, ensuring that its many treasures are protected for the benefit, discovery, and enjoyment of future generations of Canadians.

The desired outcomes of this transition strategy are as follows:

- Parks Canada has the tools in place to fully manage and administer the park and to implement the Management Plan initiatives.
- Parks Canada is prepared for and developing long-term lease commitments with the park lessee community.
- The park is perceived by visitors to be a part of the Parks Canada family of protected heritage areas.

**TRANSITION OBJECTIVE 1: Comprehensive baseline information concerning park assets and natural, cultural, and agricultural resources is established and kept up-to-date.**

### Actions

- Fully develop the natural and cultural resource information base.
- Establish ecosystem baseline conditions to support the park monitoring plan described in Strategy 2.
- Consolidate the inventory and assessment of available agricultural resources, including lands and associated residential properties, soil quality, access to water, field structure, production and fallow land, restoration potential, and future agricultural opportunities.
- Identify cultural resources through evaluation, and establish management priorities to guide the assessment of the condition of cultural resources, including buildings and engineering works, known archaeological sites, landscapes and landscape features, and historical and archaeological objects.
- Create an inventory of all built assets in the park, assess them to establish condition and rehabilitation/recapitalization requirements, and develop a life cycle management system to manage interventions that integrates Management Plan priorities and funding availability.





### Targets

- A park monitoring and reporting plan for natural resources is in place by the year following park establishment.
- Park database is in place by 2016.
- A Cultural Resources Values Statement is completed by 2017.

### TRANSITION OBJECTIVE 2: Operational activities and plans facilitate decisions and support day-to-day park management.

#### Actions

- Build the park organization required to administer and manage the future National Urban Park.
- Complete the required due diligence prior to the lands being transferred to Parks Canada.
- Acquire the lands by way of a phased approach from the various jurisdictions.
- Recommend the lands for designation as part of the park to ensure their continued protection.
- Enter into discussions with current lessees to negotiate new leases with new terms and conditions.
- Develop real property policies and procedures for Rouge National Urban Park.
- Work to improve the health of park ecosystems by:
  - Working with the province of Ontario and other federal government departments to achieve agreement on an approach for ecosystem connectivity
  - Developing and implementing a strategy for outreach, stewardship, monitoring, and species-at-risk
- Focusing initial restoration efforts on:
  - Aquatic and riparian habitat at local scales, including fisheries management objectives
  - Beneficial management practices on park farmland that support water quality and ecosystem connectivity.
- Complete a Rural Landscape Plan to guide the evolution of predominantly agricultural portions of the park in a holistic, integrated manner, as well as to inform long-term lease commitments. This plan will:
  - Build on and help develop park asset and resource databases
  - Identify the needs and future plans and aspirations of agricultural, commercial, and residential lessees, as well as consult the public, municipalities, and other levels of government
  - Bring together a broad cross-section of the GTA agricultural community to advise on how best to move forward with park farming in the context of Management Plan objectives, sustainability, and the unique opportunities afforded by farming's presence in the park, the Greenbelt, and the GTA
  - Assess suitable site requirements to facilitate:
    - The integration of current farming with park objectives
    - Agricultural diversification (e.g., direct marketing, farmers markets) and special use areas for alternative farming approaches, such as incubator farms, community-shared agriculture and community gardens
    - Understanding of commercial opportunities that further visitor experience opportunities
    - Consolidation of residential leases with agricultural lands to encourage a lived-in landscape

- Identify areas to be included in long-term and shorter-term leases, as well as areas not to be included in leases (such as sensitive natural and cultural heritage features, and the trail network)
- Identify routings for the park trail network, as well as the conditions of location and use that support continued farming and natural heritage conservation
- Identify specific opportunities to integrate agricultural activities with visitor experience and natural and cultural heritage conservation planning.
- Initiate steps to facilitate visitor experiences that build on the Management Plan directions, including:
  - Undertaking social science research on existing and potential park visitors and audiences including:
    - A visitor information program
    - An attendance method on which to establish baseline conditions, monitor change and progress against targets, and which adapts to changing visitor patterns as the development of park visitor facilities proceeds
  - Introducing Parks Canada staff presence in the park beginning in the summer 2014 season
  - Developing a Visitor Experience Site Strategy that sets out how facilities, interpretive messages, and the suite of potential activities work together to serve different visitor segments
  - Developing a Prevention Plan and a Law Enforcement Plan that identify priority prevention/compliance issues, prevention measures, and law enforcement measures
  - Developing a Visitor Safety Plan that lists all visitor activities, their associated risks to visitors, and measures to mitigate risks and address volunteer safety requirements
- Implementing the conceptual trail network by:
  - Establishing priorities for trail implementation in areas of the park currently lacking trails, filling in critical gaps in the existing network, and identifying where trails generate the most public and environmental benefit
  - Consulting park lessees, the general public, and park committees
  - Establishing the portion of the trail network in the northern section of the park in collaboration with the City of Markham and the park farming community
  - Working with park lessees to ensure trail design accounts for privacy and operational requirements (e.g., set-backs from farm buildings/residences, fencing and bushes along fields, following hedgerows).
- Identify the range of organizations that might have an interest in contributing to park objectives.
- Include the following elements in the financial management of the park:
  - Distributes park funding in accordance with the integrated delivery of the Parks Canada mandate and among all sections of the park
  - Uses a life-cycle approach to asset investment, including the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings
  - Includes a revenue strategy for “valued-added” activities, such as camping, leases, licenses, programs, and events
  - Incorporates a mechanism for philanthropic support of the park and its operation.



### Targets

- The assembly of all park lands by Parks Canada is completed.
- All lands transferred to Parks Canada are formally designated as part of Rouge National Urban Park within five years of acquisition.
- Ecological restoration and connectivity strategies are in place by 2016.
- A Rural Landscape Plan is completed by the end of 2015.
- Visitor experience-related guidance is in place by 2015.
- Mechanisms to manage collaborations are in place by 2015.

### TRANSITION OBJECTIVE 3: The park is recognized as a member of the Parks Canada family of protected heritage areas.

#### Actions

- Ensure the Parks Canada brand is in place (e.g., web presence, staff and volunteers, interpretive exhibits, panels and apps, wayfinding signage in and beyond the park).
- Develop a marketing and promotion plan to promote the park and the system of Parks Canada places as a whole.

- Gradually introduce the Parks Canada brand to the park as the transition continues by:
  - Adding Parks Canada identifier signage as lands are transferred to Parks Canada
  - Working to introduce the Park brand through communications material of the Rouge Park
  - Gradually transforming the Parks Canada website from one focussed on park establishment, to one focussed on visitors, outreach, and park management and planning
  - Increasing the contact that Parks Canada staff has with park visitors.

#### Target

- An increasing proportion of park visitors are aware of Parks Canada and recognize the park as a National Urban Park and a member of the Parks Canada network of protected heritage areas.





#### TRANSITION OBJECTIVE 4: The Rouge National Urban Park governance framework is in place to facilitate the involvement and collaboration of partners and stakeholders in the park's management.

##### Actions

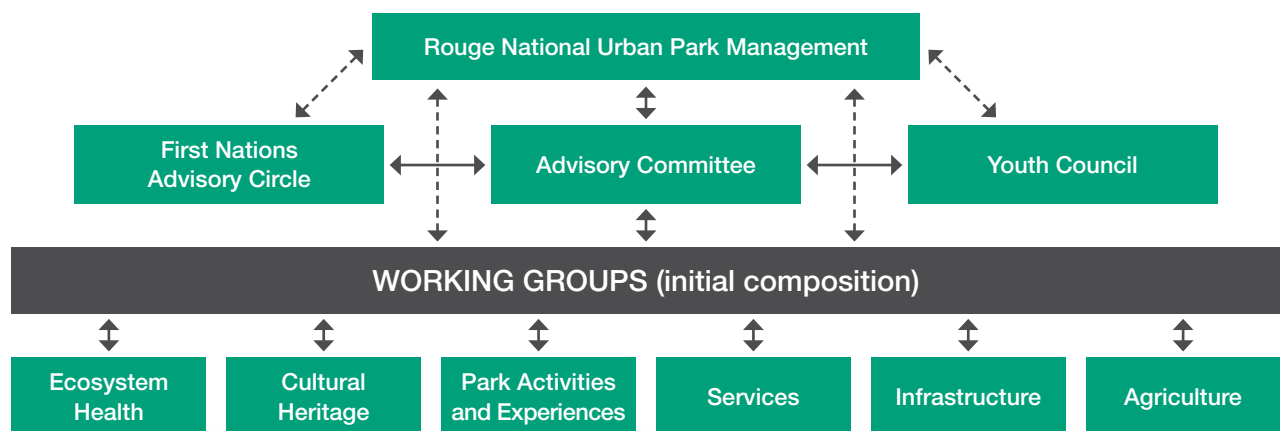
- Establish terms of reference for all advisory bodies and working groups.
- Establish the following advisory bodies that will interact directly with Parks Canada:
  - An **Advisory Committee** (Transition and Long-Term) comprising representatives from Ontario, municipalities, regional governments, as well as Aboriginal and stakeholder groups including, but not limited to environmental, agriculture, and youth. This committee will provide strategic advice and guidance on park management in a transitional role until the park is established. It will be reconstituted following park establishment
  - A **First Nations Advisory Circle** to provide Parks Canada with input on the planning, presentation, and management of the National Urban Park
  - A **Youth Council** to provide a vehicle for youth input into the park's management, and to help Parks Canada ensure the park's relevance to the interests, aspirations, and concerns of young Canadians

- Working groups to engage partners and stakeholders in the implementation of the Management Plan. They may be program or project-specific with a defined duration and scope of work. Initial working groups that will provide advice in the development and implementation of the Management Plan include:

- **Ecosystem Health, Cultural Heritage, and Park Activities and Experiences** working groups, each comprising First Nations, provincial, municipal and regional organizations and stakeholder groups
- A **Services Working Group** comprising representatives from municipal and regional governments
- An **Infrastructure Working Group** comprising representatives from the province and municipal and regional governments that will develop protocols related to infrastructure planning
- Other working groups as needed.

##### Targets

- All advisory bodies are established by 2015 at the latest.
- All advisory bodies meet regularly.



# APPENDIX: LIST OF KEY AND TRANSITION STRATEGIES

## **KEY STRATEGY 1: A Canadian First—Fostering A New Way Of Thinking About Protected Heritage Areas In An Urban Setting**

### **Objectives**

1. Rouge National Urban Park is a cohesive and evolving mosaic of diverse landscapes, demonstrating national leadership in the management of protected heritage areas in an urban context
2. The concept of a National Urban Park is understood, supported, and celebrated
3. Rouge National Urban Park is a gateway for urban Canadians, encouraging discovery of national conservation initiatives and the network of protected heritage areas in Ontario and across Canada

## **KEY STRATEGY 2: A Dynamic, Cohesive Rouge—Managing Change In Support Of A Healthy And Resilient Park Landscape**

### **Objectives**

1. The health and resilience of the park's ecosystems and cultural resources are enhanced through conservation
2. A sustainable, vital park lessee community is built on community relationships, economic viability, diversification, and environmental stewardship

3. A dynamic, adaptive management system facilitates well-informed decision-making to improve the health and resilience of the park's natural, cultural, and agricultural resources

## **KEY STRATEGY 3: A Connected and Relevant Rouge—Forging Emotional And Physical Connections With The Park**

### **Objectives**

1. Visitors, outreach audiences, and stakeholders from inside and outside the GTA feel a new and strengthened connection to the park
2. The park's welcome areas offer visitors a warm arrival and are accessible by various means
3. An evolving and diverse spectrum of activities and experiences enables visitors to develop personal connections with the park in a safe environment
4. Park users of different backgrounds and abilities move easily through the park via a connected network encompassing different travel modes
5. Visitor experience is enriched by a Park trail network that supports ecosystem connectivity and health, cultural heritage conservation, and park farming

## **KEY STRATEGY 4: Success through Collaboration—Nurturing Strategic Relationships To Advance Shared Objectives**

### **Objectives**

1. Strategic relationships support the objectives of the park and the organizations with which Parks Canada engages
2. Interested Aboriginal groups with direct historical connections to the park can build and maintain mutually beneficial working relationships with Parks Canada



3. Third-party service delivery and a dynamic volunteer community contribute significantly to successful park operations
4. Rouge National Urban Park's urban context and park vision are catalysts for recognized research and innovation that benefit the park and strengthen community involvement
5. Collaboration leads to compatible land use and infrastructure abutting the park

### **TRANSITION STRATEGY: *Enduring Spirit of the Rouge*—Facilitating The Transition To Rouge National Urban Park**

#### **Transition Objectives**

1. Comprehensive baseline information concerning park assets and natural, cultural, and agricultural resources is established and kept up-to-date
2. Operational activities and plans facilitate decisions and support day-to-day park management.
3. The park is recognized as a member of the Parks Canada family of protected heritage areas
4. The Rouge National Urban Park governance framework is in place to facilitate the involvement and collaboration of partners and stakeholders in the park's management

