

TRAILS FOCUS GROUP - Meeting #3 update

Thursday, April 14, 2016 (Lauren Des Marteaux - EEPAC rep.)

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 new guideline process was presented to the focus group on April 14th. A draft of the complete document will be presented to the focus group in May.

The revised process collapses the 5 different management zones of the pre-existing guideline in favor of two zones:

1. *Nature Reserve* (more sensitive, naturally-derived, compatible with level 1 trails)
2. *Natural Environment* (less-sensitive, culturally-derived, compatible with level 1 and 2 trails)

The trail under consideration will be assessed for presence of significant species or other ecological features, and compatibility of the trail with those features will be determined based on relevant literature (e.g. Endangered species act, MNR documents). For existing trails, outcomes will include:

1. *Trail remains*
2. *Trail is redesigned* (surface changed, or other management occurs)
3. *Trail is rerouted or relocated*
4. *Trail is closed*

The recommended trail design will be reviewed by relevant advisory bodies (e.g. EEPAC).

Trails Focus Group discussion points:

There were some issues with the level of detail of significant environmental features and whether a given feature warranted further review for trail compatibility (e.g. not SAR turtle nesting habitat). The intent: review of ecological features that are generally not impacted by the presence of trails is costly and time-consuming.

Recommendation: That Dillon revise the document to include more detail, increase clarity, and provide justification for features that do not require further review.

The “Nature Reserve” zone was to be potentially renamed to “Wilderness Zone” (which would align with other provincial documents), however this could also pose problems with regards to AODA requirements for “wilderness” areas. The consensus seemed to be that “Wilderness” is also inappropriate for ESA trails within city boundaries, while “Nature Reserve” is thought to be understood by the public.

Recommendation: Keep “Nature Reserve” designation.

In the pre-existing guideline utility routes were recommended for potential trail alignments; periodic disturbance in these routes for utility maintenance would overlap with disturbance from the trail, and this alignment would thereby minimize total area of disturbance in ESAs. Some concern was raised as to the 'nature-appreciation value' of having trails along utility routes. Some members of the focus group did not feel that this was necessarily an issue and that utility routes are typically not distinguishable from other regions of the ESA.

Recommendation: That this item in the guideline remains. However the intent (whether preferred and for what reason) is not yet resolved.