



City of Vaughan Natural Heritage Network Study Phase 2-4 Status Update



OCTOBER 2013

What is the Natural Heritage Network Study?

Vaughan is one of the fastest growing cities in Canada. Over the next 25 years, Vaughan will experience even more change as the city's population continues to grow. With the understanding that Vaughan is experiencing rapid growth, the City has begun a Natural Heritage Network (NHN) Study that will examine the health of Vaughan's forests, meadows, wetlands and streams (called *natural features*) and what needs to be done to protect the diversity of plants, animals and their habitats.

The study will look at:

- the natural heritage that exists today,
- how well the system is able to protect biodiversity,
- how we can enhance natural features to better support animals and plants, and
- how to better connect the network to support biodiversity in the long term.

What is a Natural Heritage Network and Why is it Important?

A Natural Heritage Network is a system of natural features that supports diversity of plants, animals and their habitats. These features are linked by natural corridors and are described as a network or system as they work together and interact in ways that benefit all. Areas for restoration may need to be included in the Network to enhance and/or connect existing features.

Benefits of a Healthy Natural Heritage Network

- ✓ Clean air and water
- ✓ Habitat for a wide range of birds, animals, fish, and insects
- ✓ Lower greenhouse gas emissions
- ✓ Opportunities for active living and community building
- ✓ Shade protection from UV light and cooling that reduces energy use in summer
- ✓ Reduced stress and depression and improved mental functions.



What Are We Doing Now?

A team led by North-South Environmental is currently working on Phase 2-4 of the process. The team has completed field work (Phase 2) that will help to better understand the status of some of the natural heritage network lands, corridors, and water courses that could help support significant wildlife species. The work included studying bird and amphibian breeding habitats, rare plant communities, headwater streams and other significant wildlife habitats.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Vaughan's largest forest is 152 ha. The Canadian Wildlife Service recommends at least 1 forest in the watershed be over 200 ha.
- Only 30% of streams in Vaughan have a level of forest cover recommended by Environment Canada.
- Vaughan is home to many Species at Risk, including:
 - Eastern Meadowlark
 - Jefferson Salamander
 - Blanding's Turtle
 - Milksnake
 - Redside Dace (fish)
 - Rapids Clubtail (dragonfly)



Study Process

The study is taking place in 4 phases and builds on the natural heritage review completed in 2010 that identified the natural features we have in Vaughan.

Phase 1: GIS Mapping and Target Setting

Phase 1 of the NHN Study is complete - Final Report - November 2012.

Phase 2: NHN Field Work

Field work will help to better understand significant wildlife habitat, headwater drainage features and identify any habitat for Species at Risk.

Phase 3: NHN Summary and Recommendations

A comprehensive natural heritage network will be developed that includes recommendations for protecting, managing and enhancing natural features.

Phase 4: Land Securement Strategy

Identify strategic goals and implementation guidelines for land securement in the City of Vaughan for a program to maintain and improve the ecological integrity of the NHN.

How You Can Stay Informed or Get Involved?

1. Visit vaughan.ca regularly for more news about the project and opportunities to get involved.
2. Attend the first community meeting being held in collaboration with the Vaughan Community Climate Action Plan (CAP) on November 13th from 6:30 p.m. (open house), 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (presentation on the status of the NHN Study and CAP project followed by working sessions) at City Hall, 2141 Major MacKenzie Drive, Vaughan, ON.
3. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/thecityofvaughan and Twitter @City_of_Vaughan

For more information about the project or to be added to our stakeholder list, please contact: Tony Iacobelli, Senior Environmental Planner at: 905-832-8585 ext. 8630 or tony.iacobelli@vaughan.ca.