

**Westminster Ponds / Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area
Master Plan Implementation Update
Community Meeting Notes
Wednesday, October 21st, 2009
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Western Ontario Fish & Game Protective Association**

Meeting Notes

The meeting provided an update on 2008 & 2009 master plan implementation actions and reviewed potential implementation actions items for 2010.

Tara Tchir, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) Ecologist opened the meeting with a recap of the Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) master plan process.

Winnie Wake of Nature London gave an update on the confirmed nesting of Chimney Swifts in the Wellington Building at Westminster Ponds.

Dan Jones, Supervisor of the ESA Team gave an update on trail monitoring, naturalization around the Tourist Office, removal of the Silverdale staircase, the community days (e.g., tree planting, work days). He also highlighted some potential new projects for 2010 including replacing the Worthington boardwalk, habitat restoration through native vegetation plantings, and removal of staircase north east of Spettigues Pond.

Cathy Quinlan, Terrestrial Biologist, UTRCA gave an update on the viewing platform bird blind study at Saunder's Pond.

Andrew Macpherson, Manager, Parks Planning & Design, Planning & Development Department, City of London gave an update on the status of City of London veteran buildings and the upcoming master plan for this area.

Barbara Wyatt-Chiodo, Environmental Educator, London Environmental Education Centre, Thames Valley District School Board gave an update on the new location of the Thames Valley District School Board Outdoor Education Centre.

After the presentations, attendees were given the opportunity to share their comments, ideas, concerns, and opportunities for future master plan implementation. The comments are summarized below:

Trails

- Are there any plans for 3 metre paved paths within Westminster Ponds?
 - Only the 3 main entrances have pavement, no pavement is planned within the ESA proper.
- The closure of trails on high ground has forced people into wetter areas and use unmanaged trails. - The plan is trying to address steep slopes, and root erosion. Boardwalks are being installed in many of the wet areas.
- Will the bridge at Dayus Creek be replaced? - No plans for this at the present time

- Will the CN crossing be completed? - This is a long term implementation item
- Need to take a good look at drainage of trails, it would be difficult to put enough boardwalks in.
- Unsafe staircases north of Spettigues (former landfill) will be removed due to safety issues. Options are being developed to move or re-orient trail to maintain access
- 2009 was a very wet year that made trails inaccessible. Do we want to engineer solutions to wet trails? Is it okay to say “trails closed” when the wetland is too wet. Answer: yes.

Wildlife

- Is there a long term strategy for deer numbers in this area? - Deer numbers seem to be increasing and may become an emerging issue
- Should start monitoring deer situation and impacts
- It appears that wildlife populations are increasing at Westminster
- Have you monitored nesting bitterns and other birds at Saunders?
- Suggested that the viewing dock by the old outdoor education centre be removed as there is a the new viewing platform by the Tourist Office and the new Outdoor Education Centre
- Use simple measures to start monitoring deer browse and trail widening. There is a series of guidelines developed by Point Pelee that are "quick and dirty" measurements that can be taken by the ESA team (or even school children).

Access

- When the new veterans road entrance is developed, will there be parking provided? - This point will be noted for the master plan.
- Will there be boat/canoe access to Saunders Pond?

Other

- What capital projects are anticipated for the next few years? - Continued monitoring of closed trails, vegetation restoration especially wet areas where trails have gotten very wide, Worthington boardwalk replacement
- The Sitting Tree Nature School would like to help with monitoring projects with their students
- Please say “Environmentally Significant Area” instead of ESA when speaking of these areas at community meetings.
- Is the former landfill site part of the ESA? – Yes. Plus, it is a good grassland and shrub area for nesting birds. Too much methane being released to allow tree planting in this area at this time.
- How is buckthorn being managed in this area? - More work is being done in this area. A buckthorn management strategy is forthcoming from the City of London.