

To: Community and Protective Services Committee

November 12, 2014

- Councillor M. Brown (Chair) mbrown@london.ca
- Mayor J.L. Baechler (ex-officio) mayor@london.ca
- Councillor W.J. Armstrong barmstro@london.ca
- Councillor N. Branscombe nbransco@london.ca
- Councillor D. Brown dbrown@london.ca
- Councillor J. Bryant jbryant@london.ca

CC: Heather McNeely, Long Range Planning and Research hmcneely@london.ca

RE: Draft Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy

Dear Committee Members,

Please accept my comments regarding the proposed Draft Humane Wildlife Conflict Policy.

Included are three options for your consideration for improving the proposed draft plus comments to support these options.

Options:

- 1) If the committee accepts the *Draft Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy* as written, it should then direct staff to write a ***Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Strategy***, which describes how a policy will be implemented.

Most municipalities DO NOT have human /wildlife conflict policies because policies are not transparent and therefore not enforceable. Policies can also be overturned when inconvenient.

Instead proactive municipalities **develop human/wildlife strategies** which describe methods of preventing and resolving conflicts. They are public documents and implementation is transparent.

The Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict **Strategy** should be development within a timeframe that it can be included or referenced (whichever is most appropriate) in the London Plan AND go through a public comment process.

I have attached the most recent report from the City of Oakville describing their most recent efforts to implement their Human/Wildlife Conflict Strategy.

The **Royal Ontario Museum** has also created a **Road Ecology Centre** dedicated to reducing road hazards involving wildlife because collisions with animals can result in death for both people and animals.

2) Adopt the policy with the following changes:

The City is committed to upholding high standards of animal welfare, including the humane treatment of wildlife. The City will strive to prevent conflict between humans and wild animals by not interfering with wildlife and their natural processes through land-use planning where possible.

From time to time, conflict between humans and wild animals arise within the City of London on City owned lands and the City will be compelled to act to protect property, human health and safety. In these circumstances, the City will strive to protect the welfare of wild animals by using humane solutions to resolve conflicts. To achieve this, the City will make all reasonable efforts to avoid displacing, injuring or killing wild animals. Humane lethal measures will only be used as a last resort.

3) Add an option that requires staff to post a 30 day public notice announcing lethal measures on the city's website. Public participation was instrumental in resolving lethal control of beavers in the Stanton Drain two years ago. Recognizing public participation in resolving human/wildlife conflicts makes for a more transparent and effective policy.

Comments

No Public Process

- This policy discussion has had no public process.
- Has not been publicly released in which to offer a thoughtful and meaningful public discussion.
- Has not been posted on the City's website, as other strategic plans and policies routinely are to promote a transparent process and fair public comment
- It is being pushed through this committee on its last sitting and pushed through on Council's last sitting with no explanation as to why there is such urgency.

Facts to Consider

This policy does not include 'prevention' as a humane strategy to resolve human/wildlife conflict.

Without a commitment to prevent human /wildlife conflict, the city will need to continue killing wildlife that pose a threat.

In some cases there are mitigating options that can be applied most notably in the case of beavers attempting to dam the steady flow of water in storm sewer culverts. Devices can be used to 'trick' beavers into believing water flow has been dammed.

But these options become more restricted when the conflict involves larger migrating species such as White-tailed Deer, coyotes, and raccoons.

The province has jurisdiction as to when and how wildlife can be moved. Without provincial authorization, wildlife cannot be moved outside of a one kilometer radius. This is to prevent the overcrowding of animals into small natural areas such as conservation reserves.

It is also expected that wild animals moved outside of their established habitat will not survive.

Ethically Certified Traps

The Ministry of Natural Resources endorses 'body-grip' traps that drown animals without damaging the pelt. This benefits trappers by increasing the value of a pelt. It is a loop-hole that municipalities use to rationalize the killing of animals by drowning and compile with 'humane' wildlife policies.

No person advocating for the humane treatment of wildlife would endorse such a trap.

There is no humane way to kill wildlife that is simply living naturally but has come into conflict with human development.

A complete policy must include preventive measures to minimize these sorts of dilemmas and contradictions.

Prevention

You should know that staff already takes into account non-lethal methods to avoid killing wildlife when they come into conflict with infrastructure. The problem is that these efforts are limited because they do not consider prevention as part of their overall strategy.

For example, the a new turtle crossing sign has recently been posted on Hyde Park Road between Gainsborough Rd and Sarnia Rd. By all measures, it is ineffective. If drivers were to take seriously the caution of avoiding turtles on the road, they would have to stop traffic and wait as a turtle crosses and risk being ticketed by police.

Warning drivers of a turtle crossing fulfils the draft urban humane wildlife conflict policy as written but is in actuality ineffective in avoiding turtle deaths.

A serious policy would avoid placing the responsibility on drivers and instead place culverts beneath the road for safe turtle crossing and avoid placing drivers and turtles in direct conflict.

This is just one example of how a preventive approach would resolve human /wildlife conflicts.

The larger issue is recognizing wildlife migration paths and habitat needs through the establishment of wildlife corridors and habitat protection as part of a land use planning process.

There is precedence for such an approach in the London Plan as it already recognizes the need for wildlife corridors. Unfortunately, the London Plan reference lacks depth and makes no reference to common wildlife and the need to resolve human/wildlife conflicts.

This policy requires a public process for fair comment. If this committee is not prepared to seriously consider public comments because of time restrictions than please let the new council complete the process.

Sincerely,


Anna Maria Valastro

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London Ontario N6A 1N7



OAKVILLE

REPORT

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 2013

FROM: Environmental Policy Department
DATE: October 18, 2013
SUBJECT: Oakville Wildlife Strategy - Implementation Status Update
LOCATION: All
WARD: Town wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Oakville Wildlife Strategy - Implementation Status Report from the Environmental Policy department, dated October 18, 2013, be received; and
2. That the continued implementation of the recommendations in the Oakville Wildlife Strategy be supported.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The draft Oakville Wildlife Strategy (OWLS) was endorsed by Council on June 20, 2011. OWLS provides a comprehensive overview of wildlife matters in the town with sections on roles and responsibilities, natural areas, dealing with conflict, biodiversity and recommendations;
- The OWLS and Wildlife Conflict Protocols now comprise the Wildlife Procedure GEN-EN-001-005 under the General Environmental Sustainability Policy GEN-EN-001;
- Staff has implemented the actions outlined in the previous report to Community Services Committee dated November 13, 2012, and has successfully carried out a number of additional recommendations set out in the OWLS;
- Key areas to be addressed by staff in 2013 are a comprehensive species at risk strategy, a road ecology program and an invasive species strategy.

BACKGROUND:

On December 5, 2005, Council endorsed the Town's Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP). One of the key targets set out in the ESP was "to develop a Wildlife Management Plan in order to maintain biodiversity" (Target 1.1.3). Council endorsed the draft OWLS and Wildlife Conflict Protocols on June 20, 2011 that was

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implemented as Wildlife Procedure GEN-EN-001-005 under the General Environmental Sustainability Policy GEN-EN-001 in November 2012.

The Oakville Wildlife Strategy (OWLS) is intended to:

- reduce conflict situations with wildlife;
- provide a clear process for dealing with specific situations involving wildlife;
- provide clarity of roles and responsibilities for both staff and the public;
- conserve biodiversity;
- educate staff and the public on living with wildlife;
- propose recommendations for moving forward.

These documents provide a baseline of information on wildlife in Oakville, including direction and procedures for staff to follow when dealing with wildlife situations in the town. The OWLS section "Recommendations for Future Consideration" provides direction for moving forward on initiatives to support further improvement to the town's wildlife practices and biodiversity.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Since the approval of OWLS, staff has been implementing the recommendations. This report provides an update on progress made since the first update report to the Community Services Committee, presented on November 13, 2012.

Progress on the OWLS Recommendations

The ten recommendations are a set of actions that provide direction on areas for further investigation and/or implementation. These efforts strengthen the town's commitment to supporting biodiversity, wildlife and natural areas management. The following is a summary of progress completed over the last year.

Recommendation 1: Wildlife education and outreach program

- The town has established a speaker series that brings in experts to speak on topics related to wildlife that are of interest to the community. These sessions have proven to be highly popular and well attended. To date, the town has hosted three sessions on coyotes and two on "wildlife proofing" your property. Sessions have typically attracted approximately 100 participants each time. Several of these events have been video recorded and are available on the town's website. These have also been well used.
- As part of the town's environmental outreach program, biodiversity and wildlife are now a key component and have been integrated into activities and materials. Examples include a biodiversity theme for the 2013 annual Halton Ecofest event, wildlife themed giveaways at outreach events and participation in events such as Conservation Halton's Forest Festival.

- The town offers a number of wildlife fact sheets. Additional topics have been added that include how to select a reputable wildlife removal company, "wildlife proofing" your home, and a checklist for residents to reduce potential wildlife conflict situations.
- Education and outreach continue around the coyote management program and staff has responded to over 100 resident reports in the past 12 months.
- Coyote awareness and safety is now a standard component of the annual training program for Parks and Open Space summer staff.
- Through the many initiatives implemented as a result of the Oakville Wildlife Strategy, the town has developed a reputation as a leader in the field of municipal wildlife management. In the past year, staff has been invited to speak at events such as the national Living With Wildlife Conference and a the GTA Shelter Alliance (municipal association for animal managers).
- As part of the coyote management program the town has partnered with OakvilleGreen, a local environmental organization, to provide outreach and education to schools. Since its initiation in the Spring of 2012, over 15,000 students have received interactive presentations that provide a science-based overview of coyote ecology and hands-on training to reduce conflict situations. The program has been well received and has been utilized by both school boards and private institutions.

Recommendation 2: Wildlife by-laws

- Existing provisions in the Property Standards By-law (2007-100) have been interpreted to use in managing problem coyote feeding on private property and the Parks By-law (2013-013) has been amended to include the feeding of coyotes as an offence to cover incidents on public property. Staff has now used these by-laws successfully in a number of cases to eliminate conflict situations without the need to bring charges.

Recommendation 3: Beaver management

- The town's existing beaver policies ensure threats to human safety and property damage due to flooding and hazard trees are addressed, however, preventive and mitigation measures are not formally set out. It is anticipated a comprehensive beaver strategy will be developed as a future initiative and in the interim, staff continue to address issues using a tiered approach before permanently removing an animal. Efforts by Parks and Open Space staff such as wrapping significant trees to prevent further damage and removing hazard trees that have been felled by beaver continue.

Recommendation 4: Canada goose habitat management guidelines

- At Community Services Committee on July 8, 2013, Council received a report from Parks and Open Space on a Canada geese management strategy for the town. While Oakville is known for its comprehensive program in managing

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populations, this new strategy goes further to include additional preventive approaches such as landscape modifications to discourage landing.

- Several sites across town were identified as key areas for habitat modifications. To assist in the implementation of the Canada geese strategy recommendations, Parks and Open Space, Environmental Policy, Conservation Halton and community partners Evergreen and T.A. Blakelock High School are participating in a naturalization project along one of the stream corridors in the west end of Coronation Park. Work was initiated in Summer 2013 with the first set of plantings to be installed this Fall. Subsequent phases of work are expected to continue into 2014. Once completed, in addition to creating a deterrent to Canada geese, the project will create habitat for other species, assist in improving water quality draining into Lake Ontario and provide an opportunity for learning through the association with T.A. Blakelock High School and the posting of educational signage.

Recommendation 5: Wildlife corridors and habitat

- With the successful partnership with the Oakville Horticulture Society (OHS) and Halton Region on the Anderson Parkette Gardens in 2012, staff is once again working with the OHS to develop and install naturalized plantings at two new sites. Locations are being confirmed and the installation of this project is expected in Fall 2014. The sites will feature daffodils and ecolawn, a type of grass that requires little to no maintenance or watering and provides a more naturalized landscape. As with the Anderson Parkette, education and signage will be key features.
- An application for funding under the Great Lakes Guardian Community fund was submitted in April 2013 to undertake a restoration project on the Bronte Bluffs, in conjunction with community partners Evergreen, Conservation Halton and the Bronte Business Improvement Area. The project, if approved would be implemented in 2014. Staff is awaiting funding approval from the province on this project.
- South Shell Park continues to be a key restoration site in the town. Further stewardship work by Appleby College, Evergreen and TD Bank to remove invasive species, install infill planting (approximately 700 trees and shrubs) and mulching took place in 2013. Habitat structures were added this year to further enhance biodiversity. This is a critical area for migratory birds travelling across Lake Ontario and educational signage explaining this was also installed this year.
- Staff worked with the Bronte Harbour Outer Marina to conduct a habitat pilot project for the red necked grebe, a bird considered rare in Ontario according to the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. A nesting platform, based on a successful design developed by the Toronto and Region Conservation

species. The online system allows for input from both stakeholder (e.g. provincial, municipal) data sets and public input. The system can be used to monitor the spread of species, pinpoint pathways of spread and assess efficacy of treatment programs.

Recommendation 7: Wildlife Friendly Development Procedures

- Prior to the development of the North Satellite Operations Depot and Patrol Yard in 2012 Bobolink and Eastern meadowlark, two species protected under the province's *Endangered Species Act* (ESA), were found on the site. Town staff partnered with Halton Region and Conservation Halton to effectively develop a solution to fulfill the requirements for compensation and mitigation under the ESA. In January, 2013 the Ministry of Natural Resources approved the town's plan to provide enhanced habitat for these species on an adjacent parcel of land owned by Halton Region and restoration efforts were undertaken in the Spring of 2013. Additional snake habitat is also being constructed at the site.
- In 2012, the province initiated a number of proposed changes affecting the implementation of the ESA and the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. Staff responded to the proposed changes with a series of formal comments under the Environmental Registry. Staff also participated in a two day stakeholder conference on changes to the ESA in April, 2013.
- Environmental Policy staff provided presentations and resources to ensure new processes under the ESA legislation were conveyed to appropriate Planning Services and Development Engineering staff.
- Through the Environmental Registry, staff provided comments to the province on the proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* (GLPA) and Strategy. If enacted, this legislation would provide new tools to restore and protect the lakes and create a Great Lakes Guardians' Council to identify priorities and recommend actions to address them. As of October, 2013 the proposed GLPA passed Second Reading in the Ontario Legislature.
- A terms of reference and initial work has been carried out for establishing a roster of humane wildlife management companies for town facilities. This would complement the Wildlife Conflict Protocols to ensure wildlife conflict situations on town property are carried out in compliance with the legislation and in a manner that minimizes risk to employees and the animals or birds involved. It is expected this roster will be available in 2014.

Recommendation 8: Road Ecology Program

Staff has initiated the development of a road ecology strategy with an anticipated completion date of December 2014. Road ecology is a growing field of interest that combines the fields of transportation, planning, engineering, ecology and GIS to develop better ways of managing the interaction between wildlife and roads and will

Authority was constructed in the spring. The design is meant to help prevent the loss of hatchlings which can occur with other types of designs such as the use of tire platforms.

- The town continues to work with Conservation Halton on the restoration of Glenorchy, a conservation area comprised of 990 acres of tableland and valleys associated with Sixteen Mile Creek in North Oakville. With partial funding provided by the town in 2012, construction of a two hectare wetland was completed in 2013 which will provide much needed habitat for amphibians, turtles and birds, some of which are listed as endangered or threatened species.
- A pilot project using rain saucers is underway by Environmental Policy and Parks and Open Space staff. Rain saucers are an innovative yet simple structure that allows rainwater to be harvested for irrigation purposes in areas not associated with building structures. The initial pilot area is Palermo Park which is not currently served with town irrigation services. If successful, this could potentially be used to supply a cheap and low maintenance source of irrigation water for more remote restoration projects or community gardens within the town.
- As part of the ongoing work towards Halton's Regional Natural Heritage System (RNHS), staff is part of a stakeholder group whose role is to provide input on how to implement the further assessment and monitoring of the RNHS. The Citizens' Priorities - Halton Region's 2011-2014 Action Plan identifies this as one of the key areas of focus.
- Active partnerships continue with OakvilleGreen to carry out plantings and restoration activities. Since 2004, OakvilleGreen has planted 15,750 native trees and shrubs in association with the town.

Recommendation 6: Invasive Species Strategy

Invasive species are a growing risk both economically and for biodiversity. Town staff has undertaken initiatives to address a number of species.

- The Parks and Open Space department, through its forestry division, deals with several invasive species that place our urban forests at risk. These include the extensive Emerald Ash Borer program, a recurring Gypsy moth treatment program (treated in 2013) and most recently Asian Long Horned Beetle which is now recurring in the GTA.
- In 2013, staff treated approximately 21 hectares of public lands for giant hogweed, mainly along the Sixteen Mile Creek valley lands and in isolated areas along Bronte Creek. Giant Hogweed is an invasive plant that can cause significant burns from exposure to its sap.
- Environmental Policy staff participated on the province's Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMaps) steering committee. EDDMaps is a web-based mapping system for documenting invasive species distribution and has been developed to assist in better managing the spread of invasive

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be of particular importance moving forward with transportation corridor development for the lands north of Dundas.

A symposium was hosted on October 9, 2013 to provide a baseline of information for staff and stakeholders. This was opened up to outside agencies and the session municipalities as well and attracted a great deal of interest with 110 registrants and was well received. A multi-stakeholder working group has been established to ensure the success of the project with representatives from numerous departments from the Town of Oakville (Environmental Policy, Engineering and Construction, Parks and Open Space, Planning Services, Development Engineering and Roads and Works Operations) as well as key stakeholders that include: Halton Region, City of Burlington, Town of Milton, Conservation Halton, Oakville and Milton Humane Society, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Road Ecology Group). The final document will be a working manual with mapping geared towards the planning and engineering streams to plan and mitigate roads that may impact wildlife.

The province of Ontario is currently developing a wildlife mitigation strategy for roads that it will be pushing out to municipalities in 2014. Oakville is working closely with the province through this project to ensure consistency. Once completed, the town's Road Ecology Strategy will be a first at the municipal level in Ontario. The strategy will ensure a more effective and efficient process for moving transportation projects through the Environmental Assessment process, as well as the *Endangered Species Act* and Conservation Authority requirements.

Recommendation 9: Monitoring and Data Collection

The town's State of the Environment Report (SOER) is published annually and provides a record of environmental indicators reflecting the six goals of the Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) and includes indicators related to biodiversity and wildlife. A report to Council on the SOER will be going to the Community Services Committee in December 2013. In addition, two new wildlife monitoring projects are underway:

- In conjunction with the Road Ecology Strategy, staff is working with Conservation Halton, the Oakville and Milton Humane Society and Halton Region to develop a GPS reporting system to accurately track wildlife/vehicle collisions. This will provide better data to develop mapping for prioritizing mitigation measures on existing roads and provide a measure of risk analysis for high collision areas. It should be noted that 6% of all reported collisions in Ontario involve wildlife and this does not include accidents that occur where a driver takes action to avoid wildlife (e.g. swerving or sudden braking).
- As part of the town's coyote program, two projects have been undertaken to improve data collection for risk management. The first is the coyote reporting

system which allows residents to enter sightings, wildlife feeding issues and conflict occurrences. This was initiated in April 2012 and to date has resulted in well over 100 reports. This information has been used to identify areas for signage, promote neighbourhood awareness and is now being used to develop a risk information system.

- In June, 2013, a situation arose in the community where a coyote was involved with a non-lethal attack on a dog. Staff worked with the Oakville and Milton Humane Society to locate the coyote den site and place trail cameras at key locations. Data gathered revealed off-leash dogs were accessing remote areas where the den was located and appropriate actions, including posting signage and education, were taken and no further issues have been reported in this area. The use of this technology is now a part of the "toolbox" for managing conflict scenarios .

Recommendation 10: Expand Resources

- Staff continues to implement strategic priorities recommended in the Oakville Wildlife Strategy using existing resources as approved through the annual budgeting process. Partnering with organizations such as Conservation Halton, the Oakville and Milton Humane Society and OakvilleGreen has proven to be an important way of dealing with resource limitations. In addition, the formation of inter-municipal collaborations such as the one formed for the Road Ecology Strategy ensures that efforts are not being duplicated.

Next Steps

Adequate habitat and a healthy ecosystem are key considerations in supporting wildlife and as part of the development of the Oakville Wildlife Strategy, this was acknowledged through a number of the recommendations. As we move through implementation, there has been an increasing awareness of the need to broaden out the strategy to encompass the overarching importance of biodiversity. To continue to advance progress on the strategy, staff will be exploring the development of a higher level Biodiversity plan in 2014 that would encompass the wildlife strategy and bring together numerous other initiatives such as work on invasive species, natural heritage systems, species at risk, road ecology and others across the corporation.

As we move forward in developing North Oakville and bringing the natural heritage system north of Dundas into public hands, this will be of even more importance.

Other specific programs that are planned for further investigation in 2014 are habitat banking pilot projects in partnership with the Aurora branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources, incorporation of species at risk mapping into planning databases, completion of the road ecology strategy and associated mapping and further refinements to our wildlife conflict management strategies. This work will ensure the

town complies with evolving legislation, manages risk from wildlife issues in an effective manner and continues to be a leader in environmental initiatives to support a thriving ecosystem.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The OWLS and Wildlife Conflict Guidelines assist the public and staff in dealing with wildlife matters more effectively. The education and outreach component supports a better understanding of wildlife and appreciation of their role in Oakville's ecosystems.

(B) FINANCIAL

The OWLS provides a series of ten recommendations to support biodiversity and wildlife in the town. These recommendations generally involve suggestions for researching or investigating particular issues further so financial implications will not be known until the work comes forward. Some components of the recommendations will come forward in the annual budgeting process. In particular, the creation of a new FTE position for the natural heritage system is expected to be brought forward at some point in the future to address increasing demands around the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, natural areas and wildlife matters. Currently, existing staff is implementing the recommendations on a targeted and phased basis.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The Wildlife Procedure, including the Oakville Wildlife Strategy and Wildlife Conflict Protocols affects the operations of those departments that may deal with wildlife in the course of their work. Roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined in the above-noted documents and include Clerks (By-law), Development Engineering, Engineering and Construction, Environmental Policy, Facilities and Construction Management, Parks and Open Space, Planning Services, Legal, Roads and Works Operations and Service Oakville.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our natural environment
- have environmentally sustainable programs/services
- continuously improve our programs and services
- be the most livable town in Canada

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

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Subject: Oakville Wildlife Strategy - Implementation Status Update

The OWLS and Wildlife Conflict Guidelines support the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainability by helping to reduce human wildlife conflict situations, providing clear guidance to staff and the public on wildlife matters and supporting biodiversity.

Prepared by:
Donna Doyle, Senior Environmental
Policy Analyst

Submitted by:
Cindy Toth,
Director Environmental Policy