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A bee at work at the 267-acre Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

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Public meeting on proposals Tuesday

# Zip-lining, BMX biking on tap for Bruce's Mill?

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
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Zip-line through the tree tops, make tracks in the dirt on your bike or sharpen your tee-off skills.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority staff, who operate Bruce's Mill Conservation Area, are proposing two new activities — zip-lining, a BMX track and re-opening the driving range at the Whitchurch-Stouffville park.

A mandatory public meeting, with presentations on the various proposed activities takes place Tuesday from 7 to 8 p.m. in the chalet of the Stouffville Road conservation area.

"Personally, my opinion is you do have a growing community of young families and they are looking for things to do and picnicking and hiking are just some things," said Joe Petta, manager of the 267-acre park.

By adding these three non-passive activities to the conservation area, Mr. Petta hopes to widen its user demographic.

"A young child is not going to say 'let's go for a picnic,'" he said.

The zip-lining and BMX track would be run by third parties.

In October 2011, Brendan Arnold, head coach for the Ontario Cycling Association and former BMX rider, lobbied Whitchurch-Stouffville council for a place to put a dirt bike track.

It got the attention of Mayor Wayne Emmerson, who has since been helping Mr. Arnold find a location.

"He has got quite a following in Whitchurch-Stouffville," Mr. Emmerson said

of Mr. Arnold.

The driving range was closed about four years ago because it was under-utilized.

The revamped driving range would focus on junior golf development and children's camps.

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"It's not just about golf. The program will teach them about the environment" as well as nutrition, life and proper etiquette, Mr. Petta said, noting it will be very similar to what is offered by the TRCA at Richmond Hill's Bathurst Glen Golf Course.

Three years ago, the TRCA proposed a master plan for Bruce's Mill that would have seen it become home to an RV and tent camping area, BMX bike trail and rope-climbing facility.

All of the proposals were tossed in favour of more nature-based activities following an outcry by residents.

The park is home to the Community Safety Village of York Region.

It's probably best know for its maple syrup festival held every spring.

Bruce's Mill is at 3291 Stouffville Rd., between the communities of Stouffville and Gormley.



The mill at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area, Stouffville Road.