



Top 10 Highlights of the Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan



Since 2011, Parks Canada has engaged more than 20,000 Canadians and has worked with Indigenous Peoples, all levels of government, community groups, conservationists, park farmers, area residents, volunteers, and many other groups to complete the very first management plan for Rouge National Urban Park. The plan implements ecological integrity as a first priority in realizing the unprecedented opportunities to conserve, showcase and share this protected area's remarkable natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes.

Species-at-risk protection

Rouge National Urban Park is home to 1,700 species of plants and animals, including 27 species-at-risk. Parks Canada will work to stabilize and recover these populations and continue to collaborate with partners, like the Toronto Zoo, on recovery initiatives such as the re-introduction of Blanding's turtles in the park. More than 1,500 Canadians are engaged annually at the Rouge through species-at-risk interpretive programs and events fostering an understanding of the importance of conservation, action and stewardship.

Focus on ecological restoration

Since 2015, Parks Canada has worked closely with park farmers in the Rouge to restore nearly 50 hectares of wetland, stream and riverbank habitat, more than 20 hectares of forest habitat, as well as plant more than 70,000 native trees, shrubs and aquatic plants. The management plan continues this successful program throughout the park to improve conditions in wetlands, meadows, forests, and stream and riverbank areas, resulting in greater native biodiversity and better conditions for cold-water aquatic species.

Long-term protection and certainty for farming in the park

Farm leases of up to 30 years will ensure long-term stability for park farmers and their families – some of whom have been farming in the Rouge since 1799 (and many of whom were expropriated from these lands in the 1970s). The benefits of this stability will result in more sustainable and diverse agricultural opportunities, stronger collaboration on ecological restoration work and the facilitation of farming-based visitor experiences in the park. The Rouge has some of the last-remaining working farms in the GTA, with most located on class 1 soil - the richest, rarest, and most fertile in Canada.

Agriculture's contributions to ecological integrity

Parks Canada's work with park farmers since 2015 demonstrates farmland and farming can be significant contributors to the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity in the park. The management plan builds on this approach to ensure farmland becomes an even more important contributor to the park's ecological integrity by working with farmers to integrate best management practices into farm plans and operations.



Conserving and presenting cultural heritage

The Rouge's rich legacy of cultural landscapes, built heritage and archaeology will be conserved and interpreted for future generations. This cultural restoration work will encourage visitors to learn more about the thousands of years of First Nations presence and connection to the land, and how human use has influenced – and been influenced by – the park's various landscape. Visitors will be able to experience examples of the park's built heritage through restored and conserved buildings made accessible to the public.

Collaboration and community

The management plan provides a clear framework by which Parks Canada will continue to engage and partner with surrounding communities, which includes conservation groups, farmers, Indigenous partners, volunteers, visitors, community organizations, educational institutions, all levels of government, and the public. The plan's collaborative approach to park governance, management and operations will contribute to a long-lasting and strong sense of community throughout the Rouge.

Indigenous Peoples

Parks Canada is proud to be working closely on all aspects of the establishment, and management of Rouge National Urban Park with 10 First Nations with traditional and present-day connections to the Rouge and will continue to collaborate and work in partnership with Indigenous communities through an established First Nations Advisory Circle on park operations, including archeology, trail-building, ecological restoration, park programming, public outreach and other areas of mutual interest.

Visitor facilities

Parks Canada is excited to be working on a range of new trails and visitor facilities in Rouge National Urban Park. New welcome areas and trails are planned in the Toronto, Markham, Pickering, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and Uxbridge areas of the park, including two flagship learning and visitor centres and dozens of kilometres of new hiking trails extending from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine. Two new public activity areas and a new trail area are currently under construction in the Markham area of the park and more will follow as the management plan is implemented.

'Learn-to' destination

The Rouge aspires to become Canada's premiere 'Learn-to' park where newcomers and urban dwellers can learn to camp, paddle, hike and engage in learning opportunities related to nature, farming and cultural heritage. Since 2014, the park's Learn-to Camp program has already introduced tens of thousands of Canadians to the joys of camping. Implementation of the management plan will bring about many more opportunities for visitors to learn about Canada's environment and heritage.

Sustainable transportation access to and through the Rouge

The management plan addresses the need for sustainable transportation options to enable visitors of all abilities and means to access the park. Parks Canada will foster links with existing and future transit improvements such as GO Transit, bus ways, municipal transit hubs, and connections with municipal and regional trails and cycling routes. These initiatives will support region-wide park access from communities across the GTA in a way that reduces parking footprints in the park and broadens the range of access options to get to the Rouge.



www.parksCanada.gc.ca/rouge



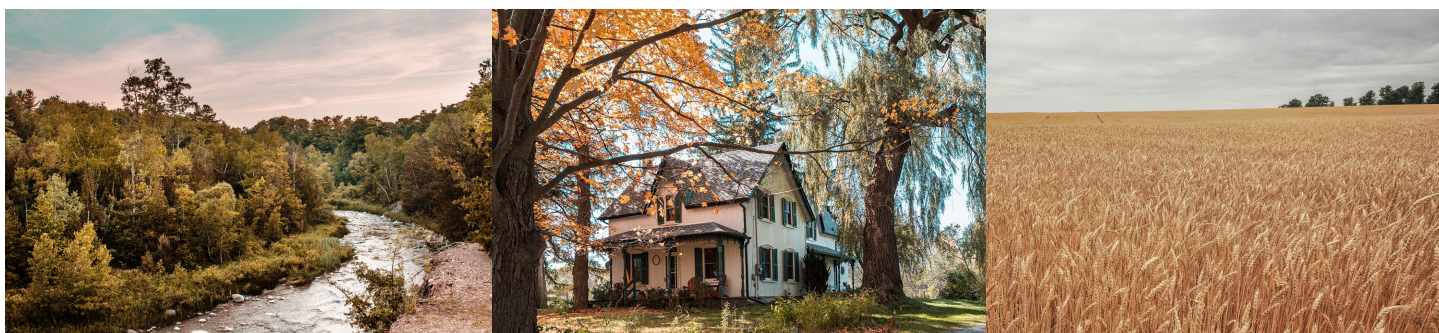
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