

York Regional Forest Accessible Trail Initiative - Nature for All -

Canadian Urban Forest Conference
Urban Forests by Design
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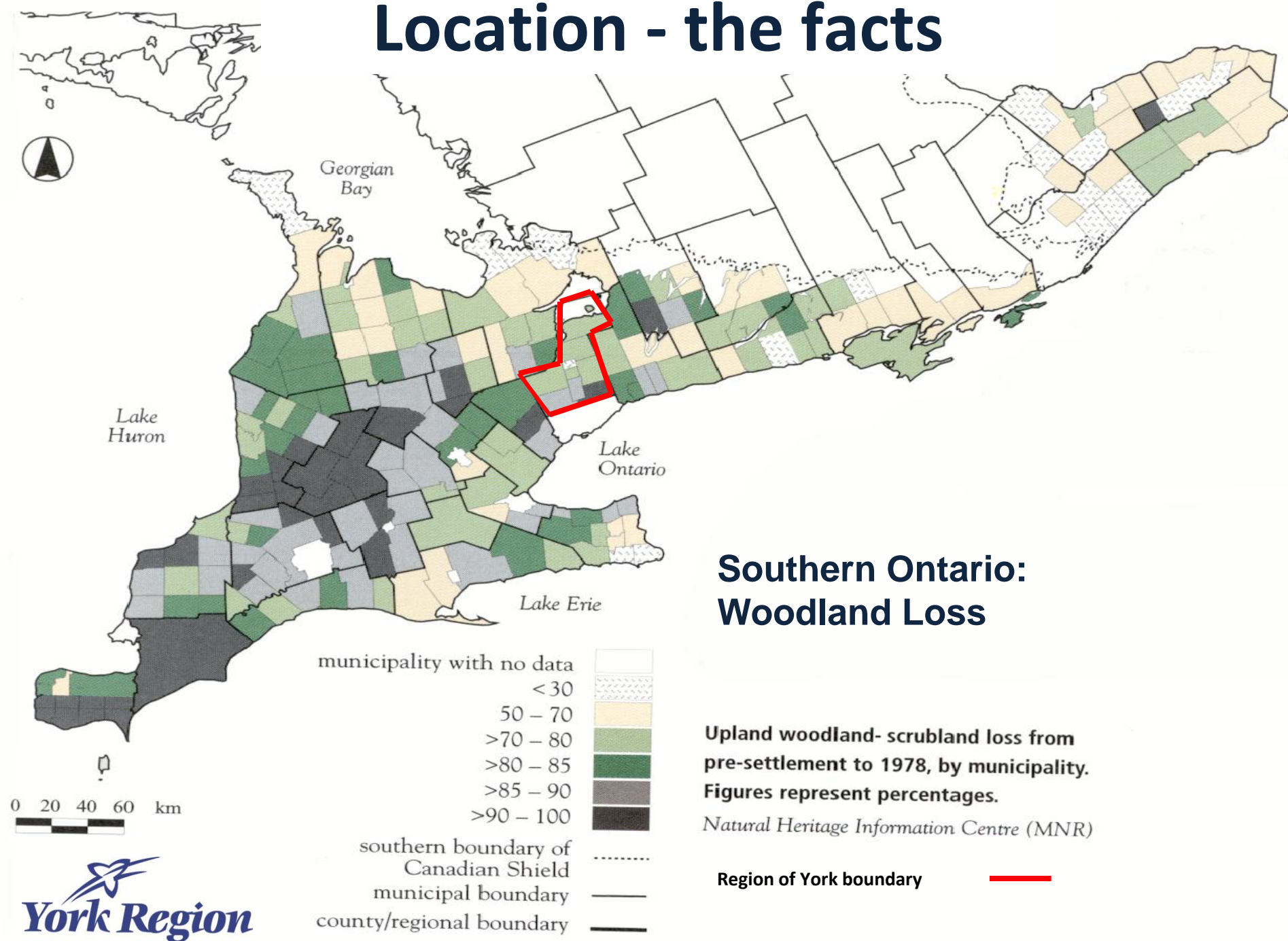
OUTLINE:

- Who - Regional Municipality of York
- Why accessibility?
- Where - York Regional Forest
- What - 1st Trail - chronology of events
- How - Design Guideline
- What's next.....
- Lessons learned



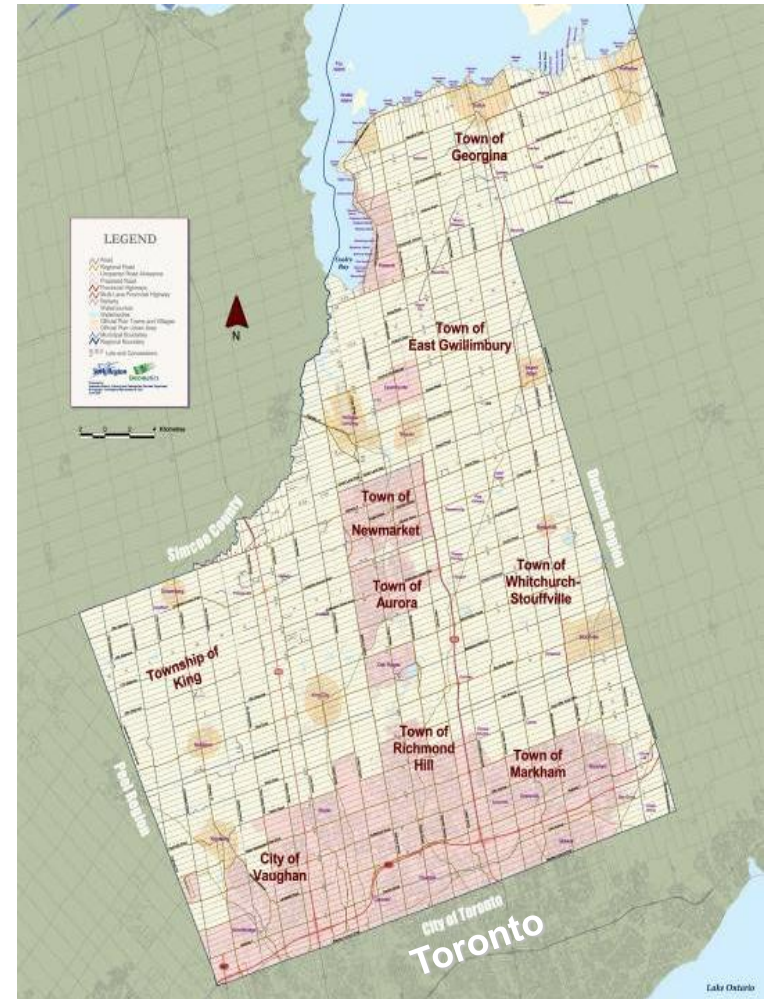
Urban Forest Innovation – Planning, Practice and Design

Location - the facts



Location - the numbers

- Largest metropolitan area in Canada
- Part of Greater Toronto Area
- Within 2 hours drive for 6+ M people in the GTA
- Population currently 1,000,000 +
- 9 local municipalities
- Land base 1,776 km²



Legislation and Standards



- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
- Preliminary Draft Built Environment Standard, 2007
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 2012
- Design of Public Spaces Standard – applies to outdoor spaces including recreational trails
- Accessibility in buildings through Ontario Building Code
- Applies to new or redeveloped public trails intended for recreation and leisure, but not wilderness or backcountry trails e.g. those built in a way to reduce environmental impact
- Includes design standards for trails, signage and parking

Why Accessibility?

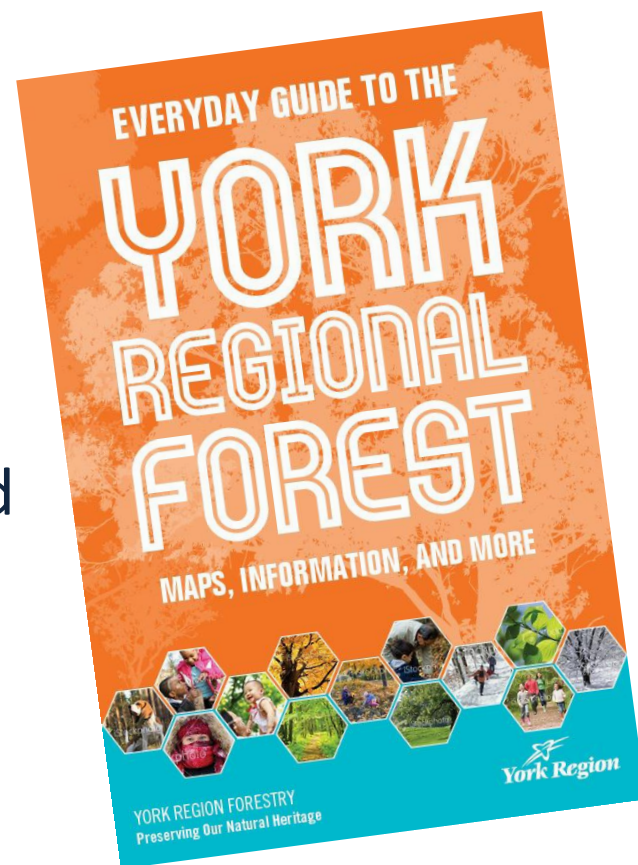
- 1.85 M people in Ontario have a disability 15.5% (1 in 7)
- As population ages this increases to 1 in 5 by 2036
- The number of seniors 65 and over will more than double by 2036
- By 2017 for the first time, seniors will account for a larger proportion of the population than children under 14



Accessibility Benefits Everyone

York Regional Forest

- 1800's forests cleared for pioneer settlement
- 1920's Agreement Forest Program to restore degraded landscapes
- 2001 1st public forest to be FSC certified in Canada
- 21 properties, 2,300 hectares, 120 km of multi use trails



York Regional Forest

- 20 year Forest Management Plan (1998 - 2018) and 5 year Operating Plans
- Demonstration forest :
 - silvicultural management
 - public land management
 - wildlife habitat
 - environmental education
 - passive recreation
 - trail design and management



Trails Use and Management

- Access for maintenance, management and emergency access
- Multi-use trails – much on ORM
- Public recreation including:
 - hiking & dog walking
 - mountain biking
 - nature appreciation
 - horseback riding
 - hunting
 - snowshoeing/ x-country skiing



Accessible Trail – the beginning

- 2008 Region Accessibility Advisory Committee request to review legislation and evaluate options for accessible trails
- 2009 Accessible Trail Sub-committee
- Forest Public Advisory Team input
- Meetings, tours, site criteria etc.
- Hired expert to inform the process
- Primarily mobility and sight disabilities focus



Consultation, Collaboration and Learning

1st Accessible Trail at the Hollidge Tract

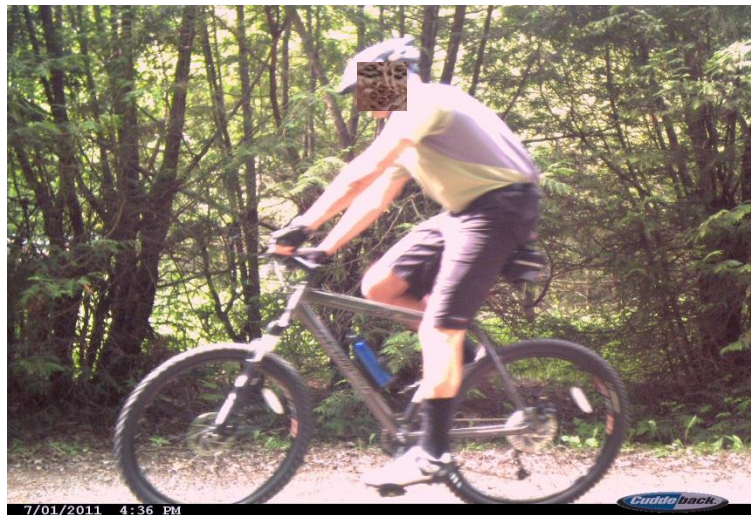
- 1 km loop re-construction - selected in the Hollidge Tract – key location
- Trail design based on draft Build Environment Standard - criteria
- 2010 summer - trail designed and constructed
- Official opening September 2010
- Promotion – tours, brochures, web site, 360⁰ images
- Monitoring - trail cam, interviews, surveys, car counts...



Monitoring - Trail Cam



Monitoring - Trail Cam



Integrated Accessibility Standard - 2012

Regulation Sect. 80.9 (1) - requirements:

- Width min. (1m) & height (2.1m)
- Firm and stable surface
- Surface 'openings' criteria
- Edge guard (5cm) at water or drop off
- Trail head signage – length, surface type, avg. & min. trail width, avg. & max. running slope and cross slope, location of amenities (if provided)
- Consultation ('approval') with Accessibility Advisory Committee on the specific criteria



"Now! ... That should clear up a few things around here!"

Building on Success – 2012/13

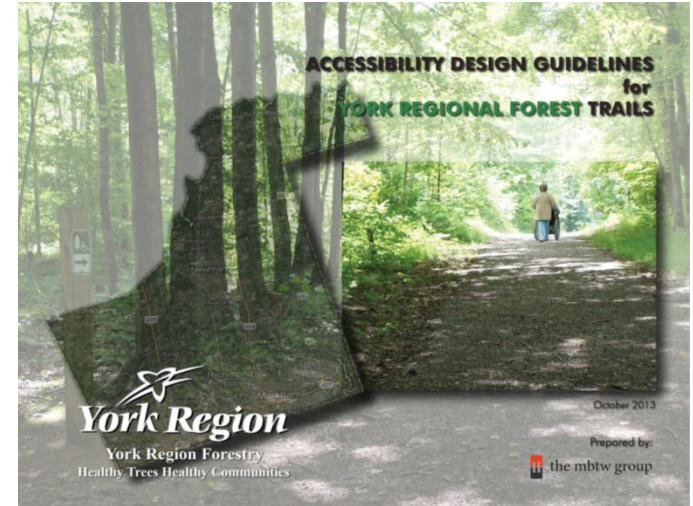
- Fall 2012 - RFP for accessible trails based on our approved criteria:
 - Design guidelines to address requirements of 2012 Integrated Accessibility Standard
 - Detailed design for accessible trails in the; North Tract (2 km), Hollidge Tract (3 km), Eldred King Tract (2 km), Hall Tract (2 km)
 - 9km of shovel ready projects for implementation over next 10 years



York Region Accessible Trail Guideline

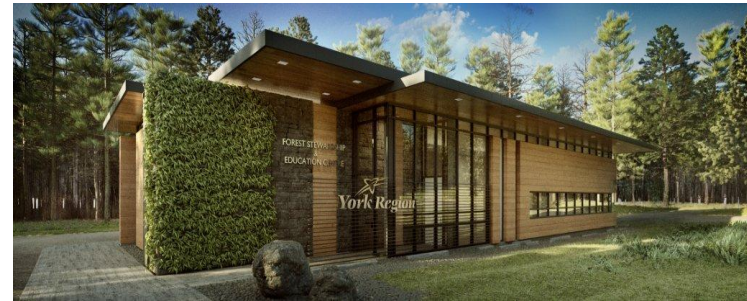
2013 specifications approved by Accessibility Advisory Committee:

- Width 1.5m allows for turning
- Surface firm, stable (screenings)
- Cross slope recommended $< 1:20$ (5%) never $> 1:10$ (10%)
- Running slope rec. $1:20$ (5%) never $> 1:10$ (10%) max. & resting places
- Resting intervals and seating
- Others...



Next Steps & Lessons Learned

- 2014 - just completed construction of 2 km loop in North Tract
- Continued promotion of accessible trails – tours, events - spread the word, Google pilot (street view)
- Reconstruction or new trails - not that complex, not that expensive
- 2015 – new Forest Stewardship and Education Centre – accessible facility and trail hub
- Personal and professional learning



Who benefits – we all do




Challenge – Become an Accessibility Champion!

A photograph of Margaret Gaukel, an accessibility advocate and trail champion, sitting in a wheelchair on a paved path in a forest. She is wearing a black vest over a long-sleeved shirt and black pants. The background is a lush green forest with many trees and bushes. The text 'In memory and gratitude to Margaret Gaukel' is overlaid on the top right of the image.

In memory and gratitude to
Margaret Gaukel

❖ accessibility advocate
❖ trail champion

The background of the slide is a photograph of a forest. The upper portion shows tall, thin tree trunks reaching up to a canopy of bright yellow and orange autumn leaves. The lower portion of the image is obscured by a solid green rectangular overlay, which serves as a background for the text. Below the green overlay, at the very bottom of the slide, is a close-up photograph of fallen autumn leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and brown, some with pine needles mixed in.

Thank you – questions?

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Regional Municipality of York

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