



Background

Bronte Creek is a beautiful 304 km² watershed that is located in south western Ontario. This environmentally significant river flows 50 km from near the town of Morriston, over the Niagara Escarpment to the City of Oakville, where it enters Lake Ontario. Of particular significance is the abundance of groundwater inputs that provide clean, cold water for local residents and allow for a coldwater ecosystem originally dominated by brook trout and Atlantic salmon. Further information regarding the watershed can be found at the TUC's Ted Knott Chapter website: <http://tutkc.org/Projects/BronteCreek/BronteCreekWatershed.htm>

The Challenge

Portions of Bronte Creek and its aquatic inhabitants are suffering due to increased water temperature and degraded habitat conditions. Human impacts such as online ponds, riparian (vegetated zones along the river edge) deforestation and dams have caused "Bronte Creek to run a fever" according to Jack Imhof, TUC's National Biologist. Warmer waters are detrimental to the coldwater ecosystem of the creek as many of the aquatic creatures such as brook trout require cold, oxygenated water in order to survive. The increased water temperatures and degraded habitat has also lead to degraded water quality that also affects local residents.

Fortunately Bronte Creek is resilient and will benefit from our efforts to restore its ecosystem by working with landowners and the local community to reduce water temperatures and improve riparian and aquatic habitats. TUC's Bronte Creek Watershed Renewal Program was officially launched in Spring 2009 and will run for five years. As with all of TUC's National Flagship Programs, the Bronte Creek Renewal program depends on ongoing partnerships to ensure success. TUC extends heartfelt thanks to Conservation Halton, Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program, City of Burlington and TUC's Ted Knott Chapter. Additional funding has been provided by a grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation and by generous donations from Esso Imperial Oil and the Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows.

The Bronte Creek Watershed Renewal Program

A Trout Unlimited Canada
flagship conservation project

Summary by Mary Finch

Photos by Jack Imhof



Goals and Objectives

The main goal of this program is to engage local area residents, especially landowners in renewing the ecosystem of Bronte Creek. We want to bring Bronte Creek's fever down! Ultimately, it is their watershed and they should be given the tools and support to make it as healthy and productive as it can be. Specific projects will include aquatic (water) and riparian (vegetated zones along the river edge) habitat restoration through the implementation of the two main program objectives:

1. **Engage, assist and support** Bronte Creek Watershed landowners who wish to implement restoration projects such as creating riparian zones and removing small dams and online ponds. Trout Unlimited Canada is available to help with designing and identifying restoration projects, as well as project management: helping to source funds, obtain permits and organize volunteer crews to help with projects;
2. **Rehabilitation of a section of Bronte Creek** in Lowville Park, Burlington. This City of Burlington owned property is a favourite with many families and local residents. Bronte Creek runs through the park and is central to many of the recreational activities that take place in the park including fishing, wading, hiking and dog walking. Erosion, reduction of the riparian zone and alteration of the stream bed have caused the creek to become over-widened in the park which in turn has caused the water temperature to increase. Rehabilitation efforts aim to decrease water temperatures and increase fish habitat. This component is scheduled to occur in 2010 and will serve as a demonstration of a healthy creek section with hopes of encouraging further stewardship projects

Several community meetings and a Family Discovery Day have already been held. The Partners are now working with the City on the details of the restoration project for Lowville Park. In addition, data have been collected from the watershed and a number of landowners have already come forward interested in work on their properties.

Our Project Partners



Hamilton-Halton
Watershed Stewardship Program



Imperial Oil

Mary Finch, TUC's Bronte Creek Watershed Stewardship Specialist, helping Appleby College students to identify 'bugs' to understand the creek's food web and its importance as an indicator of stream health.

If you wish to contribute to this project or for more information, please contact:

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