

City of Toronto
Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan

CONSULTATION REPORT
Stage 1: August – December, 2000

February, 2001



Jump in! Get Involved!

Lura Consulting has been retained by the City of Toronto as a neutral, third-party facilitator of the consultation process for the Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact either:

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I. SETTING THE STAGE

Effectively managing stormwater is a priority for the City of Toronto. Right now, the City is working to create a plan which lays out what needs to be done: the Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan (WWFMMP or Master Plan). Step 1 – completed in December, 1998 -- involved collecting data on environmental conditions and on developing a vision, goal, and objectives to guide the planning process. Step 2 – now underway and to be completed by the end of 2001 – will set out new stormwater management strategies, policies and practices, and identify how these changes will be implemented and funded.

To complete the Master Plan, the City has been divided into five study areas. Four of these generally follow the boundaries of the major watersheds: Etobicoke and Mimico Creeks, Humber River, Don River, and Highland Creek and Rouge River. The fifth study area includes all the parts of Toronto which have combined sewers. The planning process is being overseen by the WWFMMP Steering Committee, made up of representatives of knowledgeable interest groups, public agencies, members of City Council and City staff.

The City knows that a successful Master Plan depends on the insight, advice, and expertise of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders. Neighbouring municipalities, regulatory agencies, community groups, and residents of Toronto all have important contributions to make to the planning process. As a result, consultation with these stakeholders is a key element of Step 2 work (see consultation objectives listed on the following page).

This report is the first in a series of summary reports designed to highlight key consultation activities completed during Step 2, and describe how the feedback and advice received from stakeholders has influenced the planning process. This report focuses on the consultation activities between August 2000 and December 2000 – Stage 1 of the WWFMMP consultation process in Step 2.

The focus of this first stage of consultation was on:

- introducing the master planning process;
- obtaining feedback and advice on the project objectives, as well as the target-setting framework (this framework represents an approach to measuring the achievement of objectives); and
- collecting local knowledge regarding watershed issues.

Building on this introduction, this report is presented in three parts – first describing the consultation activities that took place (Section II), then highlighting the advice received from stakeholders and the action taken (Section III). The report ends with a description of consultation plans for the next stage of the consultation process.



Finally, it is important to note that the intent of this summary report is not to repeat information available in other formats (e.g., meeting minutes, community workshop notes, e-mail correspondence, etc.), but to pull together the key messages and common themes heard from all consultation activities and demonstrate how those messages have been integrated into the Step 2 work. Additional detail on consultation results is available in Appendix 1 of this report (an Issues Matrix that lists what issues were raised, who raised them, and includes the City and Steering Committee's responses) or individual meeting records (available on request from Tracey Ehl at the City of Toronto – please see the contact information provided on the inside cover of this report).

Master Plan Consultation Objectives

Awareness and education

- to generate awareness about the Master Plan process throughout Toronto's communities and the five study areas;
- to educate consultation participants about wet weather flow issues, such that they can provide informed input as part of the planning process;

Access to information and consultation opportunities

- to provide the public with timely access to technical information as the Master Plan is developed;
- to provide the public with accessible and timely opportunities to be involved in the Master Plan's development;
- to provide flexibility to accommodate the needs of participants, without inhibiting the planning schedule and budget;

Issue identification and resolution

- to ensure that the public can contribute to ideas and influence results as the study progresses, before key decisions are made;
- to objectively consider the views received and address community issues and perspectives in the Master Plan;
- to resolve issues raised where possible;

Feedback and documentation

- to provide timely responses to comments, suggestions and concerns that are received;
- to provide complete documentation of comments, suggestions and concerns that are received at events, electronically, via mail, or over the phone; and
- to trace the impact of public consultation on Step 2 of the WWFMMP.

II. THE STAGE 1 CONSULTATION PROGRAM

The Stage 1 consultation program involved four key activities:

- i. meeting with representatives from upper watershed municipalities;
- ii. meeting with representatives from government agencies;
- iii. five workshops – 1 in each study area; and
- iv. e-consultation through the City’s website.

The public consultation sub-committee of the WWFMMP Steering Committee played a key role in designing and carrying out these activities, and ultimately, in determining how the feedback received would be integrated in the Step 2 work.








Meeting with Upper Watershed Municipalities. This meeting involved 37 participants, including representatives from three neighbouring regional municipalities, seven local municipalities, the WWFMMP Steering Committee, and City of Toronto staff. Its purpose was twofold: to introduce the Master Plan to upper watershed municipal staff, and to explore opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between Toronto and its neighbouring municipalities. The dialogue was focused both on the City’s WWFMMP process, as well as on common efforts required to reduce the impact of wet weather flow on shared watershed resources.

Meeting with the Government Agencies. This meeting involved 14 participants, including representatives from Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Representatives from the WWFMMP Steering Committee were also in attendance, along with City staff and members of the project consulting team. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the WWFMMP and discuss the approach to target setting being considered by the City and the project team. Discussing the roles and interests of the agencies in the WWFMMP was also an important part of the meeting, as well as obtaining input on any relevant policies, documents, or data from agencies that relates to the Master Plan.

Community Workshops. In Stage 1, residents and community groups in each of the five study areas were invited to attend a workshop to learn about the project, and to provide their insight and advice regarding the project objectives and the proposed target setting approach. The workshops were also an opportunity for participants to share any local knowledge regarding watershed issues. In total, 157 people participated in the workshops, including 95 residents and 62 representatives from community organizations. The workshops were co-hosted by organizations actively involved

Workshop Co-Hosts

Many thanks to the following workshop co-hosts, who included:

-  Friends of Highland Creek
-  Rouge Park Alliance
-  Etobicoke/Mimico Task Force
-  Don Watershed Regeneration Council
-  Waterfront Regeneration Trust
-  Toronto Bay Initiative
-  Task Force to Bring Back the Don
-  Humber Watershed Alliance
-  Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

in clean-up and stewardship activities in the watersheds. Each workshop was preceded by a one hour Open House where information about the study area was displayed, and City and project team staff were available to answer questions. The balance of the workshop consisted of a series of background presentations, followed by interactive roundtable discussions on the project objectives and target setting framework.

Copies of reports from the upper watershed municipalities meeting, agency meeting and 5 community workshops are available on request.

E-Consultation. In addition to participating in a community workshop, stakeholders, including the public, had an opportunity to provide their feedback and advice over the internet by taking part in the WWFMMP *Virtual Workshop*. The City of Toronto's website (www.city.toronto.on.ca/involved) posted a survey which asked visitors to share their perspectives on the same topics addressed at the community workshops (the project objectives, the target setting approach and local knowledge). In total, 16 people took to their keyboards and participated on-line.



Participant Quotes

“As far as I am concerned, the main objective should be to control the sudden rush of surface water due to rainstorms.”

- Participant, Highland/Rouge workshop -

“Informing and educating the public on how to reduce wet weather flow is a key objective. The public may be unaware that they might be inadvertently contributing to the problem.”

- Participant, CSO workshop -

III. ADVICE RECEIVED AND ACTION TAKEN

One of the key strengths of consultation processes lies in the diversity of ideas and perspectives held by different participants in the process. Finding common themes and key messages helps organize the feedback and advice received. This section highlights the key messages heard during Stage 1 of the consultation process. Additional details can be reviewed in the Issues Matrix attached as Appendix 1.

This section also reports on the actions taken and commitments made by the City and Steering Committee in response to the results of the consultation. The Steering Committee's public consultation sub-committee played a valuable role in confirming and refining community and stakeholder advice, and in identifying opportunities to build that advice into the planning process.

OBJECTIVES

Advice. Grouping objectives under key headings would make them easier to communicate, and would enable priority objectives to be more easily identified.

Advice. The existing objectives can be improved with edits (e.g. additions, changes, etc.).



Advice. Public education and outreach needs to be an objective – it is integral to the success of the Master Plan, and is a prerequisite to achieving most of the objectives.

Advice. If you have to prioritize among objectives, draw on community advice – particularly consider actions which enable more than one objective to be met.



Action. The list of objectives has been changed (see reorganized and revised objectives on the following page) – objectives have been grouped under headings, and a number of specific wording edits have been made.

Action. Community awareness and involvement is an integral part of all elements of the WWFMMP, and has been adopted as a Guiding Principle which will accompany the list of objectives.

Action. This prioritization will be taken into account during Stage 2 – when work will focus on developing evaluation criteria to help identify the best wet weather management strategies for Toronto.

Reorganized and Revised Objectives

In achieving these objectives, we will be guided by the following principles:

- ☘ *Rainwater is a resource.* ☘ *Wet weather flow will be managed on a watershed basis.*
- ☘ *A hierarchy of wet weather flow solutions will be implemented – starting with “at source”, then “conveyance”, and finally “end-of-pipe”.* ☘ *Toronto’s communities need to be made aware of wet weather flow issues and involved in the solutions.*

Water Quality

- #7 **Meet guidelines for water and sediment quality:** Contribute to achieving federal, provincial and municipal water and sediment quality objectives and guidelines in area watercourses and along the waterfront.
- #6 **Virtually eliminate toxics through pollution prevention:** Contribute to the virtual elimination of toxic contaminants in groundwater and surface water utilizing the principle of pollution prevention at source.
- #9 **Improve water quality in rivers and the lake for body contact recreation:** Improve water quality for body contact recreation in rivers and recreational areas and reduce posting of beaches by the Medical Officer of Health.
- #10 **Improve aesthetics:** Contribute to eliminating objectionable deposits, nuisance algae growth, unnatural colour, turbidity and odour in order to improve the aesthetics of area surface waters.

Water Quantity

- #4 **Preserve and re-establish a natural hydrologic cycle:** Contribute to the re-establishment of a more natural hydrologic process *to protect and restore groundwater and surface water resources*, based on maximizing permeability and minimizing runoff at source.
- #3 **Reduce erosion impacts on habitats and property:** Manage wet weather flows to reduce erosion impacts on stream and riparian habitats on public and private properties and open spaces.
- #13 **Eliminate or minimize threats to life and property from flooding:** Eliminate or minimize threat to life and property from flooding.

Natural Areas and Wildlife

- #5 **Preserve, re-establish and rehabilitate natural features (e.g., wetlands):** Contribute to the protection, re-establishment and rehabilitation of natural features such as wetlands *and riparian and other* ecological corridors.
- #1 **Achieve healthy aquatic communities:** Contribute to achieving healthy aquatic communities, including warmwater or coldwater fisheries as appropriate.
- #2 **Reduce fish contamination:** Contribute to reducing fish consumption advisories due to local wet weather sources.

Sewer System

- #8 **Eliminate discharges of sanitary sewage:** Eliminate discharges of sanitary sewage including those associated with CSOs, SSOs, treatment plant bypasses, illegal cross-connections and spills.
- #12 **Reduce infiltration and inflow to sanitary sewers:** Reduce sanitary sewer infiltration and inflows to City design standards.
- #11 **Reduce basement flooding:** Manage wet weather flow to reduce basement flooding.

Notes – italics indicate changes. Original numbering of objectives has been retained for clarity, but will be revised in future.

TARGET SETTING

Advice. Communication of the framework needs to be simple and concise – consider packaging the targets under terms that would be relevant to the public.



Action. New objective categories should help with communicating the target setting framework.

Advice. Different types of targets need to be separated – receiving water targets (e.g. the habitat of lakes and rivers that ultimately receive all of Toronto’s run-off) need to be differentiated from end-of-pipe targets (e.g. eliminating toxics emptied into the sewer system). Also management targets are needed (e.g. percentage of downspouts that will be disconnected).



Action. Separate targets will be identified for receiving waters, end-of-pipe, and management activities.

Advice. The information associated with existing targets can be improved with edits.



Action. These suggestions are all under consideration (see more detailed responses in Appendix 1).



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Advice. Many participants at the community workshops shared their knowledge about wet weather flow related issues and/or problem areas in their neighbourhoods and watersheds.



Action. All local advice has been documented in the individual community workshop meeting records, and is being used by each individual study area consulting team to confirm and refine their knowledge of the area.

Participant Quote

“It seems to be important to look at and to control the upper reaches of the watersheds as far as new construction projects are concerned. Especially in regard to existing wetlands and channeling, as well as the burying of small streams. In other words, if the provincial government and other municipalities are not involved, our work in the lower reaches of the watershed will be in vain.”

- Participant, Highland/Rouge workshop -

LINKAGES

Advice. The WWFMMP project needs to link to other initiatives and jurisdictions – the City’s Official Plan, the upper watershed municipalities, existing watershed activities, and the different levels of government. The opportunity to facilitate partnerships and networking among stakeholders and organizations who will be instrumental in ensuring the success of the plan – must also be seized.



Action. The City will continue to foster these relationships and work to ensure the collaborative approach necessary to ensure success of this project.



THE WWFMMP PROCESS AND CONSULTATION PROGRAM

Advice. This project has an important role to play in building a constituency committed to contributing to the City’s efforts to improve the management of wet weather flow – and to creating the political and public momentum required to make the project a success. The participation of local residents is important, and consideration should be given to involving the private sector.



Action. All suggestions will be considered when preparing for and implementing Stage 2 consultations. The importance of community awareness and outreach has been reflected in the new Guiding Principle that will accompany the project objectives. This has been a key element of all project activities since the outset, and is recognized as an being essential to the project’s success.



IMPLEMENTATION

Advice. Many participants at the community workshops shared their ideas and advice regarding implementation opportunities that would achieve the project objectives.



Action. All advice has been documented (details provided in Appendix 1) and will be considered by study area consultants as they work to identify wet weather flow management strategies.

IV. LOOKING FORWARD TO STAGE 2

Building on the results of the Stage 1 consultation and technical work, Stage 2 will focus on the many opportunities available to improve the management of wet weather flow in the City, and look at how to decide which opportunities will work best in Toronto. Stage 2 will also examine what property owners (residents, businesses, institutions, etc.) would be willing to do to manage rainwater at source – where it falls. Consultation with stakeholders will be an integral part of this work. The City and Steering Committee will be seeking community feedback and advice on the opportunities being considered, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate the opportunities.

Stage 2 will also involve development of different wet weather management strategies (or combinations of strategies) that could be applied in Toronto. Again, the experience and expertise of stakeholders and communities will make a key contribution to the planning process. Additional information regarding Stage 2 consultation activities and an invitation to participate will be provided shortly – distributed directly to those involved in the Stage 1 consultations, and broadly to the community at large.

Participant Quotes

“[This project is] very ambitious, very challenging, very difficult, but very important – so keep at it.”

- Participant, Don River workshop -

“I am looking forward to my involvement and hopefully making a contribution...to healthier river systems and water quality in the City of Toronto.”

- Participant, CSO workshop -

“It is time for action.”

- Participant, Highland/Rouge workshop -