

Grenadier Pond Meeting – July 12, 2013

In attendance: Gord MacPherson & Danny Moro (TRCA); Helen Sousa and Jorge Ture (Parks Operations); Joseph La Penna (Toronto Water); Jennifer Gibb (Forestry, Natural Environment); Colin Crawford, Corey Crawford, Leslie Gooding and Karen Yukich (High Park Natural Environment Committee (NEC)). Notes and *[comments in brackets]* by Karen Yukich.

Wendigo Pond Dredging

TRCA is currently conducting studies of 13 stormwater ponds for Toronto Water to assess sediment quality, how best to dewater, etc. (related to developing a city-wide protocol for dredging stormwater ponds). In High Park they are looking at the Howard & Ridout Ponds in the northeast, plus Wendigo Pond. Gord described their standard practice to protect wildlife: dewater the pond, lift turtles out by hand, ducks will relocate as needed. He mentioned that there is new floating equipment for dredging that is less disruptive. Joe indicated that dredging Wendigo Pond is a high priority for Toronto Water. TRCA may do the dredging but this would only be determined later.

ACTION: The NEC recommends that the tender request include specifics regarding wildlife protection.

Beaver Activity

Beavers have been active at the north end marsh, although no recent sign of activity was evident. Forestry wraps the trees that warrant protection. Gord mentioned that this is a good practice and that it may discourage them from staying at this site. He was not concerned about the amount of debris that has fallen into the marsh channel and noted that the log edging installed in 1999 was still holding.

ACTION: Forestry to continue to wrap trees as needed.

Wet Areas along Trail

For the area adjacent to the marsh that is persistently wet from a seep on the hillside, a French drain was recommended (a boardwalk is another possible solution but more costly?)

ACTION: Park Operations may consider using the French drain approach.

Eroding Shoreline

South of the “Hanging out to dry” sign the shoreline edge is falling away. Gord recommended reinforcing it with a similar treatment as the log edge in the marsh channel.

ACTION: Helen will follow up with Gord to determine whether this could be done within the operating budget (not big enough to be considered for the capital budget).

Floating Vegetation

Gord considers the duckweed to be a positive feature, useful for ducks to eat, also the nutrients being locked up in the duckweed (also in phragmites) during the summer season helps to keep the pond water clearer. So even though the nutrients go back into the pond later in the year, the water quality is better when it matters most for pond life.

Small floating mats of algae were also observed, plus Eurasian water milfoil. (Much of the surface vegetation had been cleared by a recent storm.)

ACTION: The milfoil should be monitored; it can become a serious problem under some conditions (see [factsheet](#) – note that it is more likely to spread if there is disturbance, mechanical clearing of aquatic plants).

Pond Health/Water Quality

Gord noted that the pond is so much healthier than in the early 1980s, when there was a late winter kill of fish due to low oxygen levels, and Black Crappie species was lost. He credited the stormwater management and shoreline naturalization projects, and remarked that the bass shoals built in 2007 have been very successful. He noted a great increase in the amount and extent of shoreline vegetation, and the improvement in water clarity. As noted above, he commented on the function of this vegetation to take up excess nutrients from the pond, which improves water quality during the active warm season. He also commented on the Lake Partners Program [monitoring](#) (done by volunteers Ray Bielaskie and Michael White), which shows a general trend line toward improved conditions, although there were spikes in the negative direction last year during exceptionally warm dry periods resulting in less flushing activity.

Overall, Gord commented that, for an urban centre, one would be hard-pressed to find a pond in better condition than Grenadier Pond. He would like to do further fish studies here if he had the time and resources to so.

ACTION: Volunteers will continue to take water samples for the Lake Partners Program.

Southwest Weir

Danny confirmed that the TRCA has taken on the responsibility for operating the weir, but has not yet moved the level since a special wrench needs to be made first. We mentioned some public concern that pond levels may be dropped too quickly and negatively impact the waterfowl. The response was that it's more likely a rapid rise in water levels during nesting season that could have some negative impact. In any case, the gradations on the weir allow for only limited changes (about 8 inches/20 cm in total). The aim is to have water levels lower in late summer. Gord mentioned that cattails seem to grow more during that period (although we also noted some that were close to 2 metres tall already!) Timing of the lowering is considered more important than the raising. Generally the levels should be lower in winter, and the weir should be raised in spring. Depending on the conditions, changes could be made all at once or in two stages.

ACTION: TRCA will install a data log device that measures water levels hourly for a period of 3 years.

Family Fishing Day & Fishing Impacts

Handouts prepared by the NEC pond issues working group were distributed to raise awareness of responsible fishing practices. This year the TRCA did not use a boat, only a seine net, and did not catch much with it. *[The NEC recommends that this event be moved to another location, such as Eglinton Flats, in the future, since Grenadier Pond and High Park are already subject to so many pressures, including careless fishing behaviour that causes harm to wildlife, and youth in other areas of the City would be able to benefit from an event held closer to their neighbourhoods.]*

Gord commented that Grenadier Pond seems to have a good balance of public access opportunities vs. less accessible natural areas. He and Danny mentioned that it would be possible to create more formalized access points that work with park users' natural desire lines, and have more protection for the natural areas outside these points. One example would be a pier-like structure along the more southerly portion of the east shore (presently concrete edged). For these access points to work, there have to be just enough and they have to be in the right positions. Otherwise people will seek out that more private spot to go fishing, and trample down pond edge vegetation as they make their own spots. *[These comments are based on the assumption that fishing will continue to be permitted at Grenadier Pond, a practice that may warrant further review.]*

ACTION: Additional fishing line receptacles and fishing-related signage are to be installed, and NEC will meet with Helen and Jorge to determine the boundary of the wildlife protection area (no fishing) and locations of proposed signs, and will work with Helen to finalize sign content.

Road Salting Practices

In a conversation prior to the site meeting, Karen expressed concern about the road salt used on park paths near the pond. Gord thought the impact was probably not that significant considering all the other sources of salt water going into the pond, but mentioned that it would be advisable to follow “best practices” as the City does for its streets.

Phragmites

The TRCA continues to keep abreast of research into control measures for phragmites. So far there are no effective measures. Jorge mentioned that pond users complain about having their views obstructed, but his staff are not equipped to go out into the water to cut the phragmites.

Ongoing Management

It was acknowledged that Grenadier Pond is not under active management by any particular body (e.g. not by TRCA or a City department). The only document approaching a management plan is the report produced by Gartner Lee in 1995. By contrast, the terrestrial natural areas of High Park are actively managed by Forestry/Natural Environment based on a management plan adopted in 2002. Like the Oak Savannah, Grenadier Pond is designated as an ANSI.

ACTION: The NEC recommends that the City arrange for the pond to be actively managed and monitored on an ongoing basis (e.g. by TRCA).

Note re Fish Die-off

Subsequent to this meeting, there was an extensive die-off of fish along the east shoreline, apparently due to a toxic substance being introduced into the pond (still to be confirmed by testing).

ACTION: The NEC recommends a follow-up review of how this event was handled to consider: timeliness, clarity of roles and responsibilities, communication with the public, etc.