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Further Consideration of Reducing Salt Use in our Public Realm

The High Park Natural Environment Committee (NEC) supports the proposal to map ecologically sensitive regions within Toronto, with the aim of mitigating harm to them from road salt.

The NEC has long been concerned about the adverse impact of road salt on Grenadier Pond. Most of High Park is designated both provincially significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest and Environmentally Significant Area (ESA), including all of Grenadier Pond. The pond is well-studied. In the summer of 1976 chloride readings of 350 mg/l were observed. A study in 2014 found that the level had increased to 430-470 mg/l. This is well above the Canadian Water Quality Guideline of 120 mg/l (chronic), a level which adversely affects aquatic organisms. Invasive but salt-tolerant Phragmites is thriving in the pond.

Other organisms which are sensitive to salt include our native oaks, eastern pine (Ontario's provincial tree), and sugar maple (our national symbol). Salt-tolerant Norway maple is invading our ravines and ESAs at the expense of these and other native species.

We hope that better managing the use of road salt will help protect these natural heritage features for all of us for the long term.

Leslie Gooding
Co-Chair, High Park Natural Environment Committee