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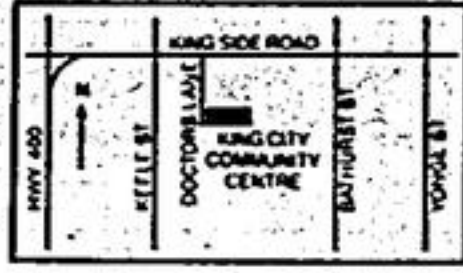
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# Emotional battle over Rouge

ALAN SHACKLETON  
Correspondent

A pristine wilderness that must be preserved to some, sacred ground to others, or the potential home of a garbage dump, expressway or subdivision, Markham's Rouge River Valley system continues to spark heated battles over its future.

At the centre of the storm is an offer by the federal government to spend \$10 million to turn the Rouge Valley into a Natural Heritage Park. Environmentalists, local residents and politicians agree a park would be perfect.

However, the provincial government owns about 75 per cent of the land in question, and hasn't made a decision on the area's future.

Among the options being considered for the Rouge Valley is a temporary garbage dump for Metro Toronto, possible housing uses or a place for the East Metro Transportation Corridor — a

north-south expressway which would link the proposed Hwy 407 in York Region to Hwy 401.

Stephen Marshall, chairman of the Markham branch of Save the Rouge Valley (SRVS) System, said the Heritage Park is the only sane choice.

"The park is our prime objective," he said. "The fate of everyone in Metro Toronto, Markham and Stouffville will be affected by the provincial government's decision. It's especially important to Markham as it's going to determine the future of our town takes."

The proposed Heritage Park would run from Rouge Beach at Lake Ontario up the Rouge River all the way to Bruce's Mill Conservation area in Stouffville.

The largest chunk of the park would be in the northeast corner of Scarborough in an area bounded by Sheppard Avenue to the south, Steeles Avenue to the north, the Rouge River to the west and the Scarborough

Pickering townline to the east.

North of Steeles, through Markham, the park would follow the courses of both the Rouge and Little Rouge Rivers. There would be a protected setback of 50 metres along the Rouge River through Milne Park, and of 150 metres north of Major Mackenzie Drive. There would be a setback of 300 metres along the entire course of the Little Rouge River all the way up to Hwy 47 in Stouffville.

The park proposal would protect an area of 4,330 hectares or 330 square kilometres.

Markham MPP Don Cousens agrees the park is the best use for the land in question. He is also frustrated by the Liberal government's delays in coming to a final decision on the issue.

"The federal government has \$10 million sitting there, and I want to know if we're going to take it or leave it," he said. "I feel it is absolutely essential that the provincial government

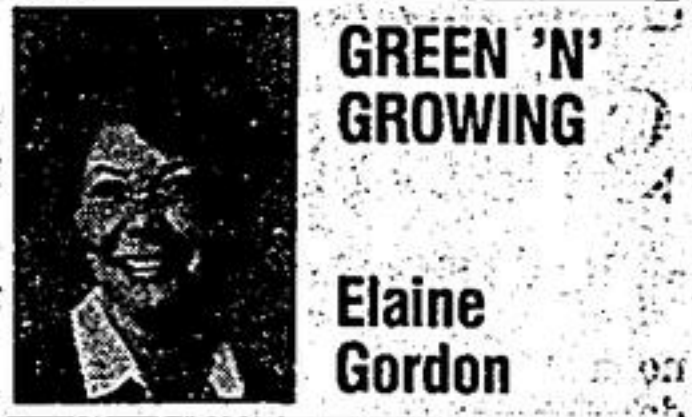
recommend a provincial park and environmental preserve for the area."

The Rouge Valley System is home to a wide variety of plant and wildlife including white tailed deer, red foxes, flying squirrels, snowshoe hares, rare red-shouldered hawks and over 35 species of fish.

Studies show it also contains a number of Indian burial sites which are considered sacred.

Marshall said the opportunity to preserve the area for future generations must not be missed.

"The potential recreational uses of the area are phenomenal, and we can't let it be destroyed," he said. "We have to save it, and we're only going to get one chance."



GREEN 'N' GROWING

Elaine Gordon

## Veggie garden a treat

Home grown vegetables allowed to ripen to complete perfection are one of the pleasures of summer. And it's a treat for the palate to taste produce that's free of chemical sprays.

Don't let small spaces deter you from experiencing the good feeling of growing some of your own food. A spot that captures the sun doesn't have to be big. A patch of earth or a few containers with well-prepared soil are all that's required.

Or, grow vegetables in raised beds. This is ideal for gardeners suffering various discomforts because they reduce bending and stooping.

Consider cottage charm and make a food and flower garden...some salad fixings and herbs marry well with annuals, too. Grow beets or lettuce to edge an area. Consider rhubarb (also called pieplant) as a low hedge or background accent plants. But don't eat rhubarb leaves...they are toxic.

How about peppers, tomatoes or long-lived asparagus in a flower bed? The French called tomatoes Love Apples at one time because looking at a tomato was supposed to kindle amorous feelings.

Grow rootcrops like carrots and radishes in back of a planter with annuals bursting their bristles out front. Place lettuce, sun-loving tiny tomatoes or peppers in a hanging basket.

Use stairs as a step garden for potted pleasures, but always put drainage holes in whatever containers you use. Canned vegetables hate water-logged feet. Make a circular bed with a car tire (paint it white if desired) and grow potatoes (Putting three potatoes in one's pocket and carrying them about was an old-fashioned rheumatism remedy.)

If you relish the thought of cucumbers, but space is tight, why not stick 'em up? Train them adjacent to a fence, garage, trellis, or railing. Use panty hose strips to keep leggy vegetables in place.

Train a pumpkin vine up a stepladder and as young Halloween jack o'lanterns are produced, place each one of them on a step to give support. Grow ornamental gourds and dry, and wax them for indoor winter decorations. Grow Indian corn to dress the entrance door.

Stick a bike wheel upright in the earth and let vegetable tendrils cling to the spokes. Let beans grow on a teepee of three stakes. Plant squash at the garden's edge where it can ramble.

Veggies will compete for nutrients if overcrowded so, when planting, allow for elbow room to prevent them curling up their toes. Avoid placing the same ones in the same spot each year...it's best to rotate them.

Mulching will help make the soil more moisture retentive and keep down those pesky weeds. Regular watering is essential so plants won't die of thirst in the hot sun. Apply moisture in the morning, if possible, so leaves are dry by nighttime...this helps prevent disease.

If little ones are exploring the fascinating world of nature, be sure their pint-sized spot has full sun all day and the soil is improved before planting. Children like fast-growing, easy eatables and get discouraged easily when a garden doesn't produce.

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