



Site Assessment – Physical Characteristics

Riverside - Middle Mill
44 Beechwood Drive, Toronto/East York

Lead Steward – John Hykel

Stewardship Day: Thursday 5-7 April to October depending on conditions

Last updated March 10, 2022

Site Access

The area is most directly approached by car from Beechwood Ave from the north. There is street parking at the bottom of Beechwood near the Police Dog Training Unit. Site can also be reached on foot or bike via the Lower Don Trail from the south (approx 1km north of Pottery Rd). Can also walk or cycle down Beechwood from O'Connor. TTC access available from Broadview Subway via bus #s 8 or 100A exiting at Pape and O'Connor.

Location Description

Riverside at Middle Mill is located in the Lower Don Valley flood plain. In this area, the valley runs from the northeast to the southwest. The site is approx 24m (NE-SW) wide by 275metres in length (E-W) = 6600 square meters.

The site is dog leg shaped and the ground slopes gently to the southwest towards the Don River but it is generally quite flat, until it reaches the riverbank and then drops quite steeply. The site is bound by the Lower Don Trail to the East and the Don River to the west. Beechwood Avenue forms the southern boundary, and the access trail forms the northern boundary. It is also in close proximity to a CN rail line to the west and the Don Valley Parkway to the East. To the north, there is a water treatment plant and to the south, a paved roadway leading to Cottonwood Flats.

Historically the site immediately to the east was home to a mill owned by the Taylor Brothers (The Middle Mill) and eventually became under the ownership of Domtar which operated a resin plant until the mid 1990s. According to Paula Davies after the mill was demolished the soil was bioremediated using a series of bins and bacteria to neutralize the chemicals. There is a recent planting on the west side of the trail about 100 metres north of where Beechwood crosses the Don Trail.

Management Units

The site has 4 unique management units which run parallel to the river in thin strips.

Riparian

There is a flat sand beach at the north most end and then sharply narrows heading towards the southern boundary. Soil is mostly sand and landfill with a high rubble component. Vegetation on the riverbank is mostly low shrubs and Manitoba maples.

Woodland

Mostly comprised of Manitoba Maples and Buckthorn with a few scattered cedars and native deciduous trees. There are a few informal trails running north south that are heavily used.

Seasonal wetland

At the south end running north about 20m there is an engineered gully that takes run off from the upper slope. It seems to have a high content of bull rushes and very little phragmites.

Meadow bordering Lower Don Trail

This thin border runs between the Woodland and the park lawn on the west side of the Lower Don Trail. It seems to be mostly comprised of Golden Rod, New England Asters and Red Osier Dogwood.

Safety Concerns and Hazards

- very active river prone to sudden seasonal volume increases
- steep riverbank
- rubble, including protruding rusty metal, jagged concrete, broken glass and ceramics mixed in with the soil and vegetation
- poison ivy, stinging nettle
- red ants
- cyclists and e-cyclists on the Lower Don Trail
- cyclists on the informal trail
- off leash dogs

Major Attributes

Special Features

access road	trails	stream/river	erosion	seep
washrooms	picnic shelter	picnic tables	playground	drinking water
boardwalk	DOLA	maintenance bldg.	garbage cans	Sentinel stones

Grey Infrastructure

Catch basin	manhole	Gas pipeline	Storm sewer outfall	Wooden power pole
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Physical Characteristics

Aspect	N	NE	E	SE	S	SW	W	NW
Slope	flat	low	medium	steep				
Soil moisture	standing water	saturated soil	damp soil	dry soil				
Site exposure	full sun wet	full sun dry	partial sun wet	partial sun dry	shady wet	shady dry		
Soil type	sand	silt	loam	clay	muck	gravel		
Soil compaction	none	light	moderate	heavy				
Litter depth	0	< 1cm	1-2cm	> 2cm				
Bare ground	0%	1 - 5%	6 - 10%	11- 25%	26- 50%	> 50%		

Coarse Woody Debris	0%	1 - 5%	6 – 10%	11– 25%	26– 50%	> 50%
Habitat type:	Meadow	shrubland	hardwood forest	conifer forest	mixed forest	swamp/marsh

Vegetation

Trees 50% cover						
Overstory Tree Density						
Native conifers	none	isolated	few	low	medium	high
Native deciduous	none	isolated	few	low	medium	high
Invasive	none	isolated	few	low	medium	high
Regenerating Tree Density						
Native conifers	none	isolated	few	low	medium	high
Native deciduous	none	isolated	few	low	medium	high
Invasive	none	isolated	few		medium	high

Species present: Eastern Red Cedar, Sugar Maple (tbd)

Invasives: Manitoba maple

Shrubs 30% cover						
Native	0%	0 – 5%	6 – 25 %	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	>75%
Invasive	0%	0 – 5%	6 – 25 %	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	>75%

Species Present: Staghorn sumac, red osier dogwood

Invasives: Buckthorn

Herbaceous Plants 20% cover						
Native	0%	0 – 5%	6 – 25 %	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	>75%
Invasive	0%	0 – 5%	6 – 25 %	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	>75%

Species present: Golden Rod, New England Aster, Common Cattail, thistle

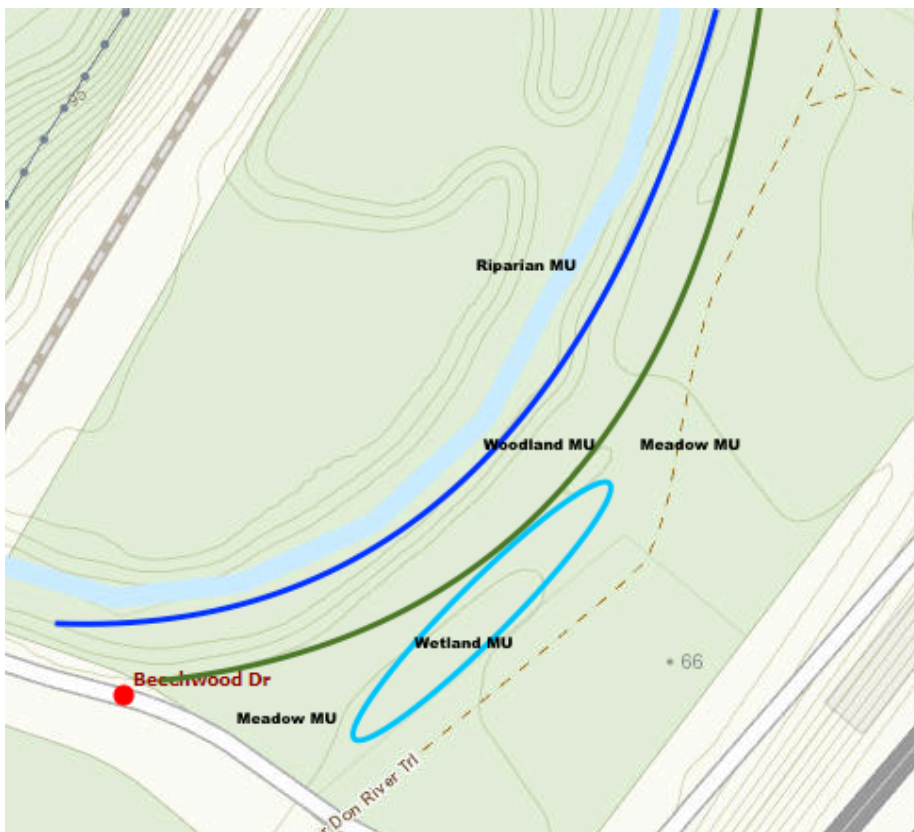
Invasives: Tansy, Queen Anne’s Lace, DSV, Garlic Mustard, Burdock

Site Maps

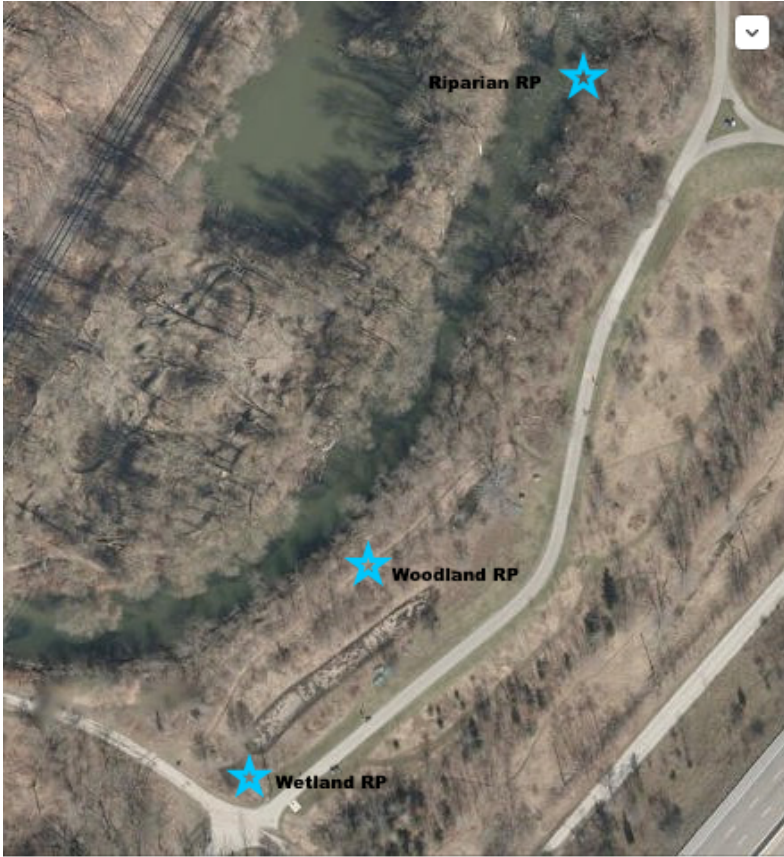
Base map



Management Units



Reference Points



Riparian Reference Point looking Southwest



Woodland RP looking Northeast



Seasonal Wetland RP looking Northeast

