

**Meeting Notes**  
**Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area**  
**Western Ontario Fish & Game Protective Association, Feb. 23, 2011**  
**Master Plan Update - Community Input**

**Presentations**

**Overview Presentation**

- *Conservation Master Plan Background* - Tara Tchir, Ecologist, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
- *Environmentally Significant Area Team Report* - Dan Jones, ESA Operations Supervisor, UTRCA
- *Looking ahead to 2011* - Jeff Bruin, Parks Project Co-ordinator, City of London

[See Presentation](#)

*Trail Planning Presentation* - Bonnie Bergsma, Ecologist Planner, City of London

[See Presentation](#)

Please also visit the Natural Resource Solutions Inc. Reports -

[Sifton Bog White-Tailed Deer Management Study](#)

[City of London City-Wide White-tailed Deer Management Strategy](#)

**Community Input (questions, comments, ideas)**

***Trail Planning***

- The new reduced loops and lack of short loops has made it difficult to go for a short walk; need to drive to trails
- Since no boardwalks are planned for Westminster Ponds this year, the Donate-a-Plank Project by Nature London and the Rotary Club of London West will go toward another ESA
- It is our observation that the current approach to closing of trails could be improved. Trail users are still able to go over/under/through the wooden barriers that have been erected. We believe that it would be helpful to scarify the soil in order to encourage natural regeneration of the former trail. Also, plantings would be useful in helping to block the line of sight, thereby redirecting users.

***CN Rail Crossing***

- Question - Are you currently researching a rail crossing on the east side of Westminster Ponds? Answer - In 2010 an Environmental Assessment for a potential crossing was to start, but was delayed until 2011. If it proves to be feasible to build a crossing, it would be helpful for students going to their school on the other side of the tracks.
- Need to talk with the School Board about school boundaries and travel patterns so that students do not have to cross tracks to get to school from certain neighbourhoods.
- Would the potential trail overpass over the CN line be necessary if Ford St. Thomas closes? How viable is the rail line without Ford?
- Question - Could we connect bicycle paths from Parliament Cres. (east of Spettigues Pond) to the Thames River Parkway along the tracks? Answer - Please send in your proposal to City Hall and it will be considered in the trail development process.

### *Access*

- Question - Will there continue to be access from Commissioners Road behind Parkwood Hospital? Answer - LHSC is reviewing the road system. A potential public access from that area is being developed for the new Mental Health Building and it will have tree-lined roads and possibly meter parking.
- Question - Can there be a connection between Thompson Pond and North Pond? Answer - No plan is in place but it will be considered in the future.
- Question: Why was the Southdale entrance to Thompson Pond shut down? Answer – It was shut down because it dead ends and invited bush parties.

### *Trees*

- The “Dog’s Head” north of Saunders Pond will get a 50 m treed buffer around it through the new Reforest London Celebration Forest. It will include 12 acres to be planted over 12 years with Memorial Donations.
- Question - Has there been any continuing work on the wildlife hazard tree assessment work that Tara Tchir reported on last year? Answer - Not as yet, funding is an issue.
- Can some risk with dead trees be assumed so fewer dead trees need to be cut?
- Question - In the discussion about hazard trees, no mention was made that Bonnie Bergsma is consulting legal council about having some trails signed as "Use at Your Own Risk" and that the hazard tree policy would not be applied to these trails. Has there been any legal response to your enquiries? Answer – Not as yet.
- The total size of Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA is 203 hectares (501 acres).

### *Wildlife*

- Question - Goldfish are now present in the Ponds; what are the impacts? Can anything be done? Answer - Thanks for bringing this to our attention. This is problem for all ponds. Predator fish may help and signage is needed reminding people not to release Goldfish into natural waterbodies.
- Question - Is moving native frogs into the ponds okay? Answer – Probably.
- Question - Have there been Coyote complaints? One was seen tonight in the parking lot. Answer - Very few complaints so far. An MNR expert spoke at the Sifton Bog Community meeting last week. See [Fact Sheet](#).
  - Scare coyotes off to reinforce the message that coyotes should be afraid of people.
  - Report your sightings to City Hall (Bonnie Bergsma, Andrew MacPherson). They will pass this information along to MNR.
- Question - Are deer an issue and will the new plantings be eaten? Answer – The Wildlife Consultant’s report included Sifton Bog and the larger city area and the report is being circulated now. There have been 20-25 deer in the Dearness Home area, but the numbers have dropped recently.

### *Dogs*

- Question - Off-leash dog walkers are very numerous. Can there be more enforcement? Answer - Manpower is limited but fines and warnings are given.
- Would it be possible to prohibit dogs altogether?
- Question - Can citizen volunteers be used to help with enforcement? Answer – Not without proper training.
- Question - How can public contact an enforcement officer? Answer – Call Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, UTRCA, at 519 451-2800 and ask for the ESA Team.

### ***Retired Landfill Site***

- Question - Any long term plans for restoring former landfill sites?  
Answer - There are restrictions as to what can be done because of methane release and volunteer liability. It is restoring on its own (grassland, birds, snakes etc.). We may do some work (e.g., remove invasive plants) but no big plans yet.

### ***Terminology***

- Use of "Resource protection" and the term "resource" made me cringe. I'm a bit nit-picky about terminology, especially when it comes to describing significant natural areas. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (2nd Edition) defines "resource" as "a material or condition occurring in nature and capable of economic exploitation." The last four words are very troublesome to me! Surely "natural environment features" would be a better description than "resource" when referring to an ESA?

### ***Fines***

- I would be interested to hear what percentage of fines issued by the ESA Management Team for violations actually get paid.