

Meeting Notes
Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area
Western Ontario Fish & Game Protective Association, September 29, 2016
Master Plan Update - Community Input

Presentations

- Conservation Master Plan Background - Linda McDougall, City of London [see presentation #1](#)
- Ecological Restoration at Westminster Ponds ESA - Alan Arthur, St. Williams Nursery & Ecology Centre [see presentation #2](#)
- Invasive Species Update: City of London's Environmentally Significant Areas – Dan Jones, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority [see presentation #3](#)

Community Input

Questions/Comments for Linda McDougall - City of London

- 1) Have you made accommodation for “fire training” next to the ESA in your plan?
Response: Fire staff participated in the Trails Advisory Group (TAG) walk, are engaged in the process and Environmental and Parks Planning (E&PP) staff met with fire staff about protecting the ESA.
- 2) Concerned that proposed trail from Dearness Home will disturb deer habitat.
Response: Deer are present throughout the 250 ha ESA and will not be negatively impacted by the trail or the ecological restoration project.
- 3) Will the new Dearness Home access point be available to the public?
Response: Yes, all trails in ESAs are public trails. Dearness Home staff met onsite with E&PP staff previously and have expressed strong support for the project and with the location for the trail connection to their lands identified on the TAG maps.
- 4) Will the garbage behind Dearness Home be cleaned up?
Response: Dearness Home staff, UTRCA and the City Ecologist are working together to keep this area free of litter.

Questions/Comments for Alan Arthur - St. Williams Nursery & Ecology Centre

- 5) How will you prevent buckthorn from coming back?
Response: One or more follow-up treatments for a period of up to five years may be required before effective control of buckthorn is achieved as seeds remain viable for up to five years.
- 6) What is the timeframe between getting rid of buckthorn and the restoration process?
Response: The planting part of the restoration can only be implemented when the aggressive invasive species have been adequately eradicated from the restoration area. Otherwise, restoration can become an expensive mess to manage if invasive species like buckthorn sprout up in large numbers in and around newly planted native species.
- 7) This project is different than re-naturalizing a road or other disturbed area; will your process /adaptive management work for this site?
Response: On any restoration project, long term monitoring and management to prevent re-invasion will be required as buckthorn can be re-introduced by birds and small mammals that eat buckthorn berries, which are prevalent throughout the City.

- 8) If you use heavy machinery, make sure you let the public know.
Response: The site will be posted and access by the public will be restricted during invasive species and standing dead ash tree mitigation and mulching operations. The City of London will coordinate public notification of these closures and the restoration process through public engagement, mail outs, educational signage and other communications.
- 9) What is the timeline for starting the project?
Response: Clearing and mulching of dead ash and buckthorn will start later this fall or early 2017.
- 10) When will trails & boardwalks be installed?
Response: Realigned trails and boardwalk installation should wrap up by fall 2017.
- 11) Are there bylaws in place to protect this ESA in the future? Is there long term protection for this area?
Response: Yes, the Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA is recognized as a Provincially Significant Wetland, and an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest by the Province and these are protected under the Provincial Policy Statement, Official Plan, and London Plan. The ESA is regulated by the UTRCA, and also by City zoning bylaws. The Conservation Master Plan for the ESA identifies a large number of recommendations and most have now been implemented or are in progress.
- 12) In the North South Report, the consultants were asked which areas would be addressed for invasive species if the city has \$10,000 per year. Is this still in place?
Response: The ESA team has managed buckthorn primarily through basal bark application of Garlon RTU as part of operational and capital projects funded by the City in the ESA since 2008, including the buckthorn in the Rotary/UTRCA restoration area. In 2014 – 2016, woody invasives including buckthorn were managed in the landfill meadow to protect habitat for Eastern Meadowlark, a threatened Species at Risk. In 2014 – 2016, buckthorn around Spettigues Pond was treated to protect many rare species and their habitats. Buckthorn was managed on the northeast shore of Saunders Pond in 2015. This approach is generally consistent with the North South Environmental 2015 report that prioritizes protection of SAR and rare species from buckthorn infestation, then treating the areas of least infestation to protect them, moving to then manage the remainder of the denser stands of buckthorn in the ESA as funds and opportunities such as this ecological restoration project arise.

Questions for Dan Jones – Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

- 13) Does the City have a way of dealing with the refuse in ESAs? Specifically, Tim Hortons cups
Response: Three groups have adopted the ESA and help with litter pick-up as do residents and others who visit the ESA. The UTRCA ESA team also responds to ESA observations and assists with this issue.
- 14) Has anyone approached Tim Hortons/other corporate sponsors regarding this issue?
Response: Thanks for the suggestion we will look into that.
- 15) Are there goldfish in Spettigues Pond? How do we get rid of them?
Response: Yes, there are goldfish in Spettigues. They could be removed by electroshocking.

General Questions/Comments

16) Are any pre-emptive activities in place to prevent the spread of invasive species?

Response: Thanks for the suggestion we will look into that.

17) Are the police involved with off-leash dog issues?

Response: Generally the ESA team enforces City by-laws for dogs off leash as does London Animal Care Centre. Police may become involved on occasion.

18) There is a dog dropping issue on the path between Parliament and Commissioners.

Response: Thanks for this we will look into that noting ESA observations such as these can be submitted via email anytime to E&PP staff for follow up. If droppings have fur in them they are likely from a coyote.

19) The fence for the off-leash dog park is not high enough.

Response: Thanks for this we will look into that.

20) There are large dog feces on the trails by the hospital.

Response: Thanks for this we will look into that noting ESA observations such as these can be submitted via email anytime to E&PP staff for follow up. If droppings have fur in them they are likely from a coyote.

21) Is it possible to provide dog feces bags for hikers?

Response: Thanks for this we will look into that noting ESA observations such as these can be submitted via email anytime to staff for follow up.

22) Could we make some ESAs dog-free?

Response: Thanks for this we will look into that.

23) At the back end of Tumblesons Pond, there is a Phragmites issue. Is this also a problem in other ponds? Are there ways to stop Phragmites? Will tarping kill it?

Response: UTRCA is treating Phragmites in ESAs unless it is in standing water then more innovative methods such as cutting and drowning are tried but are more time consuming and less effective.

24) Accessibility: the path to the Dr. Saunders cabin site and the north lookout needs to be accessible.

Response: Yes, the Accessibility Advisory Committee is engaged in the process and is invited to all TAG walks. The City was awarded a Canada 150 grant of nearly \$100,000 to improve the accessibility of the trails from the tourism building to the W.E. Saunders Cabin site, and implement the Conservation Master Plan (CMP) accessible trail to the Dearness Home with trail work expected to wrap up in 2017.