

AD HOC TRAILS FOCUS GROUP - Meetings 4 & 5 update

Thursday May 5th / Monday May 16th, 2016 (Lauren Des Marteaux - EEPAC rep.)

PURPOSE

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 ad hoc Trails Focus Group. A full draft of the new document, 'Guidelines for Management Zones & Trails Within Environmentally Significant Areas' was presented to the focus group on May 5th for feedback and discussion. A final meeting was held on May 16th, after which the guideline (with incorporation of the latest suggestions) was endorsed by focus group members. The final guideline will be presented to council on June 20th.

MAIN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS

- The terms 'trail' and 'pathway' have different implications with respect to AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) policies. The guideline must therefore make careful use of terms and definitions such that there are no conflicts with AODA requirements for 'built areas'. **Michael Dawthorne (Accessibility Advisory Committee), Andrew MacPherson, and Linda McDougall will work with Dillon to resolve any terminology issues.**
- Suggestion: That the list of ecological features and their general compatibility with trails should include *regionally-significant / regionally-rare* species in addition to species at risk and provincially-rare species. However, consideration of trail compatibility with regionally-significant or regionally-rare species (which are mapped during trail inventories) is expected during the trail design and consultation processes. **Wording to reflect consideration of these species and communities during the consultation process has been incorporated in a later draft of the guideline.**
- Off-leash dogs are a major concern for wildlife/habitat disturbance in current trail systems and should be considered when designing new trails. While enforcement / fines, signage, public education, and creation of off-leash dog parks can help, the problem cannot be eliminated. **The guideline now includes recommendations to install 'on-leash' signage in ESAs where potentially-affected wildlife (e.g. waterfowl) are found.**
- For guidance on how trails may impact ecological features within ESAs, the document recommends use of government-specific publications. Some of the focus group felt that primary scientific literature should also be reviewed or at least suggested in the guideline, while others felt that it would make the process less streamlined. **No consensus was reached, however the final draft may include wording to the effect of: 'other resources may be considered if government documents have insufficient information about the impacts of trails on a given ecological feature'.**