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THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL
PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

MINUTES
PAAWG 2023-02

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) met on March 23, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Peel Conference Centre located at 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite B, Brampton, Ontario. The meeting was also available through virtual participation via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present: Gary Mountain, Chair, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Karen Hutchinson, Caledon Countryside Alliance
Patrick Brown, Mayor, City of Brampton
Tom Dolson, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Pat Fortini, Regional Councillor
Dwight Matson, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Britt McKee, EcoSource
Manjari Mehta, Citizen-at-Large
Ed Russell, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Mark Vanderwees, Citizen-at-large

Members Absent: Raphael Adegboye, Representative of the Agricultural Community
Annette Groves, Mayor, Town of Caledon
Brian Wannamaker, Citizen-at-Large

Staff: Marco Di Nizio, Junior Planner, Region of Peel
Mark Head, Manager, Research and Analysis, Region of Peel
Melanie Williams, Principal Planner, Region of Peel
Lisa Brusse, Manager, Landowner Engagement and Stewardship, Credit Valley Conservation
Duncan Ivany, Co-ordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation
Holly Shipclark, Senior Co-ordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation
Patrick Esson, Senior Project Manager, Restoration Projects, Toronto and Region Conservation
Mary Anne Young, Project Manager, Restoration Projects, Toronto and Region Conservation

Guests: Lyndsey Cartwright, Toronto and Region Conservation
Alyssa Cousineau, Hub Manager (East), ALUS Canada
Laura DelGiudice, Toronto and Region Conservation
Laurie Nelson, Toronto and Region Conservation

Rebecca Pearce-Cameron, Associate Hub Manager (East), ALUS
Canada
Chip Pitfield, Chair, ALUS Canada Board
Ben Roberts, Economic Development Officer, Town of Caledon
Johnathan Ruppert, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Brad Stephens, Toronto and Region Conservation
Laura Timms, Credit Valley Conservation

1) Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Gary Mountain who called attendance.

Staff and guests were introduced.

2) Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Gary Mountain, Tom Dolson, and Dwight Matson declared a conflict of interest on Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) application 12-CVC-22. No other conflicts of interest were identified.

3) Review and Approval of March 23, 2023 Agenda

Moved by Tom Dolson

That the Agenda for the March 23, 2023, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2023-06

4) Review and Approval of Minutes from March 2, 2023 Meeting

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

That the Minutes of Meeting 2023-01 Inaugural and Orientation Meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, held on March 2, 2023, be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2023-07

5) Toronto and Region Conservation – Significant Wildlife Habitat Mapping

Lyndsey Cartwright, Senior Research Analyst, Toronto & Region Conservation (TRCA)

Lyndsey Cartwright presented on the Toronto & Region Conservation's draft Significant Wildlife Habitat (SWH) mapping project. The presentation outlined the objective of the project which was to map areas that meet criteria for SWH across TRCA's jurisdiction. Final mapping products of the project are intended to be used as a screening tool for municipal partners to implement land use planning policy and for organizations wanting to identify areas for restoration that would benefit wildlife. PAAWG members were encouraged to provide feedback which would inform revisions to the draft mapping.

Questions/Discussion

TRCA staff will provide the draft SWH report to PAAWG for its review and comment. Regional staff will circulate the report after the PAAWG meeting for PAAWG members to provide comment directly to TRCA.

The PAAWG Chair commented on the benefits of protecting and restoring natural habitat for wildlife and the general health of ecosystems.

6) **City of Brampton Stormwater Charges & Credits for Agricultural Land**

Tom Dolson, President, Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA)

Tom Dolson presented on the City of Brampton's proposed Stormwater Charge Credit Program for farms in Brampton. The program is proposed to provide stormwater credits for agri-environmental stewardship practices on farms to reduce stormwater charges. The practices being considered for the Program are also eligible for grant assistance to farmers wanting to establish projects on their properties through the Peel Rural Water Quality program. The presentation compared the current stormwater charge program and the streamlined credit program for farms which was recommended by City of Brampton staff and subject to Council approval.

Tom Dolson outlined the implementation process of the streamlined credit program which involves retaining a consultant, drafting framework for a farm credit program, farmer engagement, and a Report to Council that summarizes feedback from the farmers and proposes a by-law amendment. PAAWG members were requested to review the agri-environmental project categories funded through the Peel Rural Water Quality Program and identify if any project categories should be included in the City's proposed Stormwater Credit Program for farms that are not already listed by the City.

Questions/Discussion:

PAAWG members discussed alternative stewardship practices not mentioned during the presentation and asked how credits would be calculated. Regional staff clarified that the consultant retained for this project undertake a research and benchmarking exercise to review stewardship practices and programs in other jurisdictions and examine other practices identified by PAAWG members.

PAAWG members further discussed crop rotation and other conservation tillage practices (e.g., vertical tillage as well as no till) as a possible stewardship practice that could be added to the project. Tom Dolson clarified that crop rotation can be difficult to monitor. Tom Dolson further clarified that the current stage of the project involves identifying any additional stewardship practices.

Tom Dolson encouraged PAAWG members to contact City of Brampton staff and himself if they have any comments.

7) **PAAWG 2023 Work Plan**
Melanie Williams, Region of Peel

The PAAWG 2023 Work Plan was presented at the Inaugural PAAWG meeting and brought forward at this meeting to PAAWG for final comment. It was noted the work plan is subject to modification to reflect changes to implement direction of Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. The work plan will be provided to Regional Council in the annual PAAWG report.

Questions/Discussions

None.

8) **Peel Rural Water Quality Program and ALUS Peel Pilot**

1. **Financial Updates**

Holly Shipclark, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC)

The total expenditures for the 2023 year as of March 23, 2023 is \$95,878 with a total budget of \$105,891. The total annual payments for March 23, 2023 is \$54,247.65.

Questions/Discussion

PAAWG asked CVC staff to report back on the environmental benefits achieved through the Peel Rural Water Quality Program as a result of the landowner contributions. Regional staff indicated that benefits and outcomes of the Program since its inception are tracked and summarized in the annual Peel Rural Water Quality Program reporting prepared by Conservation Authority staff. CVC staff mentioned that they will report back with information at the next PAAWG meeting.

2. **Project Applications**

Holly Shipclark, CVC

Marry Anne Young, TRCA

• **01-TRCA-23- Natural Area Enhancement and Creation**

The application proposes to plant a 20-metre wide, 1.9-acre treed area along the north property line under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation". Planting will include a mix of deciduous and coniferous tree species. The applicant is also applying for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payments, as they have previously restored a total of 4.4 acres of treed habitat along the south property line. The implementation of the project will improve groundwater recharge, create a wildlife habitat corridor, and mitigate soil erosion.

Questions/Discussions

PAAWG members asked staff to clarify the eligibility and criteria used to qualify past projects for ALUS Peel Pilot funding. Regional staff indicated that this eligibility criterion in the Guidelines will be reviewed in the evaluation of the Pilot after the pilot period is completed. Guideline revisions may need to be considered at that time to establish time limitations that would apply to past stewardship project enrollment for Pilot funding.

CVC staff and ALUS Canada staff clarified that ALUS Canada is committed to find funding for annual payments for projects that are being presented at this meeting and that annual payments can be received for projects completed in previous years. ALUS Canada staff further clarified that funding is limited and that ALUS Regions must make decisions as to which projects will go through based on funding that is currently available.

Moved by Ed Russell

Motion #1 - That application 01-TRCA-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$4,469.37 under the category "Natural Area and Enhancement Creation".

Carried PAAWG 2023-08

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

Motion #2 - That application 01-TRCA-23 be approved for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payment funding in the total amount of \$570.00 a year for 5 years, for a total of \$2,850.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-09

- **02-TRCA-23- Natural Area Enhancement and Creation**

The project proposes to bring forward 1.3 acres in a fallow field for restoration. 0.9 acres of past projects were completed and approved for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payments in 2022. Implementation of this project will allow for restored land which would then be reforested and create increased biodiversity on the property.

Questions/Discussion

PAAWG inquired on the status of the past projects on the property and if they were achieving the proposed benefits. TRCA staff clarified that the past projects achieved the proposed benefits as the trees on the property are growing well.

Further discussion was held with PAAWG and ALUS Canada staff regarding ALUS Canada's potential to secure funds for future projects.

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

That application 02-TRCA-23 be approved for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payment funding in the total amount of \$195.00 a year for five years, for a total of \$975.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-10

- **12-CVC-22- Education and Training**

The application proposes to fund an educational video created by the Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA), that highlights different aspects of farming in Peel including the economic value of farming to the Region, stewardship and agri-environmental practices, and opportunities and challenges of farming in a near-urban area. This project is under the category "Education and Training". A short clip that highlights the key messages of the video was played to PAAWG.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Moved by Ed Russell

That application 12-CVC-22 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality funding be provided in the amount of \$1,000 under the category "Education and Training".

Carried PAAWG 2023-11

- **01-CVC-23 – Tree Planting and 05-CVC-23 – Natural Area Enhancement and Creation**

The application 01-CVC-23 proposes to establish forest cover across a 6.7-acre project area which would close a gap and connect two significant woodland areas. The application is under category "Tree Planting". The proposed benefits to this project include creating a complete significant woodland corridor, improve woodland biodiversity, and improve water quality by retiring fragile agricultural land from future agricultural use.

The application 05-CVC-23 proposes to retire a 2.29-acre horse paddock and establish the area as a tallgrass prairie habitat under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation". The purpose of this project is to preserve surface and groundwater sources through the restoration and creation of a natural habitat and to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Questions/Discussion

CVC staff and ALUS Canada staff discussed the maintenance of the tallgrass prairie habitat and the responsibilities of the contractor for application 05-CVC-23.

PAAWG and CVC staff discussed issues associated with the high project costs for application 05-CVC-23. CVC staff mentioned that the site preparation and collecting native grass seed is expensive.

PAAWG member questioned the high cost of the tallgrass prairie project and asked if there are landowner contributions to both applications. CVC staff and ALUS Canada staff outlined the site preparation and maintenance contributions from the landowners. CVC staff further outlined the site preparation tasks being performed by CVC staff and how the full coverage of project costs for 05-CVC-23 from the PRWQP ensures that the project will produce the proposed benefits.

Regional staff inquired if there should be a requirement for landowner in-kind contributions related to the site preparation and recommended to revisit this topic when Conservation Authority staff and Regional staff review the PRWQP guidelines.

ALUS Canada members also indicated that while tallgrass prairie habitat is more costly to establish than tree planting it is a habitat type that provides very significant ecological benefits and biodiversity similar to benefits provided by wetland habitat restoration and probably represents the one of the more important projects that should be funded.

PAAWG mentioned the idea of having benchmarks when expensive projects are presented. Regional staff mentioned that this idea will be considered when staff perform the review of the PRWQP guidelines. ALUS Canada staff added that the expensive cost of application 05-CVC-23 is worthwhile as there are many environmental benefits to the project.

Moved by Ed Russell

Motion #1 - That application 01-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$4,320.00 under the category "Tree Planting".

Carried PAAWG 2023-12

Moved by Dwight Matson

Motion #2 - That application 01-CVC-23 be approved for the ALUS Peel Pilot annual funding in the total amount of \$1,005.00 for five years, for a total of \$5,025.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, and that the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-13

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

Motion #3 - That application 05-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$15,782.14 under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation".

Carried PAAWG 2023-14

Moved by Ed Russell

Motion #4 - That application 05-CVC-23 be approved for the ALUS Peel Pilot annual funding in the total amount of \$343.50 for five years, for a total of \$1,717.50 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, and that the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-15

- **02-CVC-23- Natural Area Enhancement and Creation**

The project proposes to restore a 7.4-acre cool season pasture to native tall grass prairie habitat under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation". Grazing of the project area is proposed to begin the fourth and fifth years of the project. If the applicant chooses to graze the project area, ALUS Canada funds will be reduced from \$150 to \$75 per acre per year. Benefits to this project include controlling sediment, nutrients, and peak flows from agricultural runoff, increased natural cover, and improved habitat value of natural areas.

Questions/Discussion

PAAWG and CVC staff discussed the project costs, specifically the decreased costs associated in years when grazing is done by the landowner.

Moved by Karen Hutchinson

Motion #1 - That application 02-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$17,314.28 under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation".

Carried PAAWG 2023-16

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

Motion #2 - That application 02-CVC-23 be approved for the ALUS Peel Pilot annual funding in the total amount of \$1,110 for five years, for a total of \$5,550.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, and that the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding. If the applicant chooses to graze within the five years, the annual payment funding would be reduced to 50% of the annual payment (\$75.00/acre/year) for the years grazing occurred.

Carried PAAWG 2023-17

- **03-CVC-23 – Tree Planting**

The project proposes to plant 8,200 native seedlings and potted trees on the property under the category “Tree Planting”. The project will increase biodiversity, increase canopy cover, improve long-term soil health through windbreaks, and improve surface water quality through a buffer to watercourses and wetlands.

Questions

ALUS Canada staff outlined the context of arable land and how it is related to project eligibility.

Moved by Karen Hutchinson

Motion #1 - That application 03-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$10,000.00 under the category “Tree Planting”.

Carried PAAWG 2023-18

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

Motion #2 - That application 03-CVC-23 be approved for the ALUS Peel Pilot annual funding in the total amount of \$1,737.00 for five years, for a total of \$8,685.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, and that the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-19

- **04-CVC-23 and 07-CVC-23**

The application 04-CVC-23 proposes to restore native tall grass prairie, savannah, and meadow habitats on six project areas on the property under the category “Natural Area Enhancement and Creation”. The implementation of this project will preserve surface and groundwater sources through the creation of a natural habitat, control sediment, nutrients, and peak flows from agricultural runoff, and increase natural cover.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

Motion #1 - That application 04-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$20,000.00 under the category “Natural Area Enhancement and Creation”.

Carried PAAWG 2023-20

Moved by Manjari Mehta

Motion #2 - That the ALUS Peel Pilot funding be approved subject to:

1. That confirmation is provided by the applicant to Conservation Authority Program Staff that cattle or other livestock will be restricted from all previous trees planted and all proposed tall grass prairie, savannah and meadow habitat restored areas and the means by which the restrictions will be implemented; and,

2. That based on confirmation of livestock access restriction, that the application be approved for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payment funding in the total amount of \$3,870.00 for five years, for a total of \$19,350.00 subject to ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-21

Moved by Karen Hutchinson

Motion #3 - That application 07-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$1,370.00 under the category "Tree Planting".

Carried PAAWG 2023-22

- **06-CVC-23 – Natural Area Enhancement and Creation**

This project proposes to establish a native grassland habitat consisting of a mix of native grasses and wildflowers under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation". Implementation of this project will result in preserved surface and groundwater sources through the creation of a natural habitat, improved long-term soil health, and establishment of a natural seed bank that will enhance biodiversity in adjacent retired fields.

Questions

None

Moved by Britt McKee

Motion #1 -That application 06-CVC-23 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$20,000.00 under the category "Natural Area Enhancement and Creation".

Carried PAAWG 2023-23

Moved by Manjari Mehta

Motion #2 - That application 06-CVC-23 be approved for the ALUS Peel Pilot annual funding in the total amount of \$778.50 for five years, for a total of \$3,892.50 subject to

ALUS Canada confirming availability of the necessary funds, and that the project is eligible for funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Carried PAAWG 2023-24

9) Environmental Registry of Ontario – Application to amend the Niagara Escarpment Plan (agricultural use, on-farm diversified use and agricultural-related use policies)

Melanie Williams, Region of Peel

The Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 019-6425 “Approval of an Amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan” (NEP) is proposing to amend the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) to expand permissions for agricultural, agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses. The posting is open for comment to April 11, 2023.

Regional staff are preparing a response to the posting. In general, Regional staff support the direction proposed to better harmonize the NEP’s agricultural policies with similar policies in the Provincial Policy Statement, Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan. However, the proposed wording in the draft Amendment for the expansion of existing uses into Key Natural Heritage Features is unclear and open to interpretation with the potential that the policy would allow broader encroachment of uses that would negatively impact features. Regional staff suggest that the proposed amendment use policy wording from the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan to achieve better harmonization and clarity in the policy. Regional staff also are looking to recommend that the permission for maple sugar harvesting include the permission to locate or construct small scale ancillary structures to house equipment that may be required components of the maple sugar harvesting collection system.

Questions/Discussion

PAAWG mentioned that the Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA) will be responding the posting and will share the response when it is made available.

PAAWG and Regional staff discussed the interpretation of the amendments.

10) Communication and For Information Items

Marco Di Nizio, Region of Peel

The following correspondence were received:

- [Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance News Updates](#)
- [Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Fall 2022 Newsletter](#)
- [Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance December 2022 Newsletter](#)
- [Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance January 2023 Newsletter](#)
- [Environmental Registry of Ontario – Proposed updates to the rules of practice and procedure of the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board \(NFPPB\)](#)

11) Round Table – Other Business

The PAAWG Chair asked for more information on the ability for agricultural lands to be returned to pre-existing agricultural use(s) once the lands have undergone natural restoration. Conservation Authority and Regional staff will look into this further and provide information at a future PAAWG meeting.

12) Adjournment

Moved by Mark Vanderwees

That the March 23, 2023, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be adjourned.

Carried PAAWG 2023-25

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 pm. The next PAAWG meeting will be held in-person at the Peel Conference and online via Microsoft Teams on May 18, 2023, at 7:00pm.