

City of London ESA Management

Since March 2020 we have continued to operate within the management framework, under the contract agreement with the City of London. However it was not without significant changes to daily operations and how we actually perform the duties/tasks. In 2020 we witnessed a major increase in use of the ESA's, with people wanting to get outside for recreation or simply to connect with others. With the increase in trail users, it brings a whole suite of stressors to the ESA's. Consequently those stressors were additional challenges for a reduced number of staff. Now that we are early into 2021 we are seeing a similar amount of activity in the ESA's, and expecting that to continue into the summer months. The increase in use brings about many issues we must adapt to. Increased use means more garbage and vandalism. There continues to be an increase in encampments and drug paraphernalia. Increased trail use puts pressure on the trail system itself and contributes to trail widening, worsening trail conditions in wet areas, damage to structures and more off-trail use.

All of this puts additional pressure on staff to try and mitigate the impacts, while keeping up with all the other projects in our agreement. The health and safety of staff is paramount, so we are using additional vehicles and more PPE, which leads to higher costs. Compliance with local public health regulations has forced us to decrease the number of seasonal staff. This will impact our ability to take on additional capital projects, and likely reduce the scope of some current capital work. In addition, we are having issues meeting the requirement of operation hours in the contract. Areas of operations such as enforcement hours are likely to be especially impacted due to the close contact with people, inherent with those duties.

The measures taken to protect staff and maintain a high standard of health and safety are critical. However the cost of managing the ESA's to the standard we are used to is very high, and will likely continue throughout 2021.

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