

Chapter 6

HAVE Themes



HAVE Plan for Rouge Park  Rouge Park

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Introduction

This chapter is designed to be a summary of the relevant themes for HAVE services at Rouge Park. It is hoped that it will be used as a reference by HAVE staff as part of the planning process whenever they are developing new programs. Detailed information and recommendations for applying these themes will be included in later chapters of this plan.

Many elements described in previous chapters of this plan were taken into account in developing themes for HAVE in Rouge Park. HAVE themes also reflect recent key developments which include:

- the PPA Stewardship Model developed by EcoLeaders
- the vision of including some HAVE extension programs that may take place in local communities beyond the boundaries of park
- current best practice in communication which focuses on interaction and two-way communication
- current desire of park management to develop new methods of delivering HAVE services to reflect best practices and reach a broad range of participants
- a desire to involve park neighbours (landowners and other citizens) in conservation, preservation and sustainability activities and issues
- a desire to develop the overall environmental literacy of park visitors and neighbours
 - this includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to sustain our environment, lifestyles and communities for the foreseeable future
 - a key part of this will be to better understand and cope with the interactions of their communities with the natural landscapes that they hold dear
 - they will also develop fuller understanding of park initiatives

Please see the Foundations Chapters for more background.

Topics and Themes

There are many differing definitions of topics and themes used by agencies across Canada and elsewhere. The clearest definition was developed by Sam Ham in his book, *Environmental Interpretation - A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets* (1992) and in his article "Rethinking Goals, Objectives and Themes." *InterpScan* 29:4 2003. They are paraphrased below.

Topics

Interpretive and educational topics generally refer to broad areas of interest that can be described in a single word or short phrase such as:

- watersheds
- plants of the Carolinian forest

At best, topics are useful tools to organize themes. Each topic generally contains several themes.

Topics have a very limited value for guiding HAVE services and will not be emphasized in this HAVE plan.

Themes

Themes provide the conceptual outline for the facts and issues that will be interpreted. They outline the main ideas that will be interpreted at a site. A theme is often expressed in a single sentence, such as:

- Using some basic observation skills, anyone can detect signs of constant change in the landscape.
- The continental climate's cold winters and warm dry summers afford challenges to which plants must adapt.

Ham makes several strong arguments for using themes as defined here as the foundation for the development of interpretation services. They include that:

- they must be clearly connected to corporate or agency level goals and objectives
- they help interpreters quickly select the kinds of information to include and not include
- most audiences find thematic communication easier to comprehend (People remember themes, but they forget facts. However, themes help people organize and remember facts)
- education research shows that thematic communication is highly effective

Themes are a cornerstone for the development of HAVE services at Rouge Park. Subthemes are further elucidation of themes.

Themes and subthemes are based on the detailed information compiled in Chapters 1–3 Foundations, Chapter 4: Features Analysis, the Features Inventory (Appendices 1–3 and the general information on audiences and market in Chapter 5. HAVE staff should refer to these sections of the plan when they refine themes in the future.

Themes are essential in program planning and evaluation. HAVE field staff should note that themes provide the key direction in development of HAVE services.

Sidebar: Participant Classification

Visitors to Rouge Park can be of two key types.

Actual Visitors

This is anyone who comes to the park for recreation or learning purposes. This can be day visitors, campers or school/education groups.

Virtual Visitors

This is anyone who visits Rouge Park vial electronic means such as web sites, videos, television, radio and print media.

Sidebar: About Framing

Framing is a communications technique that creates a “frame” for messages that defines the terms of discussion. Language, of course, expresses ideas and thoughts. Every word is defined with respect to what cognitive scientists call a frame—a conceptual structure of a certain form. For example, take Theme L, “We can all contribute to the stewardship of Rouge Park’s biodiversity and ecosystems”.

The word “contribute” has an associated conceptual frame, which includes “community” (not just you alone), “adding to, maintaining or making better”, and “must be something worthwhile if contributions are important”. It evokes a positive visual image of people helping nature together outdoors, planting trees or putting up bluebird boxes, and walking lightly in the park. “We” are the heroes, rather than the opposite as might be suggested to some by an unframed theme such as “Rouge Park protects rare landscapes and natural features”. (From who?)

Theme L is inclusive, suggesting hope, love, warmth, and happiness, as the framing technique recommends for success. It would probably resonate well with family audiences and many other audiences too.

As some framing experts recommend, the language crafted for the themes was also designed to invoke a central vision of a particular future. Subtheme C12 is an example; “Rouge Park has the potential to become a biologically diverse seed and genetic bank which can become the core of restoration efforts of healthy natural habitat throughout the Carolinian Zone of Canada”. An unframed theme such as “Rouge Park protects rare landscapes and natural features” might evoke a future vision of an isolated green park in a developed or damaged watershed—a less attractive vision of the future that may not inspire as much resonance and participation.

Goals and Objectives of the HAVE Program in Rouge Park

The Function of the Goals and Objectives

According to current good practice in interpretation, themes must relate to objectives. Objectives for the HAVE Program at Rouge Park can be described under the following headings:

- Inform
- Inspire
- Involve

Inform

HAVE services in the park will inform actual and virtual visitors (see Sidebar: Participant Classification), park neighbours and collaborators about:

1. The location of Rouge Park.
 - where the park’s boundaries are
 - announce new lands added to the park
2. The recreation activities and learning opportunities in Rouge Park including; hiking, wildlife watching, canoeing and kayaking, participating in HAVE programs etc.

Plus restrictions on activities such as mountain biking, walking with unleashed dogs etc.

 - including the ecological and social reasons for these restrictions
3. The functions of Rouge Park including:
 - restoration of natural wetlands, riparian, riverine and forest habitat
 - preservation and stewardship of the park’s natural and cultural heritage
 - enabling people to learn how to become stewards of their own landholdings in and around the park and its three watersheds
 - provide compatible recreation opportunities
4. The natural and cultural history of Rouge Park.
5. The value of a large natural are to the quality of life.
6. Stewardship opportunities and training available through Rouge Park and its partners.

Inspire

HAVE services in Rouge Park will inspire actual and virtual visitors, park neighbours and collaborators to:

1. Care about the natural and cultural history of the park and surrounding areas.
2. Develop and/or strengthen a sense of place and connection with Rouge Park and its three watersheds.
3. Learn more about the natural and cultural heritage of Rouge Park.
4. Become informed about stewardship issues and initiatives in Rouge Park and its three watersheds.
5. Take action in protecting Rouge Park and other significant lands in the region and to carefully manage their own landholdings in the Rouge River, Duffins Creek and Petticoat Creek watersheds.

Involve

HAVE services in Rouge Park will empower actual and virtual visitors, park neighbours and collaborators to:

1. Contribute to learning and knowledge about natural and cultural heritage through sharing knowledge and assisting with research projects and other information collecting.
2. Stewardship of Rouge Park's Natural And Cultural Heritage
 - take part in appropriate research, inventory, monitoring, management, restoration, education in natural history mainly, with some cultural history

Chapter 3 proposed goals and objectives of the Rouge Park HAVE Program were identified. They are repeated in order of priority in the sidebar below.

Sidebar: Goals and Objectives of the HAVE Program

The proposed goals and objectives of the Rouge Park HAVE Program are listed below order of priority.

Goal 1. Light the Spark of Discovery

Objectives:

- 1.1 Aim to address park visitors at each of the lower levels of the Stewardship Development Model
- 1.2 Focus on basic interpretation—e.g., awareness, appreciation, understanding of natural and cultural heritage of the park aimed at park visitors and located within the park
- 1.3 Assist in the management of visitor impacts and foster proper park use
- 1.4 Enrich visitor experience, providing enjoyment and supporting health and wellness
- 1.5 Include school classes among HAVE audiences, facilitating programs that fit the park's mandate as well as being designed to meet specific curriculum-based learning outcomes as dictated by the Ontario Ministry of Education
- 1.6 Strengthen local communities by identifying, celebrating and sustaining locally significant places and stories (develop a sense of place)

Goal 2. Fan the Flames of Stewardship

Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop advocates for Rouge Park and the values under management
- 2.2 Enable engagement by removing barriers and providing information, facilities and viable alternatives, and developing skills and capacity of participants
- 2.3 Provide learning opportunities at each of the upper levels of the Stewardship Development Model (Values, Behaves, Leads)
- 2.4 Build on audience interests and knowledge of the park's natural and cultural heritage initiated by light the spark activities or already present in some individuals

Goal 3. Engage and Involve Citizens in Stewardship

Objectives:

- 3.1 Engage park visitors and other interested parties to become involved in the park's stewardship activities, such as restoration and monitoring, through co-productions with community groups, deliberative fora (discussion/conversation/meetings) and personal contacts, using existing networks where possible
- 3.2 Encourage on-going and additional involvement and other contributions from park visitors, individual citizens and community groups through recognition and rewards (the counterpoint of regulations and enforcement), perhaps including expenditures such as micro-grants
- 3.3 Develop collaborations and partnerships with groups and agencies to deliver appropriate HAVE services to park visitors

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Terminology

Themes and subthemes provide focus and structure and help to identify major areas of HA effort.

Overall Park Theme

The overall park theme is the unifying idea that is a recurrent element in interpretive offerings at Rouge Park.

This theme is the key recurring idea found within the park's overall HA program. It guides the development of all HA services toward contributing to the PPA mandate.

Using the Overall Park HAVE Theme

All HAVE services must fit into the overall theme. HAVE field staff use the theme as an overall guide and check to ensure the appropriateness of all new HAVE services. The overall HAVE theme for Rouge Park is:

Rouge Park protects, enhances and shares the diverse natural and cultural heritage of the region, providing a sanctuary for nature and people.

HAVE Goals and Objectives *continued on previous page*

Goal 4. Promote Best Practices in Natural and Cultural Heritage Stewardship

Objectives:

- 4.1 Lead by example
- 4.2 Use these examples in HAVE offerings, ensuring that they are visible, accessible, and interpreted
- 4.3 Assist immediate park neighbours to identify with the park and to manage their properties in a sympathetic manner as per greater park ecosystem concept
- 4.4 Assist other landholders within the Rouge watershed to restore and enhance the natural ecosystem attributes of their properties

Goal 5. Deliver Information/Orientation about the park

Objectives:

- 5.1 Assist park users, park neighbours, local media and decision makers, Rouge Park Alliance members, participating community groups and all Rouge Park staff to be able to:
 - sketch the location of the park on a map, including its boundaries and size
 - mark the locations of key park infrastructure (e.g., trails and visitor facilities)
 - describe some of the park uses and regulations associated with them, including learning and participation opportunities
 - locate access and enjoy park features and experiences
- 5.2 Provide orientation and information needed for safety
- 5.3 Promote upcoming HAVE services and events and take program registration when appropriate

Goal 6. Support Tourism and Marketing

Objectives:

- 6.1 Attract visitors from further afield or encourage them to lengthen their stay
- 6.2 Maintain and increase the profile of Rouge Park as a positive, co-operative community asset

Goal 7. Build Trust and Teamwork

Objectives:

- 7.1 Support the Rouge Park Alliance and other park partnerships by developing trust and facilitating co-operation among Rouge Park staff, Alliance members, partners, collaborators, community groups, researchers and the public through the friendly, positive, co-operative tasks of providing HAVE services
- 7.2 Be a positive, visible presence in the community

Themes

The overall park theme is complex and must be broken down into smaller ideas or subthemes that are either written as a short phrase, sentence or paragraph. These explain or clarify the meaning and direction of the overall theme and are stated in terms of the key ideas that participants in HAVE services and activities should walk away with—they are the learning outcomes of HAVE services.

Themes for HAVE services in Rouge Park are listed on page 6.5. Themes guide the development of both personal and non-personal services. They must:

1. Reflect the park’s goals as reflected in its foundations (Chapters 1–3).
2. Be purposeful—they arise from objectives. Themes must conform to the site’s HAVE objectives.

Subthemes

Each theme is broken down into several subthemes which are usually stated as simple sentences. The subthemes for each theme are located on pages 6.6—6.17.

Using Subthemes

Subthemes guide HAVE field staff in developing accurate, relevant and timely HA services and offerings. They provide more focus. Most HAVE offerings will include several subthemes from several themes.

Using Themes and Subthemes in Planning and Evaluating HAVE Services

All HAVE services must fit into the matrix of themes and subthemes. When developing a new program, HAVE field staff will choose between one to three themes as the guidelines for developing the focus of a HAVE offering. For adding further structure, several subthemes can be used to develop the HAVE offering.

Another way of thinking is that themes and subthemes are the main learning objectives for the target audiences/participants. HA staff will then use information from the features inventory and develop activities to support these learning goals.

HAVE Themes For Rouge Park

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| Theme A | Rouge Park cares for many of the diverse natural places in three watersheds. These lands are an important part of the GTA’s green infrastructure that provide ecological services such as clean air and abundant clean water. | Theme B | At first glance, the forests, wetlands, creeks, rivers and farmlands of Rouge Park appear to be unchanging. However, by learning to read the landscape you can observe how human and natural actions have and continue to shape the landscape. |
| Theme C | Preserving and restoring Rouge Park’s biodiversity is important—for people and for the wide variety of living things that live here. The park and its partners work with visitors and volunteers to steward these lands. | Theme D | People are part of nature and have been important players in Rouge Park’s past, present and future. |
| Theme E | You can help Rouge Park protect its many native plants, animals and habitats, and help preserve it as a place of quiet and contemplation for people by following its rules and regulations and taking part in park-sanctioned stewardship projects. | Theme F | Getting outside and active on Rouge Park’s trails and beach is healthy and enriching. The park is a great place to make your own nature and history discoveries. Through park staff and its programs, you can share your findings with family, friends and neighbours. |

| Theme A | Rouge Park cares for many of the diverse natural places in three watersheds. These lands are an important part of the GTA's green infrastructure that provide ecological services such as clean air and abundant clean water. | Priority |
|--------------|---|----------|
| Subtheme A1 | Rouge Park is a partnership park. The Rouge Park Alliance, made up of local municipal and regional governments, the federal and provincial government and a community group work together with park staff to protect Rouge Park and provide appropriate services to visitors. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A2 | Rouge Park is a restoration Park. A large portion of the park is farmland and old field habitat. The park is working with partners, contractors and volunteers to restore much of these lands to its previous state as Carolinian forest, wetlands, riparian habitat and tallgrass prairie. | High |
| Subtheme A3 | Rouge Park is on the outer north-eastern edge of the Carolinian forest. | High |
| Subtheme A4 | <p>What the heck are ecological services? Ecological services are the effects and products of natural ecosystems that maintain human health and economy. Together these services make up what modern city planners and engineers call green infrastructure. It is especially significant that ecological services are much more cost effective to maintain than it is to build and maintain human-made infrastructure (dams, water treatment plants).</p> <p>A natural unit that holds an interconnected set of ecological services is a watershed. In a watershed, forests, wetlands, groundwater and river systems have interconnected ecological services.</p> | High |
| Subtheme A5 | Rouge Park also is preserving some of the country's highest quality farmland in its agricultural heritage land reserve sites. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A6 | Unlike many parks located in cities, a main focus of Rouge Park is to preserve natural habitat and conserve and develop green infrastructure. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A7 | Rouge Park is part of Ontario's Greenbelt. The park and other greenbelt lands ensure that the Greater Toronto Area will have natural and agricultural greenspace to maintain the health and spiritual well-being of citizens now and into the future. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A8 | The Carolinian forest has a very high level of biodiversity and is home to many plants, birds, insects and mammals found nowhere else in Canada. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A9 | Rouge Park has one of the few remaining Lake Ontario shoreline wetlands in Canada. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A10 | The lower Rouge River system, contained in Rouge Park, is one of a few river-mouth and lower river areas left in a natural condition in the GTA. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A11 | Rouge Park once contained Ontario Tallgrass Prairie. The park plans to restore some of this now rare habitat in parts of its restoration zone. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A12 | The rapid growth of Markham and eastern Toronto is affecting the natural systems of the Park. | Moderate |

| Theme A ... continued | Priority |
|---|-----------------|
| Subtheme A13 Water Purification: rivers, wetlands, riparian zones and forests form units that work together to provide abundant, year-round supplies of clean water. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A14 Flood Control: forests, wetlands and riparian areas work together to capture, hold and slowly release runoff from melting snow and storms thereby reducing river flooding. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A15 Air Cleaning: Large tracts of urban forests like those in Rouge Park are very effective at removing particulate matter, several toxic gases and carbon dioxide from the air, vastly improving air quality and removing greenhouse gases. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A16 Air Conditioning: Urban forests also significantly moderate summer and winter temperatures in urban areas. | Moderate |
| Subtheme A17 Groundwater Recharge: Forests and wetlands in the park's three watersheds capture rainwater and spring melt waters which percolate into the soil and enter the areas groundwater system. | Moderate |