

## High Park Natural Environment Committee Background Information

### HIGH PARK'S PROTECTED STATUS

About half\* of High Park is designated as the High Park Oak Woodlands Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) and as an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). Grenadier Pond and other wetlands in and near High Park are additionally designated as a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW).

#### **What is an ANSI?**

ANSIs are identified by the Province. They are “areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study or education.” (Source: [PPS](#))

The ANSI is protected for the long term by the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and its guideline the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM). (Municipalities' Official Plans must be consistent with the PPS and either follow the guideline or take measures that have the same effect and explain how the effect is achieved.)

#### **What are ESAs?**

Environmentally Significant Areas ([ESAs](#)) are natural spaces within Toronto's natural heritage system that require special protection to preserve their environmentally significant qualities. Toronto's Official Plan currently recognizes 86 Environmentally Significant Areas in the city. Development is not permitted in ESAs and activities are limited to those that are compatible with the preservation of their natural features and ecological functions.

#### **What is a PSW?**

Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) are those areas identified by the Province using a science-based ranking system known as the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES). They are protected in the same manner as an ANSI.

\* For more details see [High Park Facts and Figures](#)

#### **Who is responsible for managing and protecting High Park?**

Urban Forestry manages and restores a large portion in accordance with the [High Park Woodland & Savannah Management Plan, 2002](#).

Park Operations manages the park in general (not much contact with the natural areas).

Other City departments can be involved in High Park (e.g. Toronto Water, Transportation, Recreation, Horticulture, Toronto Animal Services, Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS – the by-law officers), Planning, etc.)

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has some involvement, intermittently (e.g. [High Park Terrestrial Inventory Report, TRCA 2019](#) and research leading to PSW status for the Grenadier Pond Wetland Complex).

[Infrastructure and Environment Committee](#) of City Council has oversight responsibilities (not given much attention). This committee reviews items before they go to City Council.

Urban Forestry and Park Operations are part of the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department.

### **Other Relevant City Policies**

[Toronto Biodiversity Strategy](#)

[Pollinator Protection Strategy](#)

[Toronto Ravine Strategy](#)

[Toronto Certified as Bird Friendly City](#)

## **NATURE/PROGRAM GROUPS ACTIVE IN HIGH PARK**

**High Park Natural Environment Committee (NEC)** – advises the City of Toronto on the protection and restoration of the natural environment of High Park. We also promote awareness and respectful enjoyment of the park's natural heritage.

**High Park Stewards** – volunteers work with the City of Toronto to protect and restore the remaining natural areas of High Park including large areas of Savannah with Black Oak trees and related flora and fauna. During the spring, summer and fall they plant, collect seeds, and remove invasive species from restoration sites. (Boulevard Bed project is managed directly by volunteers.)

**High Park Nature** – the [website](#) is a joint project of High Park NEC and High Park Stewards. This term is also used for general purposes as an overall identity.

**High Park Nature Centre** – a charitable organization with staff and a board of directors. The Nature Centre's mission is to promote awareness and respect for nature through year-round, hands-on outdoor nature education and park stewardship.

**Sunday Walking Tours** – a volunteer-led program of free walks on certain Sunday mornings (nature and other subjects)

**Park Watch** – volunteers act as hosts and goodwill ambassadors. They respond to enquiries from Park users, provide information and assistance as needed, identify and report any potential safety problems to the Police and Park staff and promote safe and friendly behaviour among Park users. Their role is not enforcement but education and reporting.

**Paws for Parks** – a community-based volunteer organization (based in High Park) that promotes environmental protection and sharing of public parks through responsible pet-walking practices. [pawsforparks.com](http://pawsforparks.com)

**K9** – representing people who use the dog off-leash area

**Colborne Lodge** – historical museum

**High Park Children's Garden** – a City-staffed project

**High Park Resource Group** – several times per year, High Park program groups report on their activities through the Park supervisor

## **PAST ACTIVITIES OF THE HIGH PARK NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

For information on past activities of the NEC, please read the back issues of our UPDATE newsletter, posted [here](#).