



Staff Report

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Report To:	Planning and Development Committee	
Date of Meeting:	November 15, 2021	Report Number: PDS-059-21
Submitted By:	Ryan Windle, Director of Planning and Development Services	
Reviewed By:	Andrew C. Allison, CAO	By-law Number:
File Number:	PLN17.1.6	Resolution#:
Report Subject:	Environmental Stewardship - 2021 Annual Report	

Recommendation:

1. That Report PDS-059-21 and any related communications be received for information;
and
2. That all interested parties listed in Report PDS-059-21 and any delegations be advised of Council's decision.

Report Overview

Council provides annual funding for an ongoing Environmental Stewardship Program. The program encourages citizens and groups to carry out initiatives that improve municipal lands, such as valleylands and natural areas. Since 2011, a key component of this program has included the replanting of trees along rural roads. The benefits of the program go beyond the monetary value of the projects, and include ecological enhancement, climate change mitigation, community beautification, preservation of historical landscapes, education and research, and community engagement through volunteerism. In 2021, the Environmental Stewardship Program continued to support the Trees for Rural Roads initiative, contributing to the planting of 860 saplings and 10 shrubs along rural roads in Clarington.

1. Background

- 1.1 Beginning in 2002, Council has provided annual funding for an ongoing Environmental Stewardship Program. When approving projects for funding, Staff review projects to ensure general public benefit, matching in-kind contributions (labour and/or materials), and the project meets the long-term objectives of the Municipality.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of how the funds were used in 2021.
- 1.3 The 2022 budget will include a request for an increase in funding from \$15,000 to \$20,000. This will ensure the program will continue in the same manner it has in prior years. There is both an increase in demand and the cost of the supplies.

2. 2021 Stewardship Projects

Trees for Rural Roads

- 2.1 In 2012, Clarington initiated the Trees for Rural Roads (TRR) program in partnership with Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) and Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA). The goal of the program is to plant trees along country roads for the benefit of the environment and local communities. Increasing tree canopy cover improves wildlife habitat and enhances environmental services, including carbon sequestration and cooling of roadways, while preserving the historical rural aesthetics of the area.
- 2.2 The TRR program is announced through articles in local newspapers, the planning E-update and the [Municipal website](#) and social media. Trees are offered free of charge to rural residents to be planted on private property adjacent to municipal roadways. Participants have their choice of native tree species, including sugar, silver and red maples, white pine, white spruce, white birch, and red and white oak.

- 2.3 Applications are reviewed by the applicable Conservation Authority staff to ensure planting locations support the intent of the program, do not conflict with infrastructure, and trees have an appropriate separation from each other and from the road.
- 2.4 The 2021 application intake window ran from February 2, 2021 to March 31, 2021 and was quickly followed by the distribution by Staff (as seen in figure 1) of 860 saplings to 59 rural property owners throughout Clarington (**Attachment 1** – Map of the roadways planted in 2021).



Figure 1: The plants were quickly distributed to property owners by Staff.

- 2.5 To support property owners who have site limitations that restrict their ability to plant trees (e.g. overhead utilities), a native shrub pilot project was trialled as part of the 2020 TRR program. Three native shrub species, Nannyberry, Highbush Cranberry and Serviceberry, continued to be available in 2021. The provision of shrubs was at the discretion of the Conservation Authority. In total, 10 shrubs were distributed to two property owners throughout Clarington (incorporated into **Attachment 1** – Map of the roadways planted in 2021).
- 2.6 This year Staff reviewed cumulative project data from 2012-2021. Since the outset of the project in 2012, native trees and shrubs have been delivered to 301 different properties in the project area. (**Attachment 2** – Map of the roadways planted 2012-2021). Over the course of the project 7,404 trees and 60 shrubs have been provided to 299 different property owners from across rural Clarington.



Figure 2: Staff practiced appropriate social distancing when loading and delivering plants

- 2.7 Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, contactless drop-off services were provided, delivered by Staff from Community Services in 2020 and again in 2021. As seen in figure 2, Staff practiced appropriate social distancing when loading and delivering plants and were not approached by any program participants.
- 2.8 Since 2013, the TRR program has received partial funding through Maple Leaves Forever, a registered charity that advocates and supports the planting of native Canadian maples across the rural and urban landscape of southern Ontario. Native maples were subsidized at a rate of one third of the purchase price of the planting stock. Since 2019, a tribute grant has also been received from the Highway of Heroes program.

3. Concurrence

Not Applicable.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Environmental Stewardship Program in Clarington is an initiative that has been well received in the community. Since 2002, over \$195,000 has been invested in numerous projects; however, the value of the in-kind contributions multiplies the benefits many times over. The benefits go well beyond the monetary value of the projects to include ecological enhancement, climate change mitigation, community beautification, preservation of historical landscapes, education and research, and community engagement through volunteerism.

- 4.2 Clarington “led the way” with the introduction of the TRR program in 2012. Since then, the program has been adopted and adapted by other local municipalities and continues to garner interest.
- 4.3 The 2022 Planning and Development Services budget includes an increase in the budget for this program.

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Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Map of the Roadways Planted in 2021

Attachment 2 – Map of the Roadways Planted from 2012-2021

Interested Parties:

There are no interested parties to be notified of Council's decision.