

Meeting Notes
Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area
Western Ontario Fish & Game Protective Association, October 24, 2012
Master Plan Update - Community Input

Presentations

Overview Presentation

- Conservation Master Plan Background – Cathy Quinlan, Terrestrial Biologist, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority see presentation #1
- Environmentally Significant Area Team Report – Jason Belfry, Land Management Technician, UTRCA see presentation #2
- Western Counties Cultural Landscape Plan Update – Andrew Macpherson, Manager III, Parks Planning and Design, City of London see presentation #3
- Community Connections – Linda McDougall, Ecologist Planner, City of London see presentation #4

Community Input (Questions-Q, Answers-A, Comments-C)

Community Connections and Trails:

Q. Parliament Crescent is an access point and traffic can be heavy. Are there plans to alleviate congestion?

A. Aim is to encourage bike & pedestrian traffic.

Q. Is there a forest inventory planned before trail/crossing redesign?

A. A vegetation inventory is planned for spring 2013.

Q. Do students cross tracks to connect Glencairn to Laurier High School?

A. Yes.

C. Some students find it too difficult to walk to Laurier, so they switch to schools they can bus to.

A. Consultant and Trail Advisory Group will try to find a safer crossing option

Q. Will the crossing be signed “use at own risk”?

A. Working with CNR.

Q. Two consultants may be needed to

1) Map Zones (vegetation)

2) Create design options for trail/crossing

Q. Why spring only inventory? Nesting birds probably more important, so a summer inventory should be done as well.

A. The community connections plan is still in the early days so we can look at those options.

Q. Even with an overpass, people may still opt to cross wherever they want.

A. It will be easier to cross at a designed overpass, so that fact will encourage use.

C. Commissioners & Parliament connection: Hopefully more passive traffic vs. car.

A. Exact route will be determined through the process.

C. Silverdale to Parliament link needed to limit all the driving around. The CN crossing at Thompson Road (former Angelos Restaurant) is a good model (e.g., fencing, etc.).

Q. Is funding approved?

A. Yes, for the study. There is ESA funding for Ecological Inventory and \$250,000 for implementing the crossing. If CN agrees, a design process can precede with public input and approvals in about 1.5 years.

Q. What will be the community input process?

A. This meeting is a first step. Will know more after meetings with CN. An Environmental Assessment (EA) may be needed for the crossing and a public process is part of an EA. We will try to achieve consensus, if possible.

Q. Are there liability issues if we encourage people to cross the tracks?

Q. Kiosk access at Adelaide and Southdale was a very wet trail in 2011. Are there plans for a boardwalk to fix it? Community did put woodchips down.

A. Hope to work with the Rotary Club of London West to develop sections of boardwalk for this area.

Safety

C. Convenience and safety is paramount. More people that use the ESA, the safer it is.

Former Landfill

C. Any considerations for the use of old landfill as toboggan hill?

A. Vegetation (meadow, shrubs) is growing taller, so it may not be suitable much longer. No longer mowed.

Q. Currently meadow, are there plans to tree it?

A. Not enough soil yet. Also, thicket/meadow is good habitat, so fine as it is. May be many years before trees move in. Invasive species need addressing too.

C. Grassland birds (some species at risk) and butterflies found here, and a proper assessment will show how much habitat they need.

Encroachment

Q. How much work is being done on encroachment?

A. Only on a reactive basis at the moment.

Water Levels

C. Water levels at Saunders Pond have been very high and the south trail often flooded.

A. Possible causes: a drain has plugged between Fish and Game Pond.

C. What is natural? This section of the ESA was only recently opened up to the public.

Q. Do we have a history of records?

A. 1950's maps show farm fields where wetland/marsh now occur.

C. Needs addressing.

Partnerships

C. Hospital and city have worked well on joint planning & traffic, etc.

Litter

- C. Noticed increase in litter, especially at Spettigues Pond. All eyes needed.
- C. A clean up day may be needed.
- C. Garbage bins sometimes full.

Beavers

- Q. Are beavers creating any problems by North & South Ponds this year?
- A. Not a problem this year.

Invasive Species

- Q. Buckthorn is rampant at Westminster Ponds. What are the plans to address this?
- A. This is a city wide issue. Sifton Bog Buckthorn Removal Project is underway, in the trial stage. Hopefully, we will do more removal in the future when an economically feasible method is found. A buckthorn factsheet is being written by the ESA team.

Off Leash Dogs

- Q. Dogs off leash are still an ongoing issue. Some families frightened.
- A. Tickets have been laid, but education is key. Enforcement is important and uniforms generate respect.
- C. Dog walkers are good at keeping undesirables away.

Veteran's Buildings

- Q. What is the plan for the remaining un-used buildings? Will they deteriorate more?
- A. Most are rented out and structurally sound. Looking for solutions and partners for the large Wellington County Building. It will cost more than \$1 million to renovate it.