



Etobicoke and Mimico
Creeks

CreekTime

Spring 2002

ISSN 1492-675X • VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

The How to Make a Difference Edition

This edition of CreekTime is dedicated to all the volunteers and stewards of our local ecosystems and our Etobicoke and Mimico Creek watersheds.

Our ecosystems are changing

and so is our climate. This is happening in part because of mass urban development, deforestation and things we do right at home. It's true: the things we do in our backyards are affecting the global ecosystem and climate.

It's time we all started to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** - in our backyards, in our communities and in our watershed. Help us make a Living City Region!

Do you need a place to start?

Undertake a backyard wildlife habitat project! It's not difficult. Just follow these steps!

YOURS TO PROTECT

Building Your Own Backyard Habitat

Many of us live in heavily urbanized watersheds where natural habitat has been altered to make way for buildings, roadways and city parks. Species that once relied on these natural spaces are in desperate need of new habitat that meets their four essential requirements for survival. You can create this opportunity for them by providing habitat in your own backyard. Healthy yards can be created anywhere – at home, school and workplaces. It's fun, easy, and relatively inexpensive. Just follow this four-step program.

Step 1: Assess Your Yard or Garden Space

- Create a sketch or plan of your yard - have your whole family, a group of co-workers, or the environmental club at school participate!

On your plan, mark the following:

- existing trees and shrubs, flower beds, and if you can, note the species names
- existing habitat areas, including food, water, cover and places to raise young. This could be a meadow, pond or thick-
et of evergreens
- existing structures that provide habitat elements, such as bird baths or feeders, nesting boxes, and rock or brush piles



- existing areas where you practice resource conservation, such as composting areas or no-watering zones
- note the physical features of your yard, such as sun and wind exposure and soil conditions

Step 2: Provide Wildlife Habitat

Add to the plan any places where you can provide or augment food and water sources, improve cover, and give birds, animals and amphibians places to raise their young. These are important habitat elements that all species require for survival.

- Select native plants suited to the conditions for your property that provide food (fruits, seeds, nuts and nectar) for both resident and migratory species.
- Provide supplemental food sources, such as bird feeders too. Provide water sources, such as a bird-bath or small pond.
- Do not intro-



duce non- native wildlife such as red-eared sliders and goldfish to ponds. Plant groupings of evergreens. Good choices are cedar, pine and hemlock.

- Plant deciduous shrubs.
- Build rock, log, and mulch piles. Add or keep dead and dying trees; plant trees and shrubs; add logs, brush and compost piles; build nesting boxes; add ponds and wetlands; plant butterfly meadows; don't use pesticides – young will not survive and parents will be harmed by the chemicals.

Step 3: Practice Resource Conservation

Conserving resources will not only help the wildlife in your own yard but will help improve the health of your community's environment. Here are some recommendations:

- Reduce grass area and eliminate pesticide use
- Manage stormwater
- Plant an organic fruit and vegetable garden
- Compost and recycle
- Improve winter maintenance
- Reduce contributions to smog
- Control domestic pets
- Reduce litter

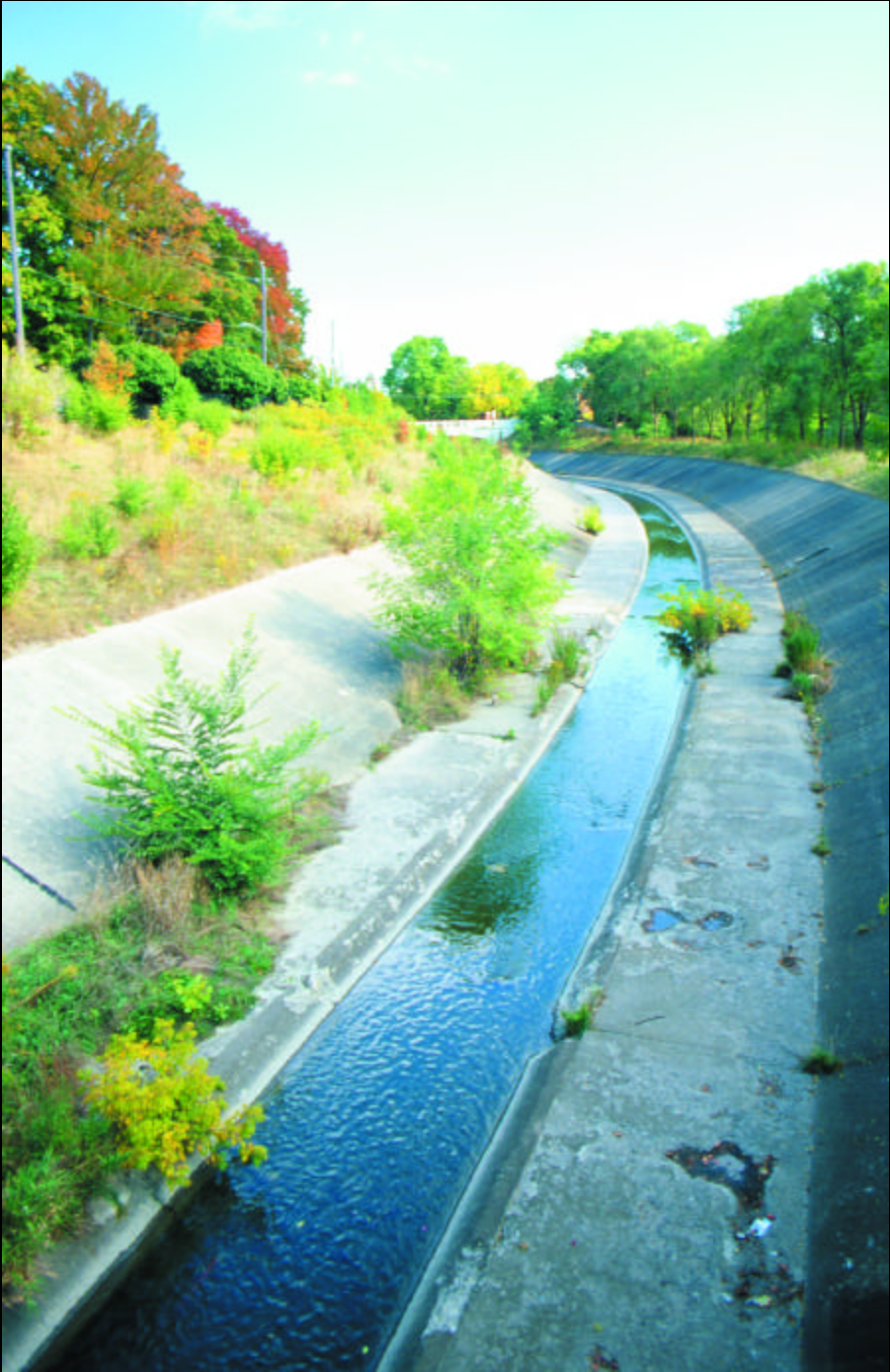
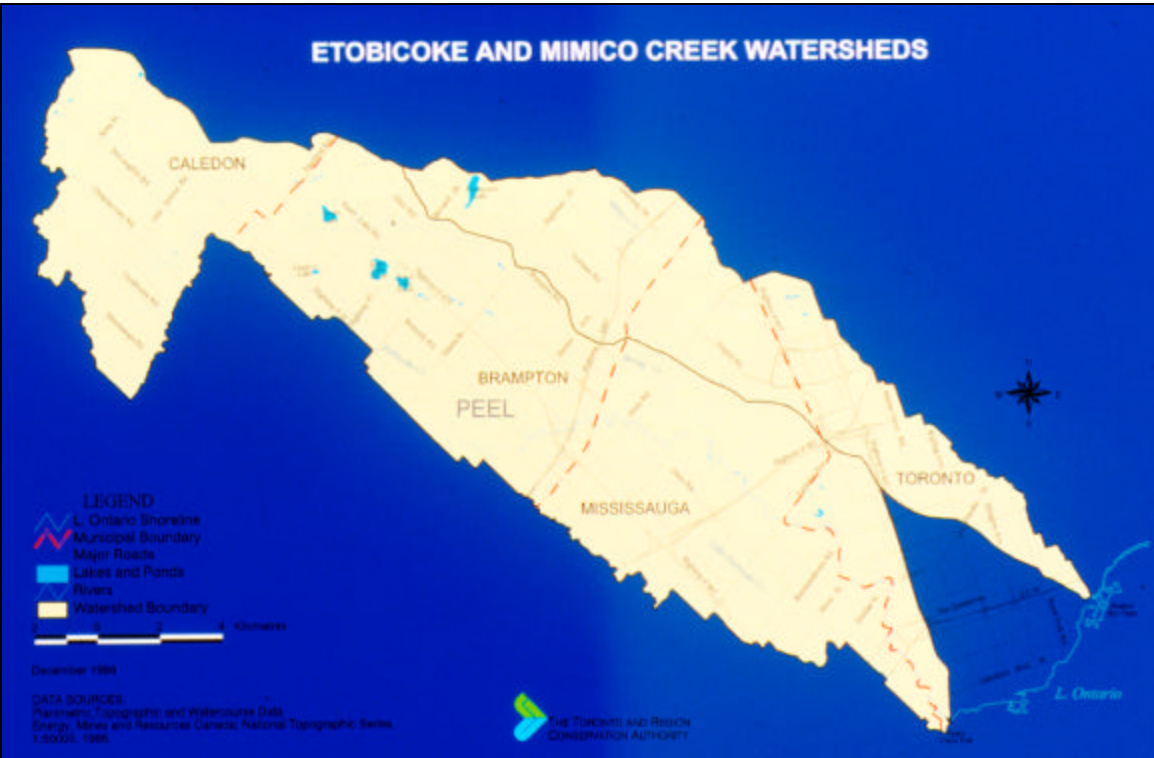
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Step 4: Let others know what you have done

- E-mail Beth Williston at bwilliston@trca.on.ca to let us know about your healthy yard!
- Certify your yard as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. Complete the application form available from www.nwf.org/habitats/ .
- Schools and community groups can register projects with the Evergreen Foundation at www.evergreen.on.ca
- Post a sign in your yard telling others what you’ve done - see www.trca.on.ca or www.gca.ca/pesticides.htm or www.nwf.org/habitats/
- If your have children, give each child a 1 x 1 metre area in your yard and let them create their own wildlife habitat with the four basic habitat elements listed in Step 3.
- Talk to your friends and neighbours. Let them know what you are doing and why.

If you’re interested in finding out more, visit the Canada Wildlife Federation’s website at www.cwf-fcf.org or the National Wildlife Federation’s web site, www.nwf.org. It’s teeming with information for ‘habitizing’ your backyard.



Make a Difference in your Watersheds

The Etobicoke Mimico Creek Watersheds Coalition

Your chance to get involved in greening your watershed is coming fast.

Who The Etobicoke and Mimico Creek Watersheds Coalition will be comprised of:

- People living and working in the watersheds
- Representatives of environmental groups within the watersheds
- Elected officials from municipalities in the watersheds
- Staff representatives from government agencies.

Watershed Coalitions (also called alliances or regeneration councils) have been in place on the Don Watershed for six years and on the Humber watershed for the past four years.

What If past experience in the Humber, Don and Rouge watersheds is any indication, the Etobicoke/Mimico Watershed Coalition will become a critical and influential body for expressing community concerns, taking action, and coordinating

cooperative efforts with other regional groups. The Coalition’s primary responsibility will be to oversee the implementation of the soon-to-be published Greening Our Watersheds: Revitalization Strategies for the Etobicoke and Mimico Creek Watersheds.

Where The Coalition will be responsible for the 77 square kilometres of Mimico Creek watershed and the 211 square kilometres of Etobicoke Creek watershed.

When We plan to initiate the Coalition in June of 2002. It will sit for about three years, at which time a new Coalition will be formed for another three-year term.

Why For our quality of life! Clean air, clean water, healthy people, and biodiversity.
For action! Community Interest = Commitment at many levels

For funding! True commitment = \$\$\$\$
For awareness, education and communication! The Coalition will be a communication pipeline into the watershed communities.

To be healthy again, the Creeks need a voice. Contact Beth Williston at bwilliston@trca.on.ca. or 416-661-6600, ext. 5263 to find out how you can help.



Four Simple Ways to Make a Difference
in your Community
An easy reference guide

- 1. Attend a planting event, keep in touch with CreekTime, or call 416-661-6600 for a listing of planting events on the creeks. Better yet, check out our web site at www.trca.on.ca for information.
- 2. Adopt-a-Park Call your local municipal parks department to help protect the health of your community parks and getaway spots.
- 3. Join a Community Action Area stewardship group The soon-to-be-formed Etobicoke and Mimico Creek Watersheds Coalition will be establishing community-based councils in local areas around the watersheds.
- 4. Get involved with local improvement projects and watershed- wide planning. Let ‘em know what you think! Stand up and be heard.

Community Action Areas

In some ways, we’re lucky in the Etobicoke and Mimico watersheds. The creeks are small, and the communities are closely knit. This means that even though they are two of the most degraded streams in the whole Greater Toronto Area, there is hope for revitalization. That hope is the people who live near the creeks will get involved.

“How?” you may be asking. Well, we think we have the answer. When the Etobicoke-Mimico Watersheds Task Force developed Greening Our Watersheds, they did not want the document to sit on a shelf. They wanted it to be used by communities. To do this they developed plans for Community Action Areas.

Nineteen of these plans will need to be developed to cover the entire watershed area. The task force completed the first three. They are:

- 1. **South Mimico** - in Etobicoke, from the mouth of the creek north to Bloor Street
- 2. **Malton** - pretty much the whole community of Malton in Mississauga
- 3. **Heart Lake** - this includes an area greater than just the Conservation Area, it extends from just north of Mayfield Road to Bovaird Drive, and from just east of Heart Lake Road to Kennedy Road.

Some of the recommendations of the plans include habitat and trail linkages, stewardship and education initiatives, and re-development opportunities. Stewardship groups will begin to implement these three plans this spring.

If you live in one of the areas and would like to be involved, contact Beth Williston at 416-661-6600, ext. 5263. Plans for the remaining Community Action Areas will be developed by the future Watersheds Coalition over the next five years. Stay tuned to CreekTime for updates.

The Three Levels of Action

- Action At Home
 - Backyards
- Community Action
 - Community Action Sites
- Watershed/Regional Level Involvement
 - Etobicoke and Mimico Creeks Coalition



Spill on Mimico Creek

Mimico Creek is highly polluted and degraded for a number of reasons. First, it is 77 percent urbanized. Most of the stormwater runoff from the urban area runs directly from your home, business or street, through the storm drains and storm sewers, to the creek. There is NO treatment for most of this water. This means two things. The water entering the creek is polluted - filled with pesticides, sediments, road oils and salt. Second, the stormwater entering the creek after a storm or during the spring thaw does so at an exceedingly rapid pace. This causes erosion (yes, you can all think of some place on the creek where it is eroding), and it destroys fish habitat.

A second reason that the creek is polluted is that there are many spills - both reported and unreported - from the industrial areas or from road intersections.

On April 11, at approximately 8:30 am, one of these such spills occurred on Mimico Creek. An estimated volume of 500,000 litres of cutting oil and stormwater was released from a stormwater management facility when a pipe, containing the contaminated mess, broke. Water quality tests for BOD (to determine the amount of oxygen available for aquatic species) and heavy metals (the stormwater facility was privately owned by a car recycling company, Triple M Metals in Brampton). We'll know the amount of damage done when the reports are released. The Ministry of the Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada all have power to lay charges depending on the results of the investigation.

In the meantime, there are lots of things that you can do. Change your own backyard practices -- make sure that there is nothing harmful leaving your property and entering the creek. If you see a spill, report it IMMEDIATELY - the MOE Spill Hotline number is 416-392-9941. If you want to be involved in the long term restoration of the creek, then join the Watersheds Coalition (see page 3).

Note: for those of you concerned about Etobicoke Creek, the state of the watershed is very similar, and so too should be your actions to restore it!

Creek Babble

Take a Hike

City of Toronto and TRCA staff took a hike up Mimico Creek from VanDusen to Eglinton last fall. We were looking for areas to regenerate - and we found a lot. It includes riparian corridors, forests, storm water improvements and fish barrier removal. Our list is pretty extensive. Let Beth Williston know if you would like to be involved. bwilliston@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600 ext. 5263.

Greening Our Watersheds is now written and currently in the design and layout stage. The launch of the strategy document will occur on June 8, at Heart Lake C.V.

Water quality and visual aesthetics monitoring. Thanks to all who took part in the fall surveys. Results will be detailed in the next issue of CreekTime, along with information on how you can get involved monitoring flora and fauna in the watersheds.



Where in the Watershed is It?

Answer from Land Edition, Spring 2001:
Lester B. Pearson International Airport.

This month's Photo.
Where is this?????

photo provided by Rosemary Hasner

Wildlife Sightings

Coyotes have been seen near the mouth of Mimico Creek. If you see one, do not feed it. Feeding any type of wildlife disrupts the natural balance of the ecosystem.



Events

May 9 - Heart Lake Girl Guide Planting at Heart Lake

May 11 - 10 am to 1 pm
Launch of the South Mimico Stewardship Group; all interested in Mimico Creek between the Mouth and Bloor street should plan to attend; Hydro Lands (off The Queensway).

June 5,6,7 - Peel Children's Groundwater Festival; by reservation for school groups only; Heart Lake Conservation Area

June 8 - 10 am to 4 pm
Peel Children's Groundwater Festival Family Day - ALL WELCOME - FREE; Heart Lake CA;

June 8 - Release of Greening Our Watersheds: Revitalization Strategies for Etobicoke & Mimico Creek at Heart Lake CA

June 8 - Launch of the Etobicoke-Mimico Watersheds Coalition at Heart Lake CA