

THE CATARAQUI REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

PARROTT'S BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PBAC)

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2011 @ 4:00 P.M.

LIBRARY ROOM, W.J. HENDERSON RECREATION CENTRE, AMHERSTVIEW

Present: Ric Bresee, Gary Osborne, Penny Porter

Staff Present: Robert Gerritsen, Conservation Lands Coordinator and Recording Secretary; Jason Hynes; Lands Planner; Steve Knechtel, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer

Guests: Chris Grooms, Kingston Field Naturalists

The meeting commenced at 4:00 P.M.

In the absence of a Chair, the General Manager started the meeting.

1) Roll Call and Mileage

There were three (3) members present. Ric Bresee attended as a delegate for Mayor William Lowry.

2) Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Ric Bresee
Seconded by: Gary Osborne

THAT the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee approve the agenda circulated.

Carried

3) Declarations of Conflict of Interest

There were none.

4) Delegations/Presentation

Chris Grooms of the Kingston Field Naturalists was not present at this time. It was decided to proceed with the agenda as presented and to await the arrival of Mr. Grooms.

5) **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

It was noted that at least one of the Chair and Vice-Chair needed to be members of the Full Authority in order to report back on any motions from this Committee.

Resolution: **PBAC-001-11**
Moved by: Gary Osborne
Seconded by: Ric Bresee

THAT Penny Porter be nominated for the position of Chair of the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee for 2011.

Carried

Resolution: **PBAC-002-11**
Moved by: Ric Bresee
Seconded by: Penny Porter

THAT Gary Osborne be nominated for the position of Vice-Chair of the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee for 2011.

Carried

Penny Porter took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

6) **Approval of Minutes of April 21, 2009 and Notes from e-Poll May 19, 2010**

Moved by: Ric Bresee
Seconded by: Gary Osborne

THAT the minutes of the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee meeting held on April 21, 2009 and Notes from e-Poll of May 19, 2010 be approved as circulated.

Carried

7) **Business Arising**

There was no business arising.

8) **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

9) **Reports**

a) **2011 Capital Expenditures**

The Lands Planner presented his report (*attached*) on Master Plan Implementation and Capital Development at the Parrott's Bay Conservation Area for 2011. The projects include information and navigation signage, brochure and web page improvements, and trail and entry gates improvements. The proposed expenditures total \$15,000. The proposed projects are in-keeping with the property management plan and associated multi-year budget provided to Loyalist Township.

The members inquired as to what was involved with the web page improvements. The Lands Planner confirmed that several pages on the Authority's web site need to be revised to reflect the Master Plan recommendations. It was recommended that other parties using the property be linked as well to promote their walks including the Lions Club, Kingston Field Naturalists and the Rideau Trail Association. The members also inquired about the status of a Friends group for the property. The Lands Planner indicated that there are several volunteers willing to help out in various capacities on the property but not necessarily in a self organized fashion. Staff will ensure that volunteer and Friends opportunities are communicated at appropriate locations including the kiosk.

There was a general discussion between the members and staff about Authority properties in Loyalist Township and private properties used by the public both in the City of Kingston and Loyalist Township and the potential of linkages between all. The properties referenced include Parrott's Bay, the Bayview Bog, Nicholson's Point and Collins Creek (at Taylor Kidd Boulevard). These linkages should be pursued as opportunities arise. It was noted by staff that for the Bayview Bog access for use by the public should be limited.

Resolution: PBAC-003-11
Moved by: Ric Bresee
Seconded by: Gary Osborne

THAT the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee recommend to the Full Authority;

THAT the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority undertake in 2011 the capital projects for the Parrott's Bay Conservation Area as outlined in the Lands Planner's report dated April 12, 2011.

Carried

Chris Grooms of the Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN) had arrived for the meeting.

b) Management Strategy for Owl Woods, Amherst Island

Since the members did have an opportunity to review the Management Strategy for Owl Woods in advance of the meeting, a full presentation by Mr. Grooms was not required. The members did indicate that the strategy was well written and congratulated the contractor and the Kingston Field Naturalists.

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority property on Amherst Island is part of an area known as Owl Woods, an area used by owls especially for wintering. The increasing popularity of the area, together with vegetation changes, has raised concerns for the area. The Kingston Field Naturalists has lead the preparation of a management strategy based on ecological principles. There are numerous recommendations with many potentially affecting the Conservation Authority operations and finances (*Executive Summary and list of recommendations attached*)

There was a general discussion on the vole population on the island and how increases and decreases in numbers may or may not affect the owl population. There have been some complaints from some residents on the island who do not wish to see an increased number of visitors to Owl Woods and the island in general. The importance of a Friends or local residents group and education for visitors were expressed as well.

It was noted that the strategy made no reference to the possibility of wind turbines on the island at some date in the future. Mr. Grooms indicated that this is largely due to the lack of information as to where they may go and also that there is only limited information on the effects of turbines on owls and raptors. The General Manager indicated that he has been in communication with a representative from the energy company pursuing the turbines on the island and there appears to be a willingness to work with the Conservation Authority and others to avoid conflicting conservation initiatives on Amherst Island.

The strategy as present has information from all the players involved. However, there has not been direct dialogue between all. There is a need for a meeting between the Conservation Authority, the Owl Woods residents, the Township and the KFN. Mr. Grooms is pursuing same for sometime in May.

Resolution: PBAC-004-11
Moved by: Ric Bresee
Seconded by: Gary Osborne

THAT the Parrott's Bay and Owl Woods Advisory Committee recommend to the Full Authority;

THAT that the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority receive the Management Strategy for Owl Woods;

AND FURTHER THAT staff work with the Kingston Field Naturalists, our Owl Woods property neighbors and Loyalist Township on developing a plan based on the recommendations from the strategy.

Carried

10) Updates, Inquiries and Other Business

There were no items.

11) Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at the call of the Chair but is anticipated for some time in September of this year.

12) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M. on a motion by Gary Osborne and seconded by Ric Bresee.

Steve Knechtel
General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer

Penny Porter
Chair

**THE CATARAQUI REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
REPORT**

TO: Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee

DATE: April 12, 2011

FROM: Jason D. Hynes, Lands Planner

FILE: PR 48
RSMT 12-1-16
IR-023-11

**RE: 2011 Master Plan Implementation and Capital Development at
Parrott's Bay Conservation Area**

Background

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) approved the master plan for Parrott's Bay Conservation Area (PBCA) in June 2009. The master plan identifies prioritized actions and capital improvements over the next few years. In November 2009, Loyalist Township Council was presented with a five-year budget that identified a request of \$ 15,000 annually would be made as a special levy, to then be collected by the Authority for completing the approved capital development projects in a given year.

2011 Projects

This report outlines the proposed allocation for completing, in 2011, a number of projects at PBCA that will see improvements that will help visitors' experiences to be safer, more enjoyable and respectful of the habitat. Sign work to be undertaken this year will see the installation of site-maps at strategic locations of the trail network, along with wayfinding markers positioned at trail intersections. Improvements along the trails will also be carried out in 2011; this work will primarily be focused on making repairs to the drainage and surfacing of trails in the west part of PBCA. Plans are also underway to update and enhance the CRCA's webpage for PBCA, and to produce a new brochure for the property.

Staff will also continue efforts to work with volunteers on projects and initiatives at PBCA to create a broader connection between the land and with the community, so as to encourage area residents to become the stewards of this special place.

2011 Budget

The PBCA's 2011 Master Planning Implementation budget is proposed to be allocated as per the following:

<u>Project and Work Description</u>	<u>2011</u>
Signage A – regulations/site maps at access points	4,000
Signage B – trail navigation and safety	3,000
Communications A – brochure production	Other source
Communications B – web page improvement	2,000
Trails B – drainage and surface improvements	2,000
Accessible Gate – installed at main entry	2,500
SUBTOTAL	13,500
Annual contingency	1,500
TOTAL	\$15,000

Staff recommendation:

***THAT** the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee recommend to the Full Authority;*

***THAT** the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority undertake in 2011 the capital projects for the Parrott's Bay Conservation Area as outlined in the Lands Planner's report dated April 12, 2011.*

Respectfully submitted,

Approved for circulation _____

JDH/jh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located on the eastern end of Amherst Island, Owl Woods is no longer a quiet little birding site. Once largely shared by word-of-mouth between birders, Owl Woods is now being promoted through a variety of mediums to a much broader audience to the point where its greatest threat may be its increasing popularity. Concerns over increasing incidents of owl harassment and the implications on the sustainable use of this regionally unique habitat by ever increasing numbers of visitors has prompted the development of this management strategy

It was produced after consultation with the stakeholders whose input provided many of the issues, as well as potential solutions. It is primarily aimed at winter owl conservation and should be viewed as a flexible working document that can be implemented when appropriate opportunities and/or resources become available.

A prioritized list of recommendations is provided in the Appendix, with the first being the most urgent and most easily achieved (i.e., planting a conifer plantation). This will enhance the function of the existing, but ageing plantation that provides critical roosting habitat for over-wintering owls. The second recommendation, and perhaps most important, is to form a Friends of Owl Woods group, as there needs to be an implementing body to push the bulk of this management strategy forward.

Owl protection would be easier to implement if Owl Woods was a public conservation park with clearly defined boundaries, fees, dedicated on-site staff, an enforcement arm, gates, fences, and operational hours. Although the reality is more complicated, the objectives of this strategy are aimed at achieving similar management goals.

APPENDIX I – LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from the body of the report have been re-ordered below, with those considered the most urgent, important, and/or easy to implement coming first. These factors were not necessarily given equal weight and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first recommendation is the most urgent, but once recommendation two and three are implemented, it follows that the order of the remaining recommendations may be influenced by fiscal restrictions and/or appropriate opportunities. As such, it will be up to the management groups to decide the order of the subsequent recommendations.

- 1. It is recommended that CRCA begin planting spruce at its earliest possible convenience, and to phase planting on their lands in 3 x 5 acre blocks, each separated by 10 years as well as a fire break. It is normally preferred to plant native species, but owl conservation is a greater priority at Owl Woods, and so both White Spruce and Norway Spruce should be considered. Norway Spruce is not an invasive threat in Southern Ontario.**
- 2. It is recommended that the KFN form a Friends of Owl Woods group (with a separate constitution and a code of ethics) to complement the CRCA management of Owl Woods, and to provide the driving force for management implementation and long term Owl Woods conservation.**
- 3. It is recommended that the CRCA become the primary agency at Owl Woods for implementing long term management and conservation.**
- 4. It is recommended that trail access points be demarcated with entrance portals and professional signs clearly indicating private property. The specific wording and any other associated signs must be discussed with the landowners. Costs should not be borne by the landowners.**
- 5. It is recommended that a memorandum of understanding be written up that included consent from landowners for the various activities and recommendations involved in this plan. This would not be a legal document, but instead would provide clarification that would help reduce future misinterpretation.**
- 6. It is recommended that professional quality signs be used for posting prohibited activities and demarcating private property. Although well intentioned, the current postings are of a low quality and may not make an effective impression. Careful consideration must be given in determining the wording of prohibited activities.**

- 7. It is recommended that talks be initiated with Loyalist Township for the purpose of establishing winter gates at both ends of Marshall 40 Foot Rd.**
- 8. It is recommended that discussions take place with the Barr family, with the aim of having a second plantation on their property, either immediately south or immediately west of the existing plantation.**
- 9. It is recommended that the other landowners be considered and approached with the possibility of planting.**
- 10. It is recommended that a post-planting protocol be developed in order to minimize seedling loss by vole girdling. Options to consider include selective herbicide use, grass cutting, and sheep grazing. Selective herbicide application is used in existing CRCA plantation agreements, and grass cutting could be done by volunteers or through a summer student program. Sheep grazing is possible, but would first need to be done on an experimental basis due to the potential risk of seedling loss.**
- 11. It is recommended that long term grassland and plantation viability be part of future Owl Woods management considerations.**
- 12. It is recommended that preservation of hardwood forest integrity be considered as a necessary part of Owl Woods management. Actions that discourage indiscriminate forest access need to be considered, as well as means to reduce the effects of invasive species.**
- 13. It is recommended that CRCA construct a new entrance, along with a graveled parking lot, gate, trails, and a kiosk at the north end of their property.**
- 14. It is recommended that CRCA construct an amphibian pond at the current access point to prevent access to Owl Woods at that location. The details of this would have to be worked out with Loyalist Township, in regards to the right-of-way and preventing road flooding.**
- 15. It is recommended that a permit system, administered through the CRCA, be developed for Owl Woods.**
- 16. It is recommended that the *Trespass to Property Act* be investigated as a possible means to protect owls at Owl Woods from harassment. This will not be possible without landowner involvement.**

- 17. It is recommended that careful consideration be given, involving consultation with enforcement officials, in determining enforcement methods, and these methods should be formalized in a procedures manual.**
- 18. It is recommended that a permit system be considered for Owl Woods. The cost of the permit, who would be eligible, and the nature of associated cautionary literature would need to be determined. Private landowners would need to be included in permit discussions.**
- 19. It is recommended that a dialogue be maintained with the current land owners on a variety of issues, including the possibility of eventual land acquisition.**
- 20. It is recommended that Owl Woods be closed to visitors in the evening hours. This could be done through a combination of posted hours and gate closings. An arrangement with a local resident would likely be needed for this.**
- 21. It is recommended that limiting hours of access be used as a management tool for controlling negative visitor behavior.**
- 22. It is recommended that some camera restrictions be part of new and improved signs and permit systems.**
- 23. If deemed necessary, it is recommended that a camera ban be considered by committee, backed up with defensible data. Various ban options can be considered including a total ban, moratorium, or in increments (e.g., alternate weeks).**
- 24. Until information can be provided that shows a lesser setback distance is acceptable, it is recommended that larger setback distances (at least 12 m) be set for visitors approaching owls at Owl Woods.**
- 25. It is recommended that representatives from the Land Conservancy be requested to meet with the land owners in order to make them aware of potential conservation options.**
- 26. It is recommended that time of day be a parameter in flushing surveys in order to support time of day visitor guidelines.**
- 27. It is recommended that a census of photography visitors be undertaken to determine the types, locations, time of day, and numbers of owl threat responses caused by photographers. Census data must be meticulously maintained to avoid the problems associated with anecdotal bias.**
- 28. It is recommended that a census of birdwatching visitors be undertaken to determine the type of visitor, locations, time of day, and incidences of owl**

disturbances. Census data must be meticulously maintained to avoid the problems associated with anecdotal bias. The intention of the census is to set up defensible guidelines and a birdwatching ban (or timing restrictions) if necessary.

29. It is recommended that school groups be monitored in the same manner as birdwatchers and photographers in order to determine educational enhancements and possible restrictions.

30. As part of an overall census of visitors, it is recommended that visitor density be a parameter of study in regards to owl disturbance.

31. It is recommended that the need for a new management strategy be considered in 2018.