



UXBRIDGE URBAN PROVINCIAL PARK

Background Information

June 2024

Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve the background information document which will inform the development of the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Management Plan. This document consolidates information about the park's natural and cultural features and current recreational use in the general area. Ontario Parks is in the process of gathering updated and new information on the values of the park. Collectively, this information will be used to support the management planning process as outlined by the Ontario Protected Area Planning Manual.

I invite you to review and comment on this document.



Jason Travers
Director, Ontario Parks Operations Branch
Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks

12/06/2024
Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

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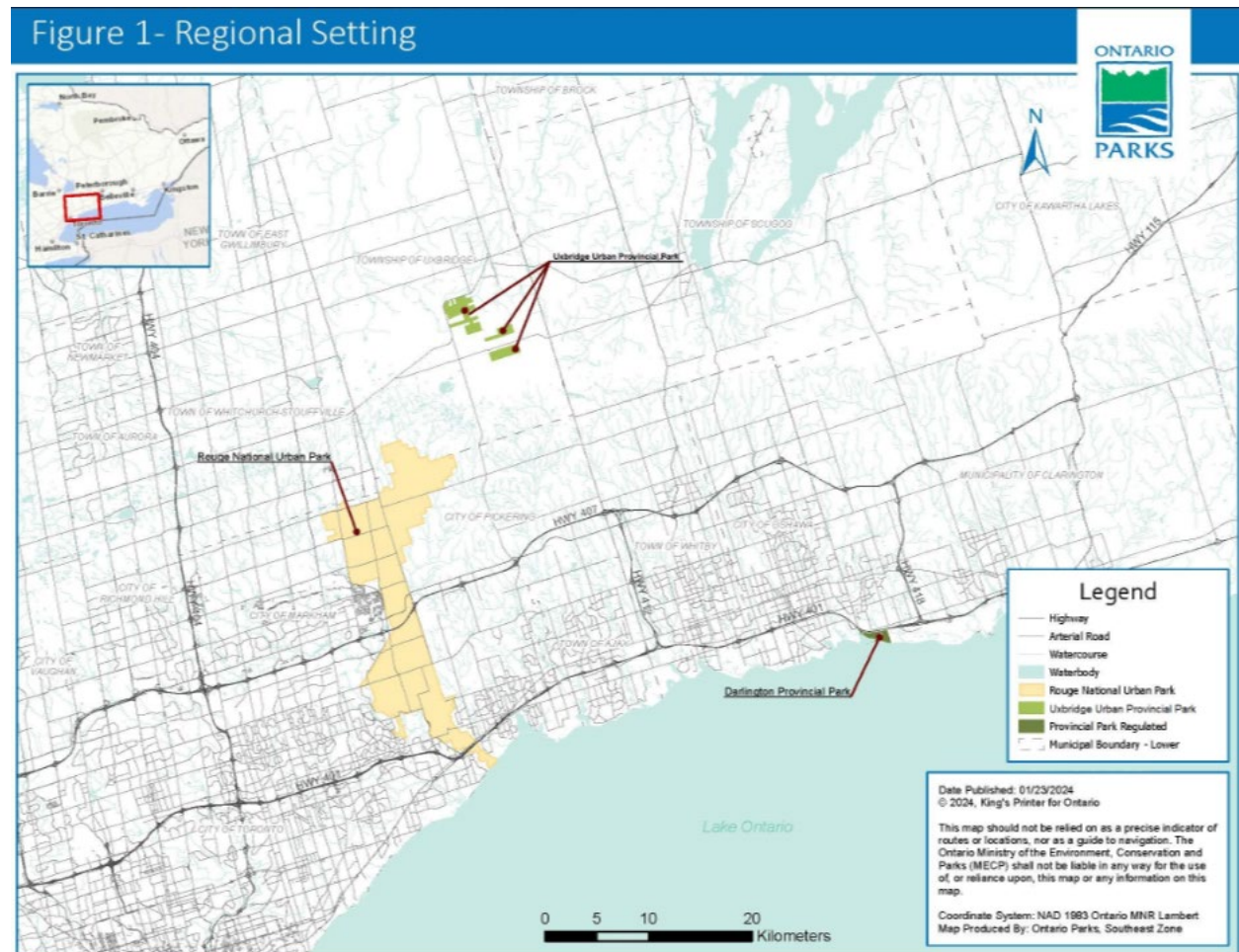
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1. INTRODUCTION

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is found on the Oak Ridges Moraine, in the Township of Uxbridge, Regional Municipality of Durham (Figure 1). The park is 532 hectares in size and includes multiple, disconnected parcels of land. Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located 25 kilometers east of Newmarket and 50 kilometers northeast of Toronto.

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is administered by Ontario Parks Operations Branch, Southeast Zone - Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.



Classified as a recreational class park, Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is intended to provide low-intensity, self-guided, ecologically sustainable recreational opportunities in an attractive natural setting. Since the park is newly regulated, there is currently limited access and uses while park management planning is being undertaken.

The planning and management of provincial parks is governed by the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. Provincial parks protect provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural landscape and maintain biodiversity while offering opportunities for ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation. The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* dedicates provincial parks to the people of Ontario and to visitors, for their inspiration, education, health and recreational enjoyment – with the intention that these areas be primarily managed to maintain their ecological integrity and preserved for future generations.

2. INDIGENOUS CONTEXT

Indigenous people lived on and developed relationships to the lands and waters that we now call Ontario long before the establishment of provincial parks. We understand that these relationships have formed the basis of Indigenous communities' distinctive harvesting practices, governance structures, cultures, and spirituality. Indigenous peoples continue to rely on, care for, and renew their connections to the lands and waters in Ontario, including traditional territories that now overlap with provincial parks.

Ontario respects Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized and affirmed by Section 35 of Canada's *Constitution Act, 1982*, and is committed to meeting its constitutional obligations in respect of Indigenous peoples.

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located within the areas of the Williams Treaties (1923) and the Gunshot Treaty (Johnson-Butler Purchase) of 1787-1788. Ontario Parks acknowledges that this provincial park is within Ontario's current understanding of the traditional territories of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Georgina Island First Nation, and Beausoleil First Nation and adjacent to the traditional territories of Alderville First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, and Scugog Island First Nation. In addition, Ontario Parks understands from Kawartha Nishnawbe that their community may practice Aboriginal rights in the area of this provincial park. Ontario Parks also understands that this provincial park is within Ontario's understanding of the primary area interest to the Nation Huronne-Wendat (Huron Wendat) in respect of archeological resources.

Ontario Parks is engaging with Indigenous communities to learn of their relationship with these lands, including any historic or current use of, or future interest in, Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park for the exercise of Aboriginal or treaty rights.

Through collaborative discussions, our hope is to share information and better integrate Indigenous knowledge, rights, values, and interests into the final management plan. We are interested in supporting an exchange of information from all knowledge areas to

help build a collective understanding of the values and interests within Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park.

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park was newly regulated on July 1, 2024. The current boundary of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is described in O. Reg 316/07 under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*.

Prior to recent planning efforts for Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park, the lands were designated as part of the Oak Ridges Moraine Area by the *Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, 2001*. Subsequently, the lands were designated as part of the Greenbelt, by the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*. Both designations remain in place and provide additional land protections, including restrictions on development.

Although previous protected area management planning has not taken place for Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park, a survey was conducted during Summer 2023 to determine interests such as:

- Degree of support for the establishment of a new protected area and why
- Frequency of recreational use
- Location of recreational use
- Preferred recreational activities
- Possible recreational activities and facilities that could occur in urban provincial parks

An open-ended question was also posted which provided additional opportunities for commenters to provide input. Some examples of comments included:

- nature should be a top priority in park development and operations,
- park should be physically and financially accessible (e.g., no or low fees),
- support for ecologically sustainable and non-motorized multi-use recreation,
- concern regarding traffic and other local impacts,
- concern regarding hunting, etc.

In fall 2023, Ontario Parks provided an opportunity for Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public to provide input on an Environmental Registry of Ontario regulation proposal to establish the park through regulation under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* ([ERO Notice 019-7733](#)). In addition to receiving comments regarding the boundary proposal, Ontario Parks also received general comments relating to park management planning. These comments addressed the same topics as the survey responses, for example; nature being the top priority, focus

on ecologically sustainable multi-use recreation and that the park should be physically and financially accessible to all.

The information gathered from the survey and the regulation amendment proposal comments (related to park management planning) will help inform the management planning for the park, including uses and areas for protection.

4. PLANNING AREA

4.1 Regional Setting

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located in southern Ontario, located 25 kilometers east of Newmarket and 50 kilometers northeast of Toronto (Figure 1). Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is situated in the Greenbelt Area and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area. This 532 ha provincial park occurs in Oak Ridges Ecodistrict 6E-7, part of the Lake Simcoe – Rideau Ecoregion and within the mixedwood plains ecozone. It contains biological features of provincial significance and representation of locally significant geological features. The mostly gently rolling to hilly landscape is dominated by deep morainal material.

4.2 Access

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is easily accessible from all directions (Figure 2). Located just south of the Town of Uxbridge, the park can be accessed by travelling south of Hwy 47 on Concession 6, and then turning southwest onto Old Stouffville Road. While the park is accessible, at this time there are no facilities.

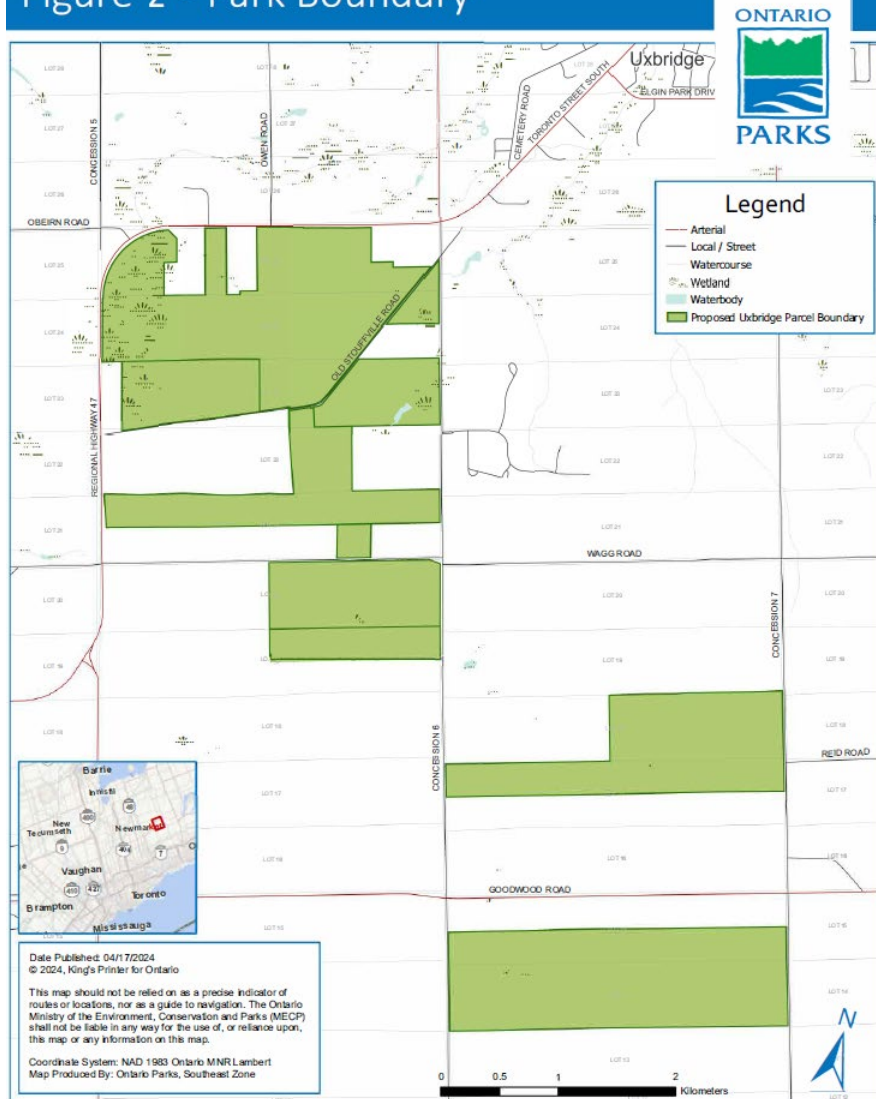
Some lands are under lease for commercial and agricultural purposes and are not accessible to the public. More information is included under Section 4.4.

4.3 Adjacent Land

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is surrounded by a combination of privately owned land; some lands are residential, some lands are owned by the municipality and region, and some are owned by conservation authorities.

Private land is not included within the park boundary and provincial park policy does not apply to these areas. If agreements are reached between the ministry and private landowners or other parties to include their lands as part of the provincial park, they may be regulated under O. Reg 316/07.

Figure 2 - Park Boundary



The adjacent lands managed for recreation by other parties are subject to different policies. Although these policies do not apply to Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park, they provide context for the surrounding lands and the policies in place to manage those lands:

TRCA. 2013. East Duffins Headwaters Management Plan Update. 137pp.

TRCA. 2012. East Duffins Headwaters Management Plan Update; Draft Background Report. 176pp.

Due to the location of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park, the lands are all patented and there are no sustainable forest licences or other Crown based resource harvest agreements in place.

4.3.1 Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Partners Network

The creation of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park builds on a legacy of conservation in the Uxbridge area. Considerable effort has been made to date and as such, the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Partners Network was created to help identify the recreational potential and protection potential for the park, and within the greater area.

Along with Ontario Parks Operations Branch, members of the Partners Network include: the Regional Municipality of Durham, the Township of Uxbridge, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Schad Foundation and Green Durham Association.

4.4 Authorized Third Party Uses and Development

Authorized uses or activities by third parties within Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park include:

- A lease to operate a maple sap harvest operation:
 - Part of lots 14 & 15, Concession 6, Township of Uxbridge
- A lease to plant and harvest crops on the following properties
 - Part of Lots 23 & 25, Concession 5, Township of Uxbridge, Regional Municipality of Durham
 - Part of Lots 17 & 18, Concession 6, Township of Uxbridge
 - Part of lots 14 & 15, Concession 6, Township of Uxbridge

These leases account for 35% of the provincial park and the lands on which they are located are inaccessible to the public. As a result of the two leases on Part of lots 14 & 15, Concession 6, Township of Uxbridge, almost the entirety of this parcel is inaccessible to the public.

There are a variety of built structures within Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. Some of these are used by the leaseholder while others are in a deteriorated condition. None of these built structures are accessible to the public.

Due to the location of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park, the lands are all patented and there are no sustainable forest licences or other Crown based resource harvest agreements in place.

5. NATURAL HERITAGE VALUES AND PROCESSES

5.1 Ecological Integrity

The maintenance of ecological integrity is the first priority in the planning and management of Ontario's protected areas. Ecological integrity addresses three

ecosystem attributes – composition, structure and function and it is based on the idea that the composition and structure of the protected area should be characteristic for the natural region and that ecosystem functions should proceed normally.

Ecological integrity is complex and difficult to measure. There are many aspects of ecosystems that could be measured at a variety of scales. Since ecological integrity cannot be assessed in one single way, the approach adopted by Ontario Parks considers the purpose of the protected area (why it was created and/or what role it plays in the protected area system), what features, values and natural processes occur there and the pressures upon the area as a whole. The identification of values and the pressures faced by protected area values helps to determine management priorities and appropriate actions to address any challenges. This is how Ontario Parks endeavors to maintain and enhance ecological integrity.

5.2 Life Science Values

Located within the Oak Ridges Moraine, Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park protects significant natural areas in a developed landscape. Due to historical agricultural practices, these lands were vulnerable to wind and water erosion, which subsequently lead to the establishment of plantations in the 1950s. As a result, about 25% of the park is classified as plantation (Deacon, 2023); primarily red pine with a smaller percentage of white pine present. The area also supports deciduous forest, provincially significant wetlands, and provincially rare sand barrens. The largest open sand barren has low disturbance with high ecological integrity. The park's eolian sand dunes are under-represented in Ontario's protected areas, which makes their protection important.

The park contains a provincially significant life science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) in the southernmost parcel; the Uxbridge-Glen Major Forests ANSI. In the northernmost parcel, the park also contains part of the candidate regionally-significant life science ANSI, the Pefferlaw-Uxbridge Headwaters ANSI. This ANSI which protects a provincially significant marsh and swamp complex, extends north-east across Highway 47 and towards the Town of Uxbridge. Other candidate ANSI lands are also located adjacent to the park boundary.

The park contains significant wetlands fed by cold-water seeps and springs. This cold-water system supports many species, such as brook trout habitat and overwintering herptiles (i.e., reptiles and amphibians). This stream runs through the Town of Uxbridge and is part of the Pefferlaw River watershed. About four kilometers downstream of the park is Eglin Pond which was recently stocked with brook trout yearlings by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF, 2022). It is possible that these brook trout travel upstream into Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. Historically, this stream was dammed to create a pond. After the dam collapsed, restoration took place and the

stream and shoreline have started to recover. This area is disturbed by unauthorized activities (i.e., motorized vehicles, garbage dumping).

To date, 38 species of bird are known to use the park's lands. Of those, three species are at-risk. This species diversity is likely due to the high diversity of habitats in the park, as well as the high connectivity with nearby protected lands.

There are at least 16 mammal species known for the park, including white tailed deer, porcupine, and coyote. One endangered species of bats has been recorded within the park.

At least 448 species of vascular plants occur in the park and 44 ecosystem communities have been mapped through Ecological Land Classification (ELC). Five species of lichen have also been recorded. Three species at risk plants and 36 regionally rare plants were found in the park. About 28% of the plant species are not native to Ontario and 27 are considered invasive, including nine of the top invasive species (e.g., *Phragmites* spp., garlic mustard, and European buckthorn).

At least 5 amphibian and 1 reptile species are found in the park. More study is needed to gather information on insect species, but currently 66 species are known.

According to Aquatic Resource Area surveys conducted by the MNRF, there are several species inhabiting the headwaters of Uxbridge Brook Tributary within the park, including brook trout, white sucker, creek chub, blacknose dace, and brook stickleback (MNRF, 2023).

Current background information resources, available on request:

Deacon, P. 2023. Botanical Assessment of Urban Provincial Park in Uxbridge, Ontario. Waterloo, ON. 62pp.

Ontario Parks is in the process of gathering new information to contribute to our knowledge of life science values in Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park.

5.3 Earth Science Values

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located on the Oak Ridges Moraine, a major landform and physiographic region in Ontario (Deacon, 2023). The Oak Ridges Moraine is recognized for its unique collection of environmental, geological, and hydrological features (MNRF, 2018).

The moraine was formed more than 13,500 years ago under and between four ice lobes which resulted in the unique topography of the four large, raised, wedge-shaped bodies of sediment (Deacon, 2023; MNRF, 2018). Glacial retreat and meltwater resulted in a

mix of glaciofluvial, glaciolacustrine, and morainal sediment. Subsequent glacial meltwater led to flooding and the landscape was further altered to reflect the glacial activity, such as kettle wetlands, large hills, valley systems, and knob-and-basin relief (Deacon, 2023; MNRF, 2018).

The park is located on mostly sand and gravel over 176 meters deep. The park's soils are considered Pontypool Series soils which are well drained, have steep slopes, and are vulnerable to water and wind erosion (Barnett, 2023). The park is in the central part of the Uxbridge Sediment Wedge which runs east to west in the northern portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine. This area was identified as a significant source area for potential sand and gravel extraction. The significance of this large, natural, recharge area for groundwater storage and distribution was recognized (Barnett, 2023) and it is included in the Lake Simcoe and Couchiching/Black River Source Protection Area.

In addition to the moraine being an important landform feature, overall, the moraine provides excellent connectivity for wildlife corridors. By protecting these properties within Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves, a cross-section of the axial zone of the Uxbridge Sediment wedge has been protected (Barnett, 2023) and as a result, some special and unique ecological features have also been protected. Furthermore, habitat connectivity will also improve.

Should key strategic lands be added to the park in the future, there is the possibility that Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park could protect a north-south cross-section of the Oak Ridges Moraine. If these additions occur, in time, a band of protection could be formed between the Town of Uxbridge and Rouge National Urban Park, and then southward through the national park towards its southern boundary, the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

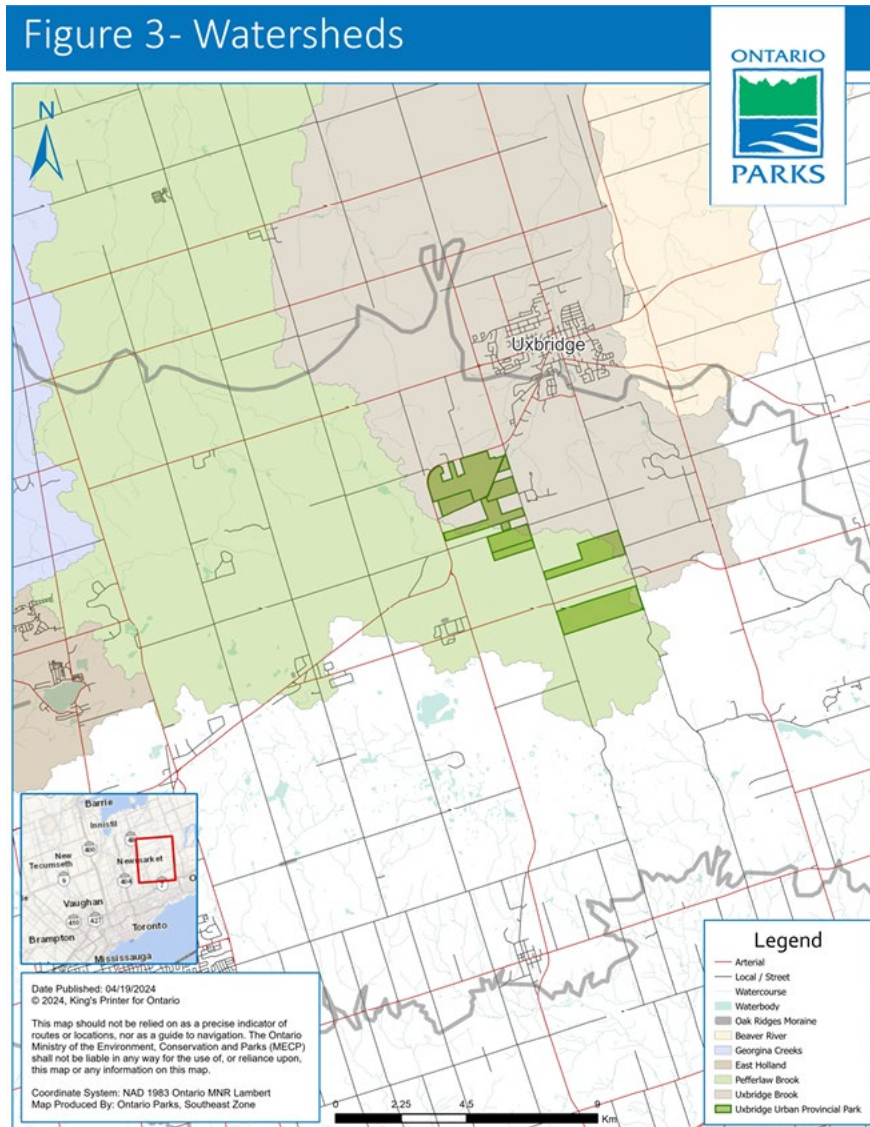
Current background information resources, available on request:

Barnett, P. J., 2023. Earth Science Inventory Checklist – Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park candidate lands.

5.4 Watersheds

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located primarily within the Severn River-Lake Simcoe watershed (Figure 3), however a very small portion of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is located in the Scugog River watershed. The majority of the park drains northwestward towards Georgian Bay, while a very small percentage of the park drains east and southwards towards Lake Ontario.

Figure 3- Watersheds



6. CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES

Considerable cultural heritage investigation has taken place for the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park lands. All of the properties have been subject to Stage 1 archaeological assessment, and in some cases Stage 2 and 3 archaeological assessments have been conducted. Built heritage evaluations have also taken place, where appropriate. Some registered archaeological sites are located within the boundary of the provincial park.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information contained within the archaeological assessment reports, these documents will not be released to the public by Ontario Parks.

One point of interest regarding the cultural heritage of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is that between 1989 and 1996, a part of the park was used for the filming of the television

show Road to Avonlea. The location has importance given the connection to local author Lucy Maud Montgomery, and her legendary tale of Anne of Green Gables (Contentworks, 2010).

While considerable information is known about the lands, Ontario Parks is interested in any additional information that may be of interest and may not have been gathered during the previous archaeological assessment investigations. Also, additional studies may take place regarding specific elements of the cultural heritage of the park.

7. RECREATION VALUES

Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is surrounded by lands that offer high quality recreational opportunities. The lands managed by Partner Network members, and the recreational opportunities provided, are known to local residents as well as by visitors.

Prior to regulation in 2024, any uses taking place on the park lands were unauthorized. While some of these uses are consistent with the ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation objective of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*, some observed uses are not.

Uses consistent with ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation objective include low-impact, self-guided recreational opportunities such as off-road cycling, hiking, cross country skiing and nature appreciation. Now that the park is regulated, it offers very limited access and facilities to support ecologically sustainable recreational activities while park management planning is undertaken.

A survey was conducted during the summer 2023 regarding the uses that are of interest to users and the responses strongly supported pursuing a variety of non-motorized use within the boundary of the park. More than half of respondents indicated that they engage in activities such as hiking, walking and nature appreciation within the general area. The survey responses support expanding access to ecologically sustainable multi-use trail facilities in general, in support of walking, hiking, birdwatching, mountain biking and equestrian trail riding. There is also support for winter recreational facilities. Some responses supported trails being separated by use.

A link to the summary of survey responses can be found listed under SUPPORTING MATERIALS on the ERO notice for this document (ero.ontario.ca/search).

8. COMMERCIAL USES

As indicated in Section 4.4, a significant portion of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park is under lease. These leases support commercial and agricultural enterprises.

9. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

There is no current information on the specific social and economic benefits that are directly resulting from the establishment of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. Anticipated benefits associated with the proposed development of the park will be identified in future planning documents.

10. PROTECTED AREA PRESSURES

The protection of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park natural and cultural values is the primary purpose of creating a provincial park and the primary priority of the park planning process. Ontario Parks has identified, and will continue to identify, potential pressures on park values. While considering any potential development that will take place in the park, the associated pressure will be evaluated and mitigated during the park management planning process and subsequent implementation.

Existing pressures impacting natural and cultural heritage values in Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park include, but are not limited to:

- Unauthorized use of off-road motorized vehicles (e.g., all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes)
- Illegal sport hunting
- Dumping
- Limited unauthorized campfires, camping, etc.

In particular, unauthorized trail use by off-road motorized vehicles has resulted in considerable damage due to erosion, sediment deposition, trail braiding and the introduction of invasive species.

11. REFERENCES

- Barnett, P.J. 2023. Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Candidate Lakes Earth Science Checksheet.
- Contentworks Inc. 2010. Built and Landscape Resources. Evaluation Report for 3795 Concession Road 6, Uxbridge, ON. N72879.
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- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.* <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01o31>
- O. Reg. 316/07. Designation and Classification of Provincial Parks. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/070316>
- Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006.* <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/06p12>

TRCA. 2013. East Duffins Headwaters Management Plan Update. 137pp.

TRCA. 2012. East Duffins Headwaters Management Plan Update; Draft Background Report. 176pp.

TRCA. 2003. A Watershed Plan for Duffins Creek and Carruthers Creek. 237pp.

Most cultural heritage resources have not been listed due to the sensitive nature of their contents.