

ROUGE RIVER MARSHES REHABILITATION PROJECT

PROJECT GOAL

Located at the Scarborough-Pickering border, the Rouge River Marshes makes up 55% of the total remaining wetland area in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The Rouge Marshes support a variety of plants and animals, many of which are classified as vulnerable by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Historically, the Rouge River Marshes provided important breeding grounds for sport and commercial fisheries, as well as for wildlife. The goals of the Rouge River Marshes Restoration Project are to:

- Create habitat for wildlife, reduce turbidity, and increase oxygen levels by re-establishing a healthy wetland plant community.
- Naturalize the southern shoreline of the marsh.
- Control non-native invasive plants including Purple Loosestrife and Phragmites.
- Create a healthy urban wetland ecosystem that provides recreational opportunities such as fishing, canoeing, and bird watching.

THE NEED



Rouge Marshes Shoreline Before Rehabilitation

High siltation and turbidity, establishment of invasive species, increased flooding and erosion, encroaching development, and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat plague today's Rouge River Marshes. This flooded river mouth receives all the sediment, pollution, and nutrients from the entire Rouge River Watershed. Although the wetland can filter a large proportion of water before it enters Lake Ontario, urban development upstream has increased the filtration needs beyond the capabilities of the wetland.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Rouge Marshes After Rehabilitation

Ontario Streams and our partners initiated rehabilitation plans for the Rouge River Marshes in 1998. Restoration work accomplished included: re-grading of the shoreline, installation of fencing and netting to control Canada Geese and carp access, garbage removal, removal of invasive vegetation, and planting of native wetland vegetation to establish a natural wetland plant community. Bird boxes, osprey nesting platforms, and turtle basking logs were also installed to increase the amount of habitat available. The re-establishment of the wetland plant community has created habitat for numerous species of birds, reptiles, mammals, and amphibians. The vegetation has

also created spawning habitat essential to the survival of many fish species. Water quality has improved due to an increase in the amount of dissolved oxygen and a decrease in turbidity as the plants slow the flow of the water, causing fine sediment to drop from the water column.

PARTNERS

The Rouge River Marshes Rehabilitation Project has received financial, in-kind, and volunteer support from hundreds of groups, individuals, and organizations. Volunteer support from the community has exceeded 2,500 hours. Our major funding partners include:

- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Canada Ontario Agreement Funding and Community Fisheries and Wildlife Program,
- Environment Canada's Great Lakes Sustainability Fund
- The City of Toronto
- The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- Rouge Park