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Bronte Creek watershed protection program ready after three years

by Donna Danielli

After three years of work, Conservation Halton is about to unveil its new Bronte Creek Watershed Study.

The study, which examines the existing and historical conditions of this watershed, spreading from Oakville all the way up into Puslinch, provides a number of strategies for its protection and enhancement in the future.

The strategies have been broken into three categories: Caring for Water, Caring for Nature and Caring for Community.

Strategies to care for the water in the watershed include protection of the areas of groundwater recharge and discharge, a water allocation strategy, the prohibition of development in areas of hydrogeologic sensitivity and the development of stormwater plans to control flows from developed areas.

Caring for nature recommendations are targeted at protecting the natural habitat, aquatic habitat and aquatic ecosystem health of the watershed.

The study calls for the protection and restoration of the extent and quality of the wetlands and forests, as well as maintaining biodiversity, protecting and restoring wildlife corridors and restricting farm animal access to watercourses to regenerate riparian buffers, stabilize the creek banks and reduce nutrient loading.

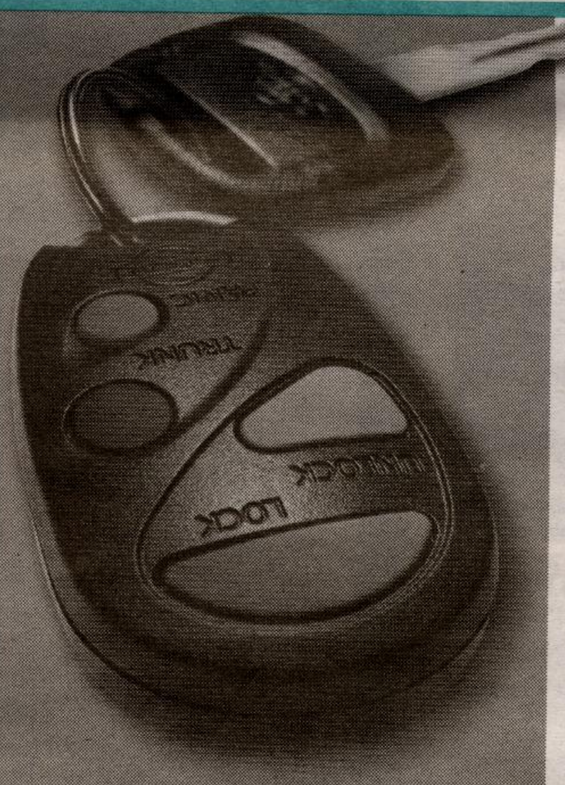
According to the report, approximately 64 per cent of the watershed is devoted to agriculture. This agriculture includes field crops, livestock related farming, horse farms, and berry farms.

A recent trend has seen the amount of farm acreage being purchased for development speculation by absentee landowners. While this activity makes large tracts of land available for rent or lease to local farmers, it tends to distort local agricultural land values and makes it more difficult to undertake the stewardship initiatives that are an important part of the third category recommendations for the care for the community.

The category of care for the community not only calls for the promotion of stewardship on private lands, it also recommends the reduction of urban development in the watershed and the maintenance of a healthy and productive agricultural community.

The final portion of the study looks at implementation actions and strategy, prioritizes tasks and identifies responsibilities for municipalities, agencies, the development industry, farm community, conservation groups, the recreational industry, and citizens and private landowners.

"Implementing the plan is a responsibility," says Conservation Halton Manager of the Watershed Planning Services, Brenda Axon. "We're now working on preserving and protecting the creek and the watershed for the future and everyone has a role to play in that."



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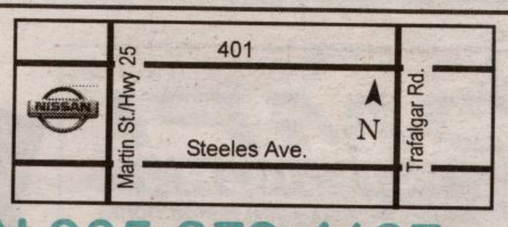

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