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NEWS



Sandra Morris photo

The Town of Halton Hills has created naturalized areas to restrict access to Silver Creek to a limited number of points in Cedarvale Park. The areas will help protect the habitat of the reddsidedace, a minnow, right, that is an endangered species.



Government of Ontario photo

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

HOW A FISH SLOWED DOWN A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT'S WALKING TRAIL

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The Town of Halton Hills has been doing some planting in Cedarvale Park and the reason behind it is a little fishy.

The town has replaced the mown, manicured grass along the bank of the Silver Creek with shrubs and trees.

What's the reason for the change?

The town began working toward an extension of its Hungry Hollow trail network through Cedarvale Park in 2012. It was informed of the presence of reddsidedace, a silvery minnow with a red or orange stripe along its sides, in the creek. The minnow, about three to five inches in length, is an endangered species in Ontario.

They used to live in streams closer to Lake Ontario, but development has pushed them further north.

How does a fish affect a walking trail?

Because of the presence of an endangered species, the town had to go through a lengthy process to get permit approvals from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks and Credit Valley

Conservation.

"To build the trail, the Ministry requires that you don't disturb their habitat," said Mark Taylor, a senior landscape architect with the town. "You have to create an environment that is beneficial to the endangered species."

Redsidedace feed on insects, jumping out of the water to catch insects on or near the surface. They need clear water to be able to see the insects. In order to limit disruption to the creek, the town has limited access to the creek to two points in the park (down from about 12).

The shrubs will provide a natural buffer between the trail and the creek and will also attract more insects to the creek area to give the fish more to feed on.

What does this mean for the trail network?

The completion of this final section will add another 1.7 kilometres to the existing 5.5 km of Hungry Hollow trails. Taylor said the additional trees planted also helps the town achieve its goals laid out in the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan. The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

WHAT'S GOING ON

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