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## **Dufferin Aggregates Acton Quarry Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Meeting Minutes**

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<b>Date:</b>	Monday January 13, 2014 – 7pm - 8:45pm	
<b>Location:</b>	Acton Quarry Office, 12791 Churchill Road, Acton	
<b>Chair:</b>	Courtney Somers	Smithcom Limited
<b>Participants:</b>	Norm Elliot	Local Neighbour
	Norm Young	Local Neighbour
	Paul Vanhanen	Bruce Trail Conservancy
	Rob McDougall	Dufferin Aggregates
	Enzo Bertucci	Dufferin Aggregates
	Monica Gunn	Vision Advisory Committee (VAC) and local neighbour
	Ron Heller	Acton East Housing Corp.
	Anthony Goodban	Ecology Consultant from GEC Consulting
<b>Facilitation and minutes:</b>	Courtney Somers and Molly Wilkie – Smithcom Limited	

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### **Minutes**

Courtney Somers started the meeting by prompting the CAP to review the minutes. CAP members reviewed and approved the October 7, 2013 minutes.

### **Operations Update**

Rob McDougall gave an update on the Acton Quarry operations:

- Due to the ice storm over the holidays, generators had to be moved in so that pumps could be turned on. There are some large expenses ahead due to frozen pumps.
- January 13<sup>th</sup> was the first day back for the maintenance crew, who will begin winter repairs this week through until March.

### **Update on Acton Extension Application**

Enzo Bertucci explained that The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has committed to having a decision on the extension by the end of January.

He explained that Dufferin Aggregates made an agreement with the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) to maintain (cutting the grasses etc.) phases five, six and seven.



### **Presentation from Ecology Consultant Anthony Goodban from GEC Consulting**

Enzo Bertucci introduced Anthony Goodban from Goodban Ecological Consulting (GEC) Inc., who provided a detailed description into the science, strategy and rationale behind the decisions that have been made within the extension proposal.

### **Acton Quarry Extension Presentation, Anthony Goodban from GEC**

Anthony Goodban explained that he and a team of ecologists from several other companies have worked on the Acton Quarry Extension application since 2007. Over the past 6 years, there has been a lot of dialogue, meetings and site visits with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Niagara Escarpment Commission, Region of Halton, Credit Valley Conservation and Conservation Halton which has enabled substantial amount of input and feedback on what has been proposed in terms of ecological enhancements.

Anthony Goodban explained that there is an Ecological Enhancement Plan in place and they are currently in the third iteration of, which was put into place last June. The Ecological Enhancement Plan is one of three pieces that dictate what the site will look like through progressive rehabilitation and the final rehabilitation of the site. He explained that the Ecological Enhancement Plan deals with Dufferin Aggregates land that is outside the license area, which means this land will not be licensed or extracted in the future. There are also ecological enhancements that will occur within the licensed area on lands that won't be extracted.

Anthony Goodban outlined a list of the key components in the Ecological Enhancement Plan:

- Tree Planting – Reforestation (34.5 ha)
- Active Thicket and Woodland Management (42.6 ha)
- Grassland Creation and Management (10 ha grassland)
- Amphibian Pool/Wetland Creation (6 pools)
- Wetland Enhancement (0.4 ha at 4 locations)
- Creation of 4 Turtle Nesting Sites Near Existing Ponds

### **Tree planting**

Anthony Goodban explained that within the license area there are another 5 and a half hectares that will be reforested. 16 hectares will be reforested after the extension is issued and the remainder will be planted between year 6 and year 15. By year 15 all the areas that have been identified for reforestation will have been planted.

Significant Woodlands are identified by the Region of Halton and the Town of Halton Hills using a number of criteria:

- Anthony Goodban made reference to a map and outlined the yellow boundary areas that will become woodlands.
- He explained that over time, all of the tree-planting efforts will increase the extent of Significant Woodlands, enhancing conditions for a variety of species dependent on larger blocks of forested habitat, including the Jefferson Salamander and area-sensitive forest bird species.



### **Thicket Management**

Anthony Goodban explained that thicket areas are areas that are sparse but contain a lot of tall shrubs.

- As part of the Enhancement Plan, Dufferin Aggregates will control the invasive species such as Common Buckthorn (an aggressive shrub) and treat the stumps with herbicide and plant species.
- All 22 hectares are outside the Significant Woodland boundaries right now, the management goal is to promote woodland conditions and expand these Significant Woodlands.

### **Woodland Management**

There are also 20 hectares of land within the Significant Woodlands that are proposed for land management.

- These areas are comprised of mainly early successional and/or disturbed forest lands that will benefit from some management, especially the control of invasive species such as Common Buckthorn.
- Woodland management activities will occur gradually over 15 years after extension is issued.

Anthony Goodban explained that the reforestation and thicket management enhancements would, over time, expand Significant Woodlands by 72.3 ha. He made reference to a map of the Acton Quarry, which outlined the areas that will contribute to Significant Woodlands in yellow

He explained that there are many steps to preparing and planning the enhancement plan, this includes:

- Submitting plans to the appropriate agencies
- Monitoring
- Maintenance

Enzo Bertucci explained that with this application Dufferin Aggregates is providing a number of different community enhancements that will benefit both the ecological phase or creation of new jobs. The Ecological Enhancement plan is just one of the community enhancements that Dufferin Aggregates is currently promoting.

### **Grassland creation and management**

Anthony Goodban explained that North of Phase 4 there is a 10ha area of Dufferin-owned land that is in active agricultural use (crop rotation). This area is proposed as a grassland management area.

- Old-field grasslands may provide habitat for species at risk such as the Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink and Barn Swallow.
- This 10 ha area will be converted from row crops to old field meadow habitat (mix of grasses and wildflowers)
- With the lands going into public ownership, these lands would accommodate trails as well.

### **Amphibian pool creation**

Anthony Goodban explained that there are currently 6 wetland pools proposed and they have been strategically located. For instance, close to blocks of forest or to ground water monitoring wells.

- Pools will have characteristics that will support amphibian-breeding functions.
- Pool "G" was constructed in fall 2011 as a pilot project.
- Pool "G" has had excellent results so far, including establishment of wetland vegetation and 5-amphibian species breeding.



### **Wetland enhancements**

Anthony Goodban explained that there are 4 small areas that are proposed to be restored, covering approximately 0.4 ha in total. The wetlands and adjacent areas proposed for restoration and enhancement include an informal camp site, an old farm lane crossing with deep rutting, ditch lines within a deciduous swamp, and a wetland swale with limited woody cover.

### **Turtle nesting areas**

Anthony Goodban explained that Dufferin Aggregates also proposes to construct at least 4 turtle nesting sites next to ponds within wetlands W1 (H19) and W9 (H16c).

- Dimensions will be approximately 8-10cm x 4-5m and the nesting areas will be positioned to provide south and/or south-west exposure.
- Turtles like to nest in gravel and sandy substrates. Suitable granular materials will be piled on top of landscape fabric (up to 1.5m deep).

Norm Young asked what would happen if Dufferin Aggregates does not obtain the license?

- Anthony Goodban explained that everything would stay where it is now. Some of the areas could go back into agricultural use.

Norm Young asked whether Dufferin Aggregates would sell off the property?

- Rob McDougall said that that is not in the plan as they are hoping to receive the extension.

Anthony Goodban explained that what may be approved may not be the full plan. The areas that are currently forests and wetlands would stay the same since they are already protected because they are in Significant Woodlands or the Niagara Escarpment

Norm Elliot asked whether JART has all of this information?

- Anthony Goodban explained that they have met with JART numerous times and have received feedback.
- Enzo Bertucci added that Dufferin Aggregates has revised and changed many aspects of the Ecological Enhancement Plan based on the feedback they received from JART.

Norm Elliot asked what types of turtle species are currently on the site?

- Anthony Goodban explained that painted turtles and snapping turtles are currently on the site. These turtles were already present on site, so existing habitats will be enhanced to provide a better environment for the species.

Anthony Goodban explained he has not worked on another project that has such a high level of commitment made to enhance and restore lands that will not be extracted.

### **Other biodiversity projects**

Anthony Goodban explained there are many other biodiversity projects that Dufferin Aggregates is involved in:

- Acton Quarry: Dufferin will construct a Barn Swallow nesting structure in the spring of 2014.
- Milton Quarry: Dufferin constructed 969m of salamander drift fence to direct salamanders away from the future extraction area.



Enzo Bertucci suggested a CAP meeting later in the year, which would include further information from Anthony Goodban, and provide more detail on the other projects that Dufferin Aggregates is involved in.

### **Amphibian Pool Pilot Project – Pool “G” Update**

Anthony Goodban explained that the purpose of the Pool G Pilot project was to study and monitor the naturalization process and identify opportunities to optimize pool creation methods based on real-world local experience and collaboration with interested agencies.

Anthony Goodban explained that Dufferin Aggregates obtained approvals from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Conservation Halton to construct an amphibian pool/wetland as a pilot project.

- Pool G was planned and designed to suit the local site conditions and intended ecological features and function, including amphibian breeding.
- Pool area and vicinity was instrumented to assist in design proportion (e.g. using data from existing monitoring well and piezometers). Pool water is a combination of groundwater and surface water; no pumping is required to maintain seasonal water levels.
- Since the pond was constructed in Jefferson Salamander habitat, Dufferin Aggregates consulted with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and they provided a letter of advice.
- Dufferin Aggregates needed a permit to construct the pond from Conservation Halton because it was within 100 meters of a provincially approved wetland.
- Approvals from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Conservation Halton were received in October 2011.

Construction of the Amphibian Demonstration Pool ‘G’ commenced in October 2011 and was largely complete by November 2011.

- Anthony Goodban references photos from November 7, 2011 when initial construction, tree-planting and seeding was completed.
- The pool was excavated to a particular depth and graded such that water levels are passively maintained by groundwater and surface water inputs.

Fall 2011: Native Trees and vegetation were planted and habitat was constructed to support wetland functions:

- 17 large Sugar Maples were planted (4 to 10cm in diameter at breast height) to establish a partial tree canopy over the ponds for the salamanders.
- Upland slopes were seeded with a “park mix” comprising of Red Fescue, Rye Grass and Clovers.
- Woody material and rocks were placed in and around Pool G to provide some structure and cover.
- The wetland area was seeded with wetland plant seeds collected from local wetlands (e.g. Beggar’s-ticks, Water-plantain, Sedges, etc).

Anthony Goodban references photos from the spring 2012 when Pool ‘G’ began to green.

- April 18, 2012: Wetland vegetation is gradually becoming established around pool margins
- May 15, 2012: American Toad and Northern Leopard Frog observed. Tadpoles were observed in the pool, during the first spring/summer season after construction. Toadlets were observed leaving the pool.



Additional activities undertaken to further improve pool conditions and to monitoring pool establishment include:

- Top-dressed disturbed upland areas and re-seeded with Park Seed Mixture.
- Sowed wetlands seeds including Asters, Blue Vervain, Narrow-leaved Goldenrod and Sedges.
- Transplanted several Eastern Manna Grass. This species grows in deeper water and has some floating-leaves, which will provide more cover in the pool.
- Placed additional cover objects (e.g. cedar rails) in wetland and on slopes.
- Planted 40 Red-osier Dogwoods at/around high-water mark.
- Planted additional trees (e.g. 15 Eastern White Cedar and 15 Bur Oak) between pool and adjacent woodlands and hedgerow.
- Continued pool monitoring including:
  - Monthly photo monitoring
  - Monthly monitoring of water levels
  - Frog call surveys, egg mass surveys from perimeter, vegetation surveys, and general wetland/pool reconnaissance.

#### 2013 – Wildlife and Plants

Breeding amphibians documented at Pool G in 2012 and/or 2013 include:

- American Toad (adults calling/observed, tadpoles observed, toadlets observed leaving pool)
- Gray Treefrog (adults calling/observed)
- Green Frog (adults calling/observed, tadpoles observed, froglets observed leaving pool)
- Northern Leopard Frog (adults calling/observed, egg masses observed, froglets observed leaving pool)
- Spotted Salamander (egg masses observed)

Other wildlife observations:

- Dragonfly species such as the Common Green Darner and Common Whitetail were observed laying eggs in Pool G as of June 2013.
- Signs of White-tailed Deer, Raccoon, etc., around pool margins
- 30 native plant species have been established
- Anthony Goodban believes that this spring the site will see spring peepers and wood frogs.

Anthony Goodban explained that although it is still early in the process there are positive results. In less than 1 year, Pool 'G' development and exhibited initial wetland pool characteristics and continues to rapidly develop.



### **Question and Answers**

Norm Young asked whether Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER) have seen this presentation?

- Enzo Bertucci explained that POWER has received the documents reports outlined in the presentation.

Norm Elliot asked whether approval will happen this year?

- Enzo Bertucci explained that with the upcoming municipal elections it is difficult to predict. Unless approval is received before June, it is likely there will not be a decision until January 2015.

Paul Vanhanen asked if Dufferin Aggregates receives approval, will this committee continue on?

- Enzo Bertucci explained, yes the committee will continue and a corporate review will take place to establish new topics.

Monica Gunn asked if the approval would be based on something that has already been submitted or whether it is a moldable idea?

- Enzo Bertucci explained that the board will likely work with what is in front of them, which is why Dufferin Aggregates has ecologists working through the plan.

Paul Vanhanen raised the issue that fences are being trampled and horses are crossing Dufferin Aggregates property.

- Enzo Bertucci explained that he will follow up Knox Equestrian Services and ensure there is appropriate signage.

### **Possible next meeting dates:**

- Courtney Somers will send out two dates for an April meeting

### **Topics:**

- Melissa Kelly will be doing a CSR workshop. She is Holcim's Corporate Social Responsibility Specialist.
- Acton Quarry Site walk in June with Anthony Goodan

Courtney Somers brought the meeting to a close.

Adjourn