

Residents can help save creek

From page 1.

complex next to the plant and creek, Carroll urged residents to get involved in forming a strategic partnership to protect Duffins Creek as the town grows.

"We can't wait until the shovel's going to be put in the ground to save the things we have," said Carroll, vice-chair of a Toronto Region Conservation Authority task force that hopes to complete a Duffins strategy by June.

Gary Bowen, the TRCA's Duffins specialist, showed residents at an open house the sewage plant's elevated chloride levels (100-230 milligrams a litre at all seven sample points on the creek) continue downstream to Hwy. 7 in Pickering. The rest of the Duffins' headwater streams do not test above 25 milligrams. Older Stouffville subdivisions were built with inadequate stormwater controls or none at all, so a plan to retrofit controls may be part of the strategy.

Fortunately, the Duffins is one of the most intensively studied watersheds of its size in Canada, Bowen said. The watershed had less than 18 per cent forest cover in 1956, about the time water quality was probably at its worst overall.

That cover is at 36 per cent today and the task force is suggesting it could increase to 47 per cent.

Carroll said residents must play a role in keeping the creek healthy, for example by controlling their own use of lawn fertilizer. A second round of public meetings is expected in March.

The region, which four years ago decided the treatment plant cannot cope with Stouffville's future growth, is preparing to decommission it when the new Ninth Line trunk sewer reaches the town. For future credit, developers are providing funds both to extend the trunk sewer north of Major Mackenzie Drive and for an environmental assessment necessary to close the plant. The sewer construction has run into difficulties and won't finish until fall, 2003.

Busato said he's for the "big pipe," though he's been told it might reduce Stouffville Creek's flow by 50 per cent, figuring it's better to have less water if the water is clean. But every new subdivision in Stouffville adds more pavement and more runoff carrying chemicals to the creek, he said. "We do need expansion (of the urban area) but we also need protection."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

The creek behind the Stouffville sewage treatment plant supposedly receives chlorine-treated water from the plant in Stouffville Memorial Park. The plant is scheduled to close after the Ninth Line trunk sewer, or Big Pipe, reaches Stouffville in the fall of 2003.

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