

**Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan  
Communications and Consultation Summary  
Phase 2, Stage 2**

October 2019

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# 1 Context for This Report

Carruthers Creek is a relatively small watershed with a drainage area of approximately 38 km<sup>2</sup>, ranging from 2-3km in width and 18km in length (See Appendix 1). It is the easternmost watershed in Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's jurisdiction and is located entirely within the Region of Durham with a population of approximately 41,000 residents. Carruthers Creek's headwaters form to the south of the Oak Ridges Moraine, in the City of Pickering, and the creek enters Lake Ontario in the Town of Ajax. The watershed is mainly rural north of Highway 7 and urbanized south of Taunton Road to the lakeshore. From Highway 7 south to Taunton Road, the majority of lands are in the Protected Countryside of the provincial Greenbelt.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), in partnership with the [Region of Durham](#) is undertaking an update to [the last Watershed Plan for Carruthers Creek](#), which was completed in 2003. TRCA will assess the many changes and impacts which have occurred in the Carruthers Creek watershed since 2003 and review the current conditions of the watershed through a multi-year process. The updated Watershed Plan will not make decisions about land use however; it will make recommendations for the protection, restoration, enhancement and overall management of the watershed that will guide future decision making for the watershed.

The goal of communication and consultation is to inform and consult with the public and stakeholders in and neighbouring the watershed to create awareness about the updated Watershed Plan and to review and consider input as the watershed plan progresses. TRCA hired a third party Consultation Advisor to ensure an independent, credible consultation process. Public input is important to establish the updated Watershed Plan [Vision Statement](#) and to consider public and stakeholder feedback on Management Recommendations. A new Watershed Plan will aim to protect Carruthers Creek's ecological health now and for years to come.

Phase 1 of the project, which culminated in the preparation of seven peer-reviewed technical reports characterising the watershed's existing conditions, was completed in Fall 2017. Phase 1 did not include public consultation as the work was completed by technical staff. Phase 2 of the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan update has been initiated; the process is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Phase 2 Key Tasks for updating the Watershed Plan

1	Establish updated goals and objectives for the watershed.
2	Based on the conditions observed through Phase 1 and other watershed health assessments, develop targets for the watershed and identify the actions required to achieve the goals and objectives.
3	Establish watershed response methodologies / assessments that will be used to measure how the watershed could be expected to respond to changes in land use and other factors, such as climate change.
4	Develop, model and evaluate five scenarios for the watershed, consisting of historic conditions, existing conditions, approved development (as per current Official Plan designations), enhanced natural heritage system, and a development scenario with an enhanced natural heritage system.
5	Formulate and evaluate candidate management actions to achieve the desired state of watershed health.
6	Develop Management Recommendations.
7	Deliver the completed Watershed Plan.

As part of Phase 2, TRCA is undertaking extensive stakeholder and public consultation. Consultation will occur in stages throughout Phase 2 of the Watershed Plan update and will follow the [Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Communications and Consultation Strategy](#). The *Communications and Consultation Strategy* was received by [Durham Regional Council in May 2018](#), and time lines were refined at Council's request in June 2018. It is a dynamic document that is adapted to respond to communications and consultation needs and opportunities as the work proceeds.

Phase 2, Stage 1 involved updating the Vision which will guide this new Watershed Plan. During this initial stage, communications and consultation were undertaken to seek input on the Vision for the Watershed Plan. Consultation in Phase 2, Stage 2 had the main objective of soliciting feedback on the draft Management Recommendations and Phase 2, Stage 3 will solicit feedback on the draft Watershed Plan, including the technical work completed as part of Phase 2. The [Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Communications and Consultation Summary \(Phase 2, Stage 1\)](#) was received by [Durham Region Planning and Economic Development Committee in May 2019](#).

This report is a compilation of the communications and consultation by TRCA on Phase 2, Stage 2 which were undertaken from October 1, 2018 to October 18, 2019. It outlines the public process objectives which guided the communications and consultation and describes the methods and activities used to inform and consult the public and stakeholders.

## 2 Communications and Consultation for Phase 2

### 2.1 Public Process Objectives

A key objective of Phase 2, Stage 2 was to continue to promote awareness and interest in the watershed planning process. Durham Region and TRCA are committed to a process to develop the Watershed Plan that provides opportunities for residents and stakeholders to learn about the health of the watershed and to share issues and ideas for protecting the health of Carruthers Creek watershed.

The purpose of the consultation for Phase 2, Stage 2 was to:

- Continue to raise awareness about the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.
- Continue to inform partners, stakeholders, and the public about the watershed planning process.
- Gather feedback on the draft Management Framework (including Goals, Objectives, Indicators, Targets, and Management Recommendations) that was developed by integrating Phase 1 and Phase 2 technical work.

### 2.2 Audiences for Communications and Consultation: Who was consulted?

The Region of Durham, Town of Ajax, and City of Pickering (Councils, Staff and Advisory Committees) have a key role in protecting the health of the watershed and implementing the 2003 Watershed Plan and the new updated plan. As such, the groups mentioned above are a key audience and stakeholder in all stages of the watershed planning process and some were already actively engaging the public on issues they identified within the Carruthers Creek watershed prior to the initiation of the Watershed Plan update.

The Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan will also be of interest to residents across Ajax and Pickering (in and neighbouring the Carruthers Creek watershed), environmental stakeholders, land owners, farmers, golf course operators, businesses, and land developers.

Various audiences have different levels of knowledge of, and interest in, the watershed and communications and consultation methods were geared to these different audiences. Methods utilized are outlined in Section 3 of this report.

Additional stakeholders expected to be affected by, and who will have an interest in, this Watershed Plan continue to be identified as work to develop the plan progresses.

### 3 Communications and Consultation Activities: What methods were used?

The communications and consultation efforts used various formats and tools to share information and gather input. The following provides an overview of the communications and consultation methods used during Phase 2, Stage 2 and should be read in conjunction with Section 4 of this report which describes what was heard.

**Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Project Website:** The website [yoursay.ca/carruthers-creek](https://yoursay.ca/carruthers-creek) was developed for the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan update as a mobile device-friendly online portal for information on watershed features, current issues, technical work completed as part of the Watershed Plan, and projects occurring in the watershed. Also, regular blog posts help to inform the public about various aspects of the Plan including technical work, consultation, and general watershed news. As part of Stage 2, 15 blog posts were uploaded on the website. The website provides information on how the Plan is being developed, identifying the Phases of work, and includes feedback mechanisms for receiving comments. From October 1, 2018 (the end of Phase 2, Stage 1) to October 18, 2019 (end of Phase 2, Stage 2) the website has received approximately 1400 visits and there has been 845 individual downloads of the various documents uploaded in the Reports and Resources section of the website.

**Dedicated Carruthers Creek email – [carruthers@trca.on.ca](mailto:carruthers@trca.on.ca):** A dedicated email address was established for the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan update to provide a single point of contact for residents and stakeholders to provide input. This dedicated email address was promoted through a media release and post cards distributed throughout the watershed. TRCA's Project Manager receives, responds to, and documents emails from this address.

**Online Survey:** No online survey was completed during Phase 2, Stage 2. To see information about the Comment Form completed as part of the Public Open House process, please see *Public Open House* section below.

**Post Cards:** A post card was developed and distributed by TRCA, the Town of Ajax and the City of Pickering at public events since October 2018 to raise awareness of the Watershed Plan and direct people to the project website and project email address. Over 2000 postcards have been distributed since the initiation of Phase 2 consultation.

**Public Open Houses:** A Public Open House was hosted on October 8, 2019 in Ajax and on October 10, 2019 in Pickering. TRCA staff with technical expertise, public outreach training and experience facilitated the open houses and presented the [Information Panels](#) to attendees. Each open house consisted of five interactive stations that focused on the watershed planning process. These stations included:

- Watershed planning station that described what a watershed is and what the watershed planning process is and why it is important. This station also gave a brief introduction about the Carruthers Creek watershed.

- Watershed characterization station that described the current conditions of the Carruthers Creek watershed and the main issues identified throughout the technical work.
- Scenario analysis station that presented mapping of the scenarios developed for analysis and the implications the scenarios would have on the watershed.
- Next steps station that encouraged participants to submit their feedback and questions on a [Comment Form](#). This station also described what the timeline and next steps are for the watershed plan process.

The open houses were effective at raising awareness of the watershed plan and at soliciting feedback on the draft Management Framework. 50 residents attended the open houses and the materials were downloaded 71 times on the Project Website during the comment period. In total, 16 Comment Forms were completed and submitted. When asked how well the Public Open Houses described the process and purpose of watershed planning, 64% of respondents answered “Well” and 27% answered “Very Well”.

**Staff to Staff meetings:** Regular update meetings were held between staff of Region of Durham, Town of Ajax, City of Pickering, and TRCA. The meetings provide an opportunity for broad discussion related to the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan amongst different departmental staff from each municipality. Further, TRCA regularly coordinates directly with municipal staff through teleconferences, emails and correspondence on a variety of issues and technical studies throughout the process. Group meetings will continue at regular intervals and key milestones throughout Stage 3. A comprehensive list of the communications and consultation activities undertaken for Phase 2, Stage 2, including all municipal partner meetings, can be seen in Appendix 2.

**Presentations/Reports to Councils and Committees:** TRCA presented to Councils and Advisory Committees to provide an overview of the watershed planning process, information on the health of the watershed, and to seek feedback on the draft Management Framework. Presentations to Councils and Committees were effective for clarifying the purpose and approach for the watershed planning process and receiving input.

Presentations and/or reports were presented to the following groups:

- Town of Ajax Community Affairs and Planning Committee
- City of Pickering Planning and Development Committee
- Durham Region Planning and Economic Development Committee
- TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance
- TRCA Board of Directors
- Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade Eco-business Advisory Committee

A comprehensive list of the communications and consultation activities undertaken for Phase 2, Stage 2, including all presentations to Councils, Committees, and Boards, can be seen in Appendix 2.

## 4 What we Heard

Key goals of Phase 2, Stage 2 of the communications and consultation were to promote awareness of the watershed planning process, to inform the public and stakeholders on how they could provide input, and to solicit feedback on the draft Management Framework. Generally, the feedback received on the draft Management Framework was positive with suggestions for clarification or additions that will be considered in the draft Watershed Plan. Public input received throughout Phase 2, Stage 2 could be categorised in four key topics as follows:

1. Discussion and understanding of the watershed planning process including clarification on how the watershed plan will inform land use decisions
2. Clarification on how the recommendations identified in the Draft Management Framework will be implemented and what is the timeline for their implementation
3. Importance of ongoing engagement, education and stewardship to protect, enhance, and restore the watershed
4. Protection of existing greenspaces.

The four key topics heard throughout the public consultation undertaken in Phase 2, Stage 2 will be addressed in the Watershed Plan in the following ways:

1. Clarification on how watershed plans inform land use decisions will be included in a dedicated section in the Watershed Plan. This section will also provide a summary of the policy basis about the function of watershed plans in relation to provincial planning policy (i.e. Provincial Planning Policy, Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, etc.) and will break down the role of municipalities as well as Conservation Authorities.
2. Monitoring is vital to the successful implementation of watershed plans. A dedicated section of the Watershed Plan will discuss ongoing monitoring and evaluation that will help to track the implementation of the Plan's management recommendations.
3. The Watershed Plan identifies engagement, education and stewardship as an important aspect of the Management Framework. Some of the programs recommended in the Plan include a program to educate homeowners in high flood risk areas about lot level best practices, rural land stewardship to engage the agricultural community on best management practices, educational signage, and community stewardship to maintain recreational trails and restore priority restoration sites.
4. Protection and enhancement of the Natural Heritage System (NHS) and the Water Resource System (WRS) are main goals of the Watershed Plan. A dedicated section of this Plan will describe both systems, and the importance of their protection, in detail.

## 5 Conclusion

This report is a compilation of the communications and consultation by TRCA on Phase 2, Stage 2 which were undertaken from October 1, 2018 to October 18, 2019. It outlines the public process objectives which guided the communications and consultation and describes the methods and activities used to inform and consult the public and stakeholders. It also describes what was heard and how public input will be reflected in the Management Framework and draft Watershed Plan. As the watershed plan continues to develop, consultation and communication with partners, stakeholders, and the public will be an important tool in helping to create the final Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.

We would like to give our sincere gratitude to everyone who took the time and effort to become involved in the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan by sending in their questions and comments, attending meetings, and submitting a Comment Form during Phase 2, Stage 2 consultation. All of your efforts and passion will help develop a new Watershed Plan that will protect, restore, enhance, and manage the Carruthers Creek watershed now and in the future. You can continue to be involved as the Watershed Plan progresses by visiting <https://yoursay.ca/carruthers-creek> to stay up-to-date and submit any questions/comments you may have.

## 6 Appendix 1

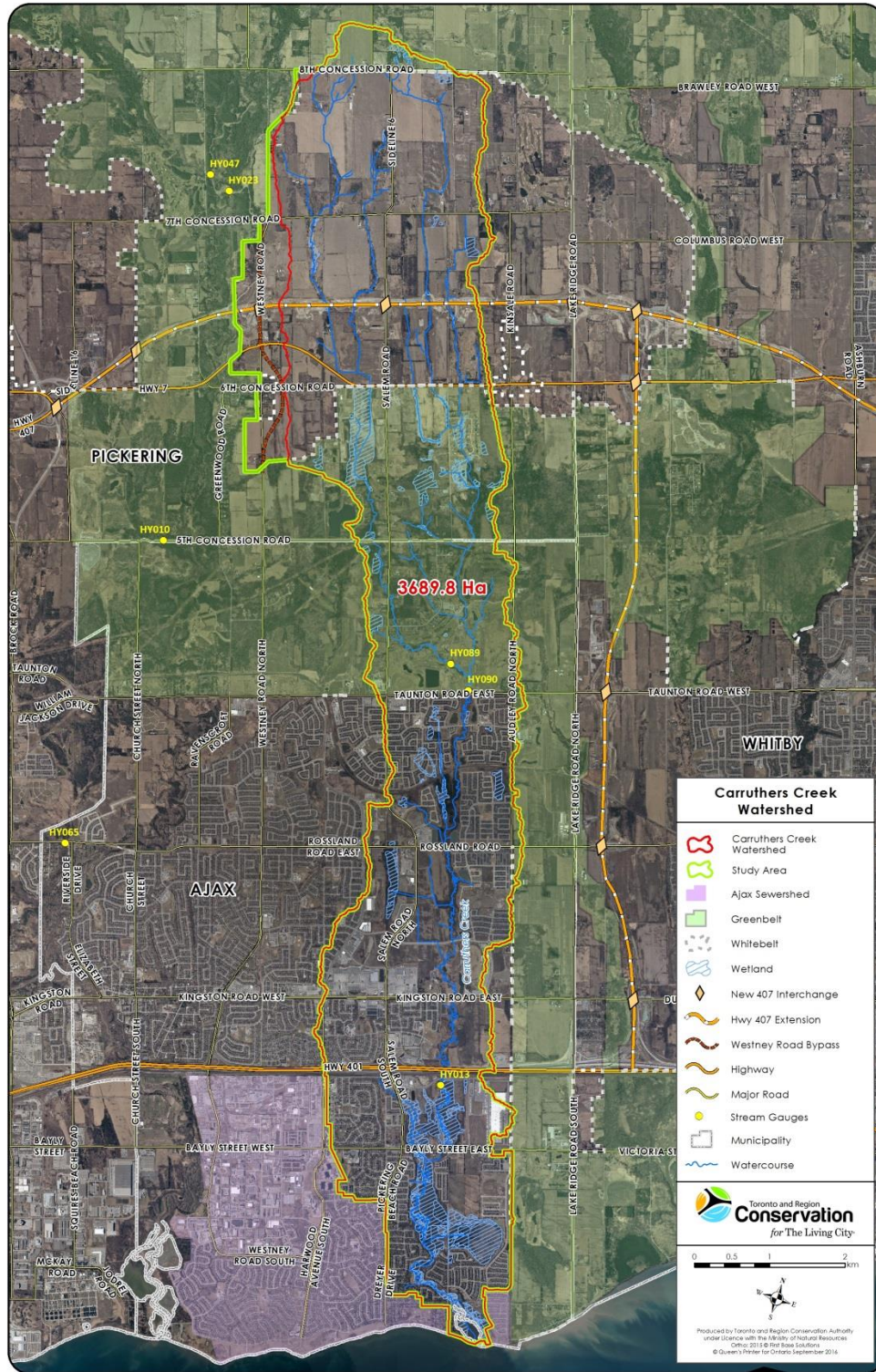


Figure 1: A map of the Carruthers Creek watershed and study area for the updated Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.



## 7 Appendix 2

Table 2 –Phase 2, Stage 2 Communications and Consultation Activities

	<b>Phase 2, Stage 2 Consultation Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Staff to Staff meeting: Pickering and Ajax staff	30 October 2018
2	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham staff	30 November 2018
3	Staff to Staff meeting: Ajax staff	15 January 2019
4	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham staff	19 February 2019
5	Presentation to Watershed Planning and Big Data Workshop hosted by Pollution Probe and Council of the Great Lakes	26 February 2019
6	Staff to Staff meeting: Pickering staff	4 March 2019
7	Presentation to TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance	15 March 2019
8	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham, Pickering and Ajax staff	21 March 2019
9	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham staff	18 April 2019
10	Presentation and staff report to Region of Durham Planning and Economic Development Committee	7 May 2019
11	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham, Pickering and Ajax staff	8 May 2019
12	Presentation to Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade Eco-business Advisory Committee	28 May 2019
13	Presentation and staff report to Town of Ajax Community Affairs and Planning Committee	3 June 2019
14	Presentation to City of Pickering Planning and Development Committee	17 June 2019
15	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham, Pickering and Ajax staff	25 June 2019
16	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham staff	24 July 2019
17	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham, Pickering and Ajax staff	1 August 2019
18	Presentation and staff report to TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance	11 September 2019
20	Staff to Staff meeting: Durham, Pickering and Ajax staff	19 September 2019
21	Staff report to TRCA Board of Directors	27 September 2019
22	Public Open House Materials posted on Project Website	7 October 2019
23	Public Open House - Ajax	8 October 2019
24	Public Open House - Pickering	10 October 2019