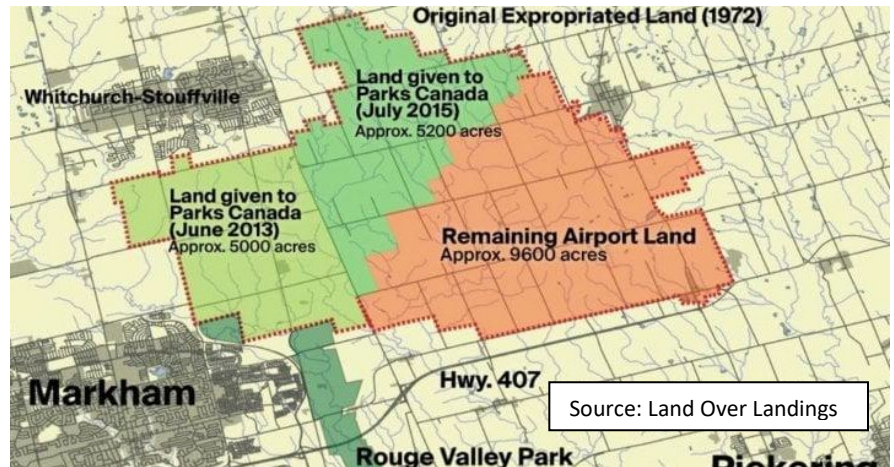


Newsletter October 2024

Federal lands – From time to time an issue or rumour or initiative emerges regarding the lands expropriated by the federal government for an airport back in 1972. This summer it happened once again. We received word that the Hon. Pauline Browes and the Hon. David Crombie, both of whom serve as board members of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust (WRT), sent a letter to Environment Minister Guilbeault requesting his support for the transfer of the Federal Pickering Lands to Parks Canada as part of the Rouge National Urban Park.

A consultant was retained by WRT to develop a proposal to accompany this request. GDA and other local groups such as Land Over Landings, were invited to comment on the proposal. We supported the proposal of adding the remaining airport lands to the RNUP. We could not support the proposal of housing be part of the vision. We felt it was important to retain these lands for farming. We said we felt that housing is best located close to where infrastructure already exists and within existing urban boundaries, that adding housing elsewhere would contribute to sprawl. We suggested that waiting for completion of the Transport Canada study which revisits the need for an airport would be preferred. We also indicated that we felt that it is unlikely a federal government of any political persuasion will give up the option of holding these lands for an airport. But we'd embrace having the lands transferred to the Rouge National Urban Park if that came to be!



Preparing our response took time: consulting with other stakeholders, meeting with sitting Liberal and Conservative members of parliament to get their views and trying to get the facts about the situation. Thanks to David Morley and Brian Buckles who worked on this issue. Stay tuned!

Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve: The Ontario Farmland Trust approached us about their application to the Greenbelt Foundation to look at the DRAP lands – what is the current state, the soil quality, the kind of farming taking place, who are the farmers, how does the surrounding community feel about an agricultural preserve in the community, what should the long term vision be for these lands and how can that be made secure? We indicated that we'd like to be part of this project. Stay tuned on this one too.

University of Guelph: Speaking of DRAP, you may recall that Brian Buckles of GDA was invited to participate in a special topics course last winter at the University of Guelph, exploring agricultural land preservation. Brian Buckles and Ian Attridge, the lawyer who acted for GDA years ago in getting the easements in place, were invited as guest speakers and presented a case study about the history, creation, strengths, and challenges of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. We were pleased to learn that the pilot course was highly reviewed by students and faculty and is now a permanent course in the Rural Planning and Development Program. The purpose and anticipated outcome of the course will be a framework that municipalities can adopt to develop local agricultural preserves.

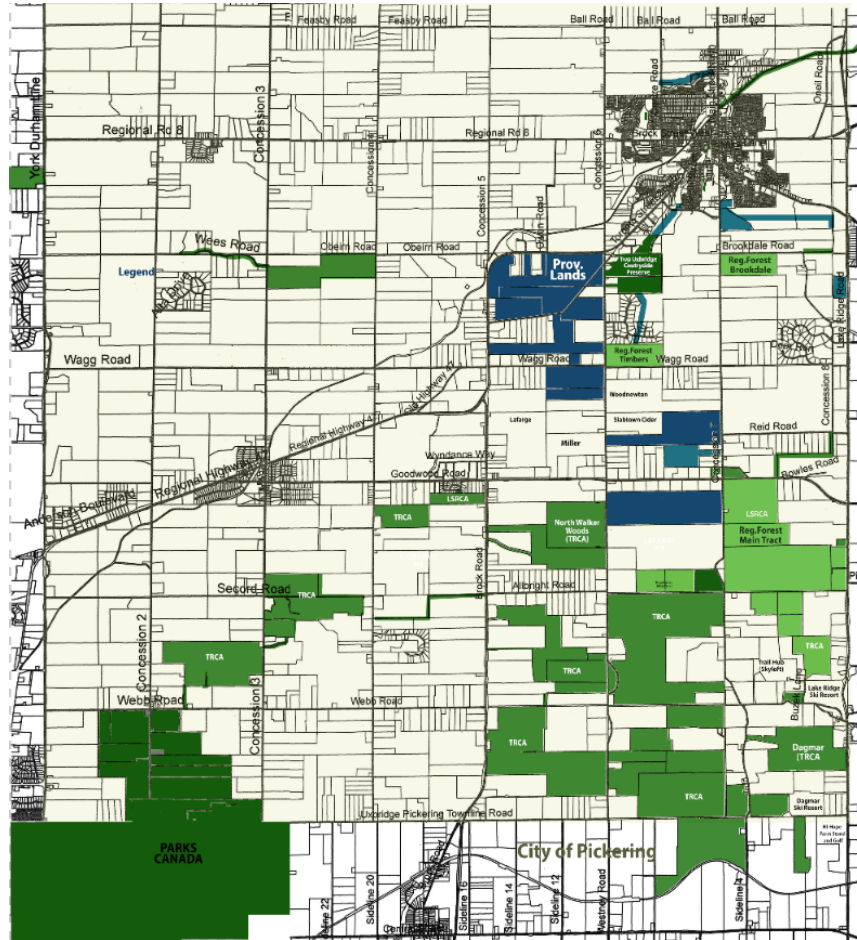
More Maps: At our AGM we mentioned a partnership with Land Over Landings to develop a digital map which portrays in detail the features of the federal ("airport") lands. On most maps, the federal lands are shown as a blank space. Land Over Landings folks had an idea that if details about what is on the lands were portrayed, it might help their arguments for more action about protecting these lands. GDA provided funding and added a few requests, such as including the lands in northeast Pickering. Our hand-drawn maps created by Chrismar were helpful in the development of these digital maps. We've just seen a draft of the first two maps. They are glorious and are going to be helpful to efforts of many who are working to protect what farmland remains and stop further sprawl. More details to come!

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park: We continue to work hard as part of the planning committee along with partners from Nature Conservancy, Schad Foundation, Region of Durham, Township of Uxbridge, TRCA and LSRCA.

The new Park officially came into being in June. GDA was invited to be one of six speakers at the official ceremony. Work is underway on completing an inventory about what is on the 1315 initial acres (lands in blue on map to right), removing garbage and fallen trees in certain areas, and on marking trails which are appropriate for immediate use by the public.

A management plan has been drafted, released for initial public comment, refined, and will soon be available for more public comment. **An open house about the management plan will be held in November. Stay tuned for the date.**

GDA continues to lead the private land acquisition team, recommending and securing key links to improve connections between the various parcels of land which will eventually become part of the Park and create a strong link to the Rouge National Urban Park (darker green, lower left in map).



Funding from the Greenbelt Foundation has supported costs such as surveys and

land appraisals. These funds have helped move the project forward more quickly than would otherwise be possible, and help private landowners and Ontario Parks determine the best way to have privately owned land included in the new Park. You can follow the progress of Ontario's newest Park by visiting this website from time to time: [Special Projects at Ontario Parks](#)



Boyington Pit (Miller) You may recall that between 2020 and 2022, aggregate pit owner Miller Group put forward a proposal to import fill and change the use of their Boyington Pit from an aggregate extraction to a permanent industrial use. The pit is situated on the 7th concession of Uxbridge, directly across the road from lands which are now part of a provincial park. At the time we could only hope that one day our efforts to have provincially owned lands transferred for conservation would be successful, and the Miller proposal was not only a threat to that vision, but also struck us as wrong in some ways. GDA retained the assistance of a firm specializing in municipal law to help us explore the problems we saw with the proposal. Our lawyer sent a letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and then the issue went silent for some time.

This summer the Miller group received an award from the Ontario Stone Sand and Gravel Association for the rehabilitation which has taken place on the Boyington Pit. The goal of the rehabilitation was to return the land to agricultural use. GDA was invited to tour the pit on the day the award was presented.

[Durham gravel pit wins Ontario award for rehabilitation - Durham Post](#)



You can read more about the event here:

Another Aggregate Good News Story: You will recall the partnership between Lafarge and the local community at their Regan Pit, just south of the Miller Boyington Pit on the 7th Concession. For about a decade Lafarge worked with us to install and maintain more than 50 bluebird boxes as the rehabilitation efforts continued in the pit. North Durham Nature's Derek Connolly maintained records of nest activity with the help of volunteers. This past year the bird boxes were attacked by bears; the pit has grown in and habitat has become less favourable to the open spaces liked by blue birds. The decision was made to remove the remaining bird boxes and posts.

Over these years a great working relationship has developed with Lafarge. Earlier this summer Derek Connolly and Liz Calvin spent an enjoyable morning meeting with Lafarge's Eastern Lands Manager Chris Galway and Environmental Projects manager Tom Baumgarten. They proposed other Lafarge sites in the area which might lend themselves to bluebird habitat. Last week the first few posts were installed at a gorgeous non-operating pit just north of Goodwood on the 3rd Concession. These "test posts" were installed to see how difficult digging in the posts was going to be. The good news is the soil is soft. The not so good news is that the best location for the bird boxes is on the ridge and is a good climb.



In the coming few weeks we would like to get up to 35 more posts and bird boxes installed. We are looking for help to carry the posts and boxes up the ridge and dig them into the ground. If you are interested in helping you can email Ranald at ranalmd.mckay@gmail.com and he will send you details once a date is confirmed. Next spring we'd like to start a weekly nest monitoring program of these boxes to ensure the birds are successful. Derek led a similar program in the Regan Pit but is stepping down from the lead role at this new location. If there is enough interest we will form a volunteer monitoring group, coordinated by Ranald, details will follow early in 2025.

Parking near the trails: The day after we last sent out our June newsletter, the Township of Uxbridge changed the service provider for collection of parking fees. Those of us who live within Uxbridge Township will continue to pay no fees but we are required to register our vehicles every 2 years. GDA members who live outside of the Township are still entitled to pay no fees but are required to renew yearly. The process has changed a little. Instead of using a code, you will complete a form provided by GDA to prove you are a member; the form is attached to this newsletter. You will need to print the form, complete it by hand, and scan and email it to bylaw@uxbridge.ca, or mail a hard copy to the ByLaw department at Uxbridge Township, 51 Toronto Street South, Uxbridge L9P1H1. You can also deliver it by hand to the Township office. Each household is entitled to register up to 5 vehicles, any two of which can be parked at a trailhead at any one time. You will receive an email when it is time to renew. The instructions are included on the form. Thanks to long-time GDA member Laura for test-driving the form and the process last month!

Trail maintenance: You may recall that GDA has been subsidizing the TRCA's mowing budget for a number of years. The funds helped TRCA keep the trails in a better state than they could otherwise manage. As mentioned in our last newsletter, these mowing costs are now being fully supported by the parking charges. TRCA is still getting up to speed on the areas which need mowing – those of us out on the trails regularly have found that some areas have received more attention than others. Those who've so generously volunteered to help out with mowing have likely been wondering why some trails aren't being mowed and yet no request for help has been made. We will be going over the mowing plans with TRCA staff at our November Stewardship Committee meeting, where trail volunteers representing the different user groups meet with TRCA staff to plan projects for the Duffins Headwaters properties.

One note about the Stewardship Committee: for many years it has been ably chaired by GDA member Tom Hawks. Tom and his wife Sheila are moving into Toronto and leaving this area they've loved so much. At our June meeting, the committee presented Tom with a plaque acknowledging his work. You can find it on a bench in the Walker Woods near post W14. Thank you Tom! Ranald McKay has stepped up to chair this committee

TRCA has applied for funding to address the problem of Buckthorn on their properties. GDA and Durham Mountain Biking Association have agreed to partner with them, receiving training and targeting certain areas in teams to remove this invasive and thorny species. This will be the focus of our activities starting in the spring of 2025, more details to follow.

Enjoy these bright Fall days in the forest – it is simply the best time of year. Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

October, 2024

To obtain a parking pass for GDA members and volunteers to park free of charge:

- 1) Print this form**
- 2) Complete the following information:**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Vehicle plates (up to 5 per household): _____

- 3) Scan and email completed form to: bylaw@uxbridge.ca**

OR

Take completed form to: Bylaw Department, Township of Uxbridge

51 Toronto St. South ON L9P 1H1

- 4) Download Hotspot (easiest to do that on your computer)**

[Permit Parking and Trail Sustainability - Township of Uxbridge](#)

Parking passes are good for 1 year for non-residents and 2 years for residents.

You will receive an email from the Township when it is time to renew.