

## **TRAILS FOCUS GROUP - Meeting #2 update**

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

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In 2016, London City Council hired Dillon Consulting to review the Trail Standards document for conformance to provincial and national standards, and to revise the document based on discussions with the Trails Focus Group. A draft of the revision will be presented to focus group in mid-April.

Dillon found that London's Trail Standards conform to or exceed other preexisting federal and provincial standards including the AODA. London has been particularly exemplary in prioritizing ecological integrity over recreation (which agrees with provincial and national priorities).

Note: municipalities are not required to conform to other natural area management policies, and they may go beyond preexisting standards laid out by other jurisdictions.

### **Trails Focus Group discussion points:**

There were concerns that it is contextually irrelevant to compare small ESAs in the London urban environment with large, mostly-isolated provincial or national parks.

There was a thorough discussion about the logistics of merging management zones 'Nature reserve' and 'Natural area 1', the purpose being to increase both the utility of the Trail Standards document and the efficiency of the trail design process. No decision was reached.

There was some discussion about what appropriate recreation in ESAs is, however this was somewhat beyond the purpose of the Trail Standards document. The general consensus was that increasing the level of recreation in sensitive areas of ESAs was not preferred (e.g. separate trails for mountain biking would not be permitted).

We agreed that future budgets should focus on ESA inventory, implementation, and management, and that there should be stronger public education about ESAs and permitted uses of ESAs.

### **Some recommendations for the revised Trail Standards document:**

- That we continue to prioritize ecological integrity in ESAs
- That we consider combining management zones 'Nature reserve' and 'Natural area 1'
- That trail design be based on the process of assessing all relevant areas within the ESA to minimize impact (avoid sensitive habitats, species at risk *etc.*)
- That 'sustainable trails' are the goal, and that this term is well-defined (*e.g.* 'sustainable trail' as described by the National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1991).
- That a distinction be made between new and existing trails with regards to the process of trail management and design
- That the consultation requirements during trail creation and planning be revised and that timelines for completion of conservation master plans be made flexible