Facts and Figures

What We Are Doing

Municipalities	Toronto, Durham, Peel, Ajax, Mississauga, Pickering
Shoreline Length (km) including Waterfront Parks	194
Length of Waterfront (km)	72 stretching from Mississauga to Ajax
Trail Length (km)	87 of continuous waterfront trail: 51 off-road and 36 on-road
Area (km²)	145 — constituting all the lands draining directly into Lake Ontario and not into any other river system, and includes Frenchman's Bay watershed
Population (2011)	637,300
Land Use	Rural — 2%, Urbanizing — 2%, Urban — 96%
Significant Natural Features	Lake Ontario shoreline, Scarborough Bluffs, Toronto Islands, Frenchman's Bay
Natural Cover	20% Natural Cover: Forest – 8%, Meadow – 8%, Successional – 2%, Wetland – 1%, Beach/Bluff – 1%
TRCA Greenspace	1,226 ha
Native Plant & Animal Species	Plants — 511, Fish — 40, Birds — 98, Amphibians — 4, Mammals — 12, Reptiles — 4. Of these, 223 are considered Species of Regional Conservation Concern.



• TRCA has planted over 140,000 trees, shrubs, and aquatic plants, and created 13 ha of wetland habitat in the Waterfront watershed between 2008 and 2012.

- TRCA undertakes annual fish community and aquatic habitat monitoring across the Waterfront to track the health of the aquatic system and measure changes over time.
- Recent park amenities, funded by Waterfront Toronto, include new coastal wetlands, such as the Adam's Creek wetland restoration project that will improve nearshore habitat and water quality.

• Two recently completed waterfront parks have added 4.9 km of new Waterfront Trail to the system and 26 ha of new parkland in the City of Toronto.

- The City of Toronto's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan aims to reduce negative impacts of run-off generated when it rains or snows. Two large stormwater tanks were installed on the waterfront that are designed to contain run-off, settle out sediments and slowly release the water into the lake. This will improve nearshore water quality.
- TRCA, in partnership with the Town of Ajax, developed the Shoreline Improvement Strategy to help identify possible beach and recreational swimming opportunities along the Ajax waterfront. To date, the work has included debris removal and beach habitat plantings along 6 km of waterfront parkland.

• TRCA, in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation and Region of Peel, are undertaking a provincial environmental assessment to create a new natural waterfront park in the Lakeview neighbourhood and provide greater public access to the waterfront at the City of Mississauga's eastern border.

What You Can Do

• **Encourage** boat clubs and marinas to certify with the Blue Flag Marina Program. The Blue Flag program sets rigorous management, public education and safety criteria to protect water quality and requires annual recertification. **www.blueflag.org**

• **Participate** in the annual Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. Each fall, local community groups gather on the shores of the lake to collect litter and remove debris. www.shorelinecleanup.ca

• **Disconnect** downspouts, plant trees and shrubs on your property, and reduce the use of fertilizer to improve the quality of the water eventually making its way to Lake Ontario. All nine watersheds in TRCA's jurisdiction empty into Lake Ontario, impacting nearshore water quality.

• **Support** the Waterfront Regeneration Trust **www.waterfronttrail.org** and its municipal partners in efforts to expand the Waterfront Trail across the waterfront, particularly the off-road connections of the trail.

Donate to The Living City Foundation to support programs and initiatives on the Waterfront at www.thelivingcity.org

> visit www.trca.on.ca/waterfront and subscribe to the Shorelines Newsletter

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Waterfront Report Card 2013



Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) has prepared this Watershed Report Card on the state of Water Quality, Recreation and Biodiversity conditions.





Measuring helps us better understand our watersheds. It helps us to focus our efforts where they are needed most and to track the progress made. It also helps us to identify ecologically important areas that require protection or enhancement.

Biodiversity

A watershed is the area of land that catches rain and snow, which drains or seeps into a marsh, creek, river, lake or groundwater. Watersheds are the collectors, filters, conveyers and storage compartments of our fresh water supply.

Where We Are



We are one of 36 Conservation uthorities across Ontario under the umbrella rganization of Conservation Ontario.

What Does this Report Card Measure?





Water Quality

Why Measure?

What is a Watershed?



Grading



The standards used in this Report Card were developed by Toronto and Region Conservation. They are intended to provide watershed residents with the information needed to protect, enhance and improve the precious natural resources that surround us.

About the Waterfront

About the Indicators

TRCA has jurisdiction over 72 linear km of Lake Ontario waterfront, stretching from the City of Toronto/City of Mississauga border in the west to the Town of Ajax in the east. The total length of the shoreline "as the fish swims" is 194 km, and includes waterfront parks and the Toronto Islands. The total waterfront drainage area is 145 km², or 6% of TRCA's jurisdiction.

Historically, the Toronto waterfront featured bluffs and beaches, cobble reefs, estuaries and bays with productive marshes, wooded shorelines and meadows. Clear water streams and broad rivers meandered through densely forested watersheds from the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario. In these habitats, diverse communities of fish and wildlife found shelter, fed, spawned, nested, over-wintered and/or visited during their annual migration.

Over the past 200 years, the pressures of population growth and urban development have changed our waterfront drastically. These changes have caused serious environmental degradation. In 1987, the Toronto Bay Harbour was included on the International Joint Commission's list of 42 Areas of Concern for the Great Lakes. While waterfront development continues, regulations are now in place that require more careful consideration of aguatic habitat, water quality and smart growth factors. TRCA and its partners have been actively rehabilitating and restoring the natural habitat along the shoreline



This Waterfront Report Card provides a snapshot of some environmental conditions along the waterfront.

Monitoring, measuring and reporting helps us better understand the watershed, the progress we've made in protecting it, and the threats to its future health. Tracking the environmental indicators used in this Report Card provides watershed residents, the public, and decision makers, with the information needed to protect, restore and improve the precious natural resources across the waterfront. Where possible, an arrow is included alongside grades to show where conditions are improving, getting worse, or stable.

What Does this Report Card Measure?

Water Quality

Beach Posting – Levels of *E. coli* bacteria indicate the presence of untreated human or animal waste. Beach postings reflect whether the water is safe for human contact.

Recreation

Trails – A connected trail system allows people to walk, hike and bike through and between natural areas. Access to greenspace increases public recreation, supports a healthy, active lifestyle, and increases support for environmental protection and restoration efforts.

Biodiversitv

Fish – A high percentage of expected species in the nearshore environment indicate a healthy aquatic system. Greater species diversity ensures natural sustainability for all life forms, including human.









Water Quality

Beach Postings





Recreation ndicator

Trails





Improved stormwater management and better beach maintenance have improved nearshore water quality and reduced the number of beach closures by 10% over the last five years.

Untreated water carried into the lake by urban rivers and creeks, known as run-off, can result in beach closures on hot summer days that follow major rainfalls. During the 2007-2011 swimming seasons, beaches along the waterfront were posted unfit for swimming an average of 16% of the time. This is below the international Blue Flag standard of beach posting less than 20% of the season.

The City of Toronto monitors 11 swimming beaches on a daily basis during the summer, while the Region of Durham samples the water quality at 3 locations once a week. Eight of Toronto's beaches are designated as Blue Flag beaches, an international eco-label given to communities committed to maintaining high standards of water quality. The Blue Flag beaches were posted, on average, only 8% of the swimming season between 2007 and 2011, while Frenchman's Bay West in Pickering was not posted at all in 2011.

Waterfront Trails by Municipality 2012



The Waterfront Trail running through TRCA's jurisdiction – made up of 36 km of on-road trails and 51 km of off-road trails – is part of a system that runs from Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Quebec border. While we are proud of the trail coverage across the waterfront, there are still opportunities to increase the off-road sections, particularly along the Scarborough shoreline.

An extensive trail system, stretching 87 km along the waterfront shoreline, provides access to natural areas and connects 26 waterfront parks.

A total of 1,226 ha of TRCA owned greenspace has been protected along the waterfront – representing 20% of the entire watershed area including the Ajax Waterfront, Rotary Frenchman's Bay Park, the Humber Bay Park Complex and Tommy Thompson Park. These areas provide access to swimming fishing, boating and other waterbased recreation activities, while off-road trails provide opportunities for walking, jogging, rollerblading and cycling. TRCA is a major landowner of public greenspace along the Lake Ontario waterfront.

In the mid-1800s, before the wetlands and estuaries along the shoreline were filled and developed, and before human wastes, sediments and industrial pollution degraded the water quality, 64 different kinds of native fish species were found along the waterfront. Since 1989, TRCA has been collecting data on waterfront fish communities. To date, 40 native fish species have been recorded.

TRCA has undertaken shoreline habitat protection and enhancement work along the waterfront for many years. For example, shoreline restoration works undertaken as part of the recently completed Port Union Waterfront Park have resulted in a decrease in alewife (non-native species) and increase in emerald shiner (native species) along this section of open coast habitat. As a result of these efforts, the fish communities in the embayments, estuaries and open waters continue to improve. Urban anglers are now catching bass, pike, salmon and other sport fish along the waterfront.









The diversity of the fish community has increased since 1989. As water quality conditions improve, a number of native species, such as walleye and brook silverside have returned.