

Friends of the Spit

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Season's Greetings:

Enjoy a winter walk, jog, hike or cycle!

In this newsletter...

No news is good news; the Spit rolls on ...

... if this is your first newsletter, WELCOME! Since 1977, Friends of the Spit have been advocating that the Spit and Baselands be, and remain, a car-free public urban wilderness, free from development, for passive recreational activities.

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2010

As an Editorial #1 ... slow as molasses

Slow as molasses... we are running out of colourful descriptions to describe how slow the process has been for the park infrastructure projects. As outlined in the April 2010 newsletter, these projects are small, low-key, and in keeping with the Master Plan. Friends of the Spit have endorsed them, since they provide the minimum necessary facilities under the agreed Master Plan. The entryway, in particular, will demarcate the Spit and solidify the Spit's northern boundary. For many reasons, the TRCA and their consultants have not yet come up with plans for building permit submission. The Conservation Authority had intended to have the structures built by March 2011, in order to maintain the infrastructure funding. That deadline is obviously not possible: will funding be lost? Once again, will we be back to square one with these projects?

We recognize that the Spit has always benefited from lack of interest and lack of funding: nature has taken over in the absence (benevolent or otherwise) of interest from governments. These four infrastructure projects, however, do represent an opportunity, when built, to declare the boundaries of the Spit and Baselands, and deter those who always seem to have "new ideas" for the land.

As an Editorial #2 ... glacial pace of L.O.P.

Now that winter is upon us, the editorial from the April newsletter rings more and more true. Except that the glaciers will just be snow drifts and wonderful ice formations on the Spit.

No one at WaterfrontToronto is promoting Lake Ontario Park: nary a word is heard – it remains unratified by City Council, unratified by the TRCA, and no one wants to touch its enormous price tag. All this means is that we are safe from the incursions of Lake Ontario Park into the wonderful public urban wilderness of the Spit and the Baselands..

Season's Greetings

The Spit in winter is a wonderful place: on a sunny day, the ice formations and the snow glisten with a great beauty. With fewer visitors, the Spit is a quiet refuge, a place for solace and contemplation. However, whether you proceed out to meditate, to look for winter ducks and the occasional owl, or simply for a good brisk walk or run: dress warmly and appropriately for the occasion. Take great care on the trails and enjoy!!

Season's Greetings to all our friends and supporters! Happy New Year!

Landscape Design for Leslie Street

As you know, the City has embarked on an ambitious transit plan. As part of that plan, land at the Ashbridge's Bay Treatment Plant will be used by the TTC for a new maintenance and storage facility for light rail transit vehicles. These LRTs will come south on Leslie Street from Queen and turn east into the maintenance facility at the Commissioners Street intersection. As part of this enormous project, which involves an estimated \$70 million (!!!) cleanup of the soils in the existing berm on the site, the TTC commissioned a limited landscape design competition for the frontages on Leslie and Lakeshore.

Three consulting firms were asked to submit proposals and a winner was selected in September. That winning scheme has since been modified by the realities of budget and site conditions, and is now undergoing refinement.

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In Memoriam: Boris Mather

Boris Mather, a long-time member of and true Friend of the Spit passed away this April at the age of 84. An active and energetic man, Boris served on the Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee, representing the Toronto Field Naturalists most recently, and prior to that, the Ashbridge's Bay Treatment Plant Community Liaison Committee. Boris chaired Citizens for a Lakeshore Greenway and was instrumental in bringing walking and hiking trails onto the agenda of Waterfront development. As quoted in the Toronto Field Naturalist September 2010 newsletter, Boris expressed his views "You cannot just enjoy nature", he said, "You have got to organize to protect it". All of us will recall Boris at public meetings, delivering carefully prepared logically presented arguments as to why our Waterfront and, particularly, the Spit, should remain undeveloped. Boris had an excellent sense of humour, bordering on the black humour side.

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Landscape Design Continued from Page 1...

Friends of the Spit was involved in the public meetings from the outset, has submitted comments, and most recently, in November, met with all the consultants, in order to both understand the current status of the scheme and to discuss ways in which the TTC could bring their landscape to a form and nature that would evoke the Spit and act as the natural gateway to the Spit. A good discussion and commentary ensued, with the hope that the TTC and their consultants will strive to make this section of Leslie Street a fitting gateway to the Spit, not only for people, but for animals, birds, and butterflies. The proof is in the pudding: we will keep you informed as to the nature of the final scheme!



In Memoriam: Boris Mather Continued from Page 1...

Two anecdotes that show Boris' reading of matters: at the famous Stop the Golf Academy at the Baselands debate at the City's Economic Committee meeting, a noted birdwatcher stood up and prefaced his objections to the golf academy by saying, "This is the *first* time I've ever spoken in public in support of the Spit", and Boris whispered, "He says that like it's a virtue!". The second was Boris' relating of a long joke after many of us had sat through a series of pompous consultants all telling us the sun would rise in the east, set in the west, that there would be a chicken in every pot, and that all would be well despite the disastrous, in our thoughts, interventions they were proposing for the Spit and Portlands. As we exited the room, Boris said, "Did you hear about the chap interviewing for consultants?" and we said, "No.", and Boris said, "Well, the first chap came in and was asked, 'What is 2+2?' and the fellow smartly answered '4'. So, the interviewer had the second chap come in and that second prospective consultant was asked, 'What is 2+2?'. That candidate answered, 'Hmm, perhaps I should take that back and think about it, and get my team working on the answer, and bring it back to you in a day'. Then the third chap came in and the interviewer asked him, 'What is 2+2', the third interviewee put on a slight smile, leaned forward, made strong eye contact, and said, 'What would you like it to be?'."

Boris had been a CCF candidate a number of times in downtown Toronto ridings: the 1955 election in St. Andrew's riding was recently profiled in a Heritage Toronto newsletter, the Heritage Toronto E-News: October 2010.

Our condolences have been extended to Boris' partner, Pauline, and his two daughters, one living in the Netherlands, the other in Australia. There are very few like Boris: we will greatly miss his support, his advice, and his trenchant commentary.



Continuing Natural Area Enhancement Projects by the TRCA

This winter, the TRCA will add additional offshore fish habitat in Embayment B and C: remember the poles on concrete bases that littered the sailing club's road? Last year's winter thaw came too early and prevented these from being left out on the ice, where, as the ice melted, they would drop through and form submerged reefs for fish.

You will have noticed the access road down to Embayment C. We are told that this will allow temporary access to enable shoreline enhancement and additional fish and amphibian habitat to be constructed. We are told that this road will be removed once work is complete. Let us hope that this road has a shorter lifespan than the temporary road at the north end of Embayment D! That road was put in to allow further work on the barrier islands and to create a carp-free zone in Embayment D: work still hasn't started! The Port Authority says January (!!!!): [ed. note: 2011, we hope!!!]

Movies at the Spit - Part II

One of our very alert visitors noted evidence of car tire burnout and skid marks on the newly paved road (that is another issue, why we needed a newly paved road!) further out on the Spit. We contacted the TRCA with this person's concerns and our concerns regarding after hours use, and its affect on the wildlife. The response we received from the TRCA project manager was as follows:

"... these tire marks are from a movie shoot that occurred on October 25 and 26 mostly during TPA operating hours and on their leased property. We were aware of the car scene and concerned about wildlife in the area, so sent staff to survey the area for wildlife prior to and during the shoot at the expense of the production company."

Website

Visit our website: take a look at past newsletters: look at our photo gallery... and... if you have some photographs you would like to see posted, please send them to our website.

Upcoming Books

In the near future, as part of its biodiversity series, the City of Toronto will issue its second book: Butterflies of Toronto. Written by a working group of volunteers, together with City staff, with tremendous photographs provided by working group members and others, this book will be a highlight! The Spit figures prominently in the book. If you are not already "into" butterflies, the book will convince you that it is a pastime/passion worth pursuing! We are told that the books will be available in January: we will put a notice on our website when they are available.

Park Operations

If you have encountered difficulties during normal operating hours of the park or want to report broken or damaged items, do use the Friends of Spit website (www.friendsofthespit.ca) to report and we will direct those comments on to the appropriate operations' person at the TRCA. Or you may phone the TRCA directly at (416) 661-6600 ext. 5770 (in their off-hours, you can always leave a message) or email ttp@trca.on.ca, to express your worries. For wildlife or natural heritage immediate concerns call (416) 990-8058 to reach the gate attendant's cell phone. Of course, in an emergency, 911 is the call!

Ongoing issues of concern have been gates not open during park operating hours, damage to portable toilets, changes of portable toilet locations, etc. All of these items affect our enjoyment of the park, so do not hesitate to leave us a message via the website or to contact the TRCA.