



CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Corporate Assets and Strategic Planning

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 17, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone and Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plans (PW16087) (Ward 15)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Ward 15
PREPARED BY:	Adrienne Kupchanko Policy/Program Analyst, Strategic Planning (905) 546-2424, Ext. 5516 Jennifer DiDomenico Manager, Policy & Programs, Strategic Planning 905-546-2424, Ext. 5596
SUBMITTED BY:	Robert Norman BLA, OALA, CSLA Director, Strategic Planning Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Plan for Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands”, attached as Appendix A, be approved as a guiding document regarding future management actions for these lands;
- (b) That the “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Plan for Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands”, attached as Appendix B, be approved as a guiding document regarding future management actions for these lands.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is a collaborative initiative to protect Heritage Lands. It is important to note that the Heritage Lands Management Plans are not “land use” plans, governed by the Planning Act, but rather contain voluntary guidelines that partners and adjacent landowners can choose to adopt in their land management efforts to protect and enhance the biodiversity and cultural history of the area.

Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands and Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands are the second and third out of a total of six Heritage Lands Management Plans to be completed.

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The Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands comprise 337 hectares of land located in an area extending generally between Highway 6 and Waterdown Road in the City of Burlington and from Highway 403 north to the southern limit of Waterdown in the City of Hamilton. The majority of the Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands are owned by Conservation Halton, with smaller areas owned by the City of Burlington, City of Hamilton, Bruce Trail Conservancy, and Ontario Heritage Trust. Please refer to map attached as Appendix C to Report PW16087.

The Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands comprise 800 hectares of land located in an area extending generally from Waterdown Road to Brant Street in the City of Burlington and from Highway 403 north to Mountain Brow Road and Dundas Street in the City of Hamilton. The majority of the current EcoPark System lands are owned by the City of Burlington, with smaller areas owned by Conservation Halton, Halton Region and Bruce Trail Conservancy. It is important to note that the Waterdown-Sassafras Heritage Lands do not contain City-owned partner land (at this time) however the Heritage Lands do fall within the City of Hamilton boundary. Please refer to map attached as Appendix D to Report PW16087.

This report is intended to request approval of the “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Plan for Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands” and “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Plan for Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands” that will serve as a set of management directions for these lands.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 7

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: There are no financial impacts of the recommendations.

Staffing: There are no additional resources needed to implement the recommendations. Staff are recommending that the City continues dedicating time to the project to fulfil the objectives of the initiative, which can be accomplished within current staffing levels and work plans.

Legal: The recommendations do not have any associated legal implications.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Overview

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is a collaborative initiative to protect, restore and connect more than 3,900 hectares (9,600 acres) of natural lands in west Hamilton, Dundas, Flamborough, and Burlington. This is one of the most biologically rich areas of Canada and the natural features of the study area include a portion of the Niagara Escarpment, and the lands and waters associated with the Cootes Paradise Marsh and Grindstone Creek.

These natural lands are also situated in one of Canada's most vibrant and rapidly growing urban regions, the Hamilton-Burlington region. Economic growth and urban development have caused the natural areas to become fragmented by roads, rail lines and other features of urbanization. The result is a disconnected patchwork of smaller protected areas, each valuable but isolated and ultimately unsustainable. This situation presents an urgent need to reconnect, restore and protect these valuable lands, and to create a lasting legacy for current and future generations.

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is a collaboration between:

- Bruce Trail Conservancy
- City of Burlington
- Conservation Halton
- Halton Region
- City of Hamilton
- Hamilton Conservation Authority
- Hamilton Naturalists' Club
- McMaster University
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan Office

Since 2007, the EcoPark partners have worked together with neighbouring landowners to protect and restore their natural lands and secure additional lands to create ecological corridors. In addition, the partners work together and with other local environmental groups to deliver sustainable recreation and education opportunities.

The City of Hamilton is one of 10 partners within the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System initiative; nine of which own lands within the geographical boundaries of the EcoPark and signed a memorandum of understanding in 2013 (extended in 2016). The City has representation on the Cootes to Escarpment Management Committee as well as on the Land Management Plan Project Steering Committee (as described below).

Heritage Lands Management Plans

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is divided into six core areas, called Heritage Lands, which include:

- Burlington Heights
- Clappison-Grindstone
- Waterdown-Sassafras Woods
- Lower Grindstone
- Cootes Paradise
- Borer's Falls-Rock Chapel

A primary goal of this initiative is the development of comprehensive joint Heritage Lands Management Plans for these six core Heritage Land areas.

Heritage Lands Management Plans provide a consistent framework for the future planning, implementation and management of lands under ownership of the partners. The plans are intended to enhance the protection and management of important natural and cultural features and improve sustainable recreation activities, education, and research opportunities.

The plans are not meant to supersede or replace, but rather enhance land use plans or zoning that are currently enacted within the EcoPark area; including, but not limited to, the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, and Hamilton Official Plans.

Completion of Heritage Lands Management Plans, in all six core Heritage Lands will include:

- Identification, protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage resources.
- Identification and documentation of pressures and issues of concern raised by partner organizations, stakeholders, and the public.
- Infrastructure creation, maintenance, and decommissioning.
- Recreation, education and research opportunities that are compatible with preserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the areas.
- Criteria and indicators to evaluate the implementation and ongoing monitoring program to collect relevant information to gauge success of the management plan.

The first Heritage Lands Management Plan completed was Burlington Heights, which is comprised of lands directly east of Cootes Paradise, along both sides of York Boulevard from Dundurn Castle to Plains Road West. This plan was approved by the City of Hamilton in 2015 through report PW15062.

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark Secretariat, which is comprised of a Coordinator and other staff as required to manage the day-to-day administration and related activities, is leading the Land Management Plan initiative. In 2014, the Secretariat received \$374,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to cover the cost of developing management plans for the remaining five Heritage Lands over a 5-year period. Through a competitive bidding process, North-South Environmental Inc. (Environmental Consultants) was retained to develop the Heritage Lands Management Plans for the Waterdown-Sassafras Woods and Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands which began concurrently in late 2014.

Overview of Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands

The Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands comprise 337 hectares of land located in an area extending generally between Highway 6 and Waterdown Road in the City of Burlington and from Highway 403 north to the southern limit of Waterdown in the City of Hamilton. Approximately 60% are currently owned and managed by partner organizations. The majority of the current EcoPark System Lands are owned by Conservation Halton (151.93 ha), with smaller areas owned by the City of Burlington (17.03 ha), City of Hamilton (14.67 ha), Bruce Trail Conservancy (9.72 ha), and Ontario Heritage Trust (8.36 ha). Please refer to Appendix A and C attached.

Existing land uses within and adjacent to the Heritage Lands include agriculture, rural residential, industrial and suburban developments. The community of Waterdown extends to the north of the Heritage Lands. A number of utilities and infrastructure bisect the Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands including a railway, two major power lines, Waterdown Road, Snake Road, and a pipeline. Most of the Heritage Lands are located below the escarpment brow except for the lands above the Grindstone Falls (Great Falls), a repurposed limestone quarry (King City/Sheppard Quarry), and adjacent tableland forests along the escarpment rim in the City of Hamilton.

Overview of Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands

The Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands comprise 800 ha of land located in an area extending generally from Waterdown Road to Brant Street in the City of Burlington and from Highway 403 north to Mountain Brow Road and Dundas Street in the City of Hamilton. Approximately 56% of the lands are currently owned and managed by partner organizations. The majority of the current EcoPark System Lands are owned by the City of Burlington (247 ha), with smaller areas owned by Conservation Halton (158 ha), Halton Region (30 ha) and Bruce Trail Conservancy (11 ha). Please refer to Appendix B and D to Report PW16087.

Existing land uses within and adjacent to the Heritage Lands include agriculture, industrial (including active and inactive clay and shale quarries), two closed landfill sites, a golf course, city parks, rural residential, and suburban developments. The Waterdown community extends to the north of the Heritage Lands.

It is important to note that the Waterdown-Sassafras Heritage Lands do not contain City owned partner land; however, it does fall within the City of Hamilton boundary.

The Executive Summary and Table of Contents of both reports are attached as Appendix A and B to Report PW16087. Maps of the Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands and Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands boundaries are attached as Appendix C and Appendix D to Report PW16087.

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A full copy of the documents can be found on the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System website:

<http://www.cootestoescarpmentpark.ca/project-reports>

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

There are no policy implications or legislated requirements that are as a result of the endorsement of these land management plans.

Well in advance of any development, site alteration or activity on the Heritage Lands, staff will review applicable policies and regulations in order to determine conformity and approval requirements, as required.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

The Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands Management Plan and Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plan were directed by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from Conservation Halton, City of Burlington, City of Hamilton, Halton Region and the Bruce Trail Conservancy, as well as the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System Coordinator.

The following City of Hamilton Departments/Divisions have been consulted in the development of this report:

Planning and Economic Development (Development Planning, Heritage, and Urban Design Section)

Public Works (Parks & Cemeteries, Landscape Architectural Services)

The Ward 15 Councillor was consulted and is supportive of the concept of the Heritage Lands Management Plans

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Similar to the approach taken with the Burlington Heights Heritage Lands Management Plan, the North-South consultants worked under the guidance of a dedicated Project Steering Committee composed of land-owning EcoPark partners, and ongoing stakeholder engagement was built into the project workplan. These two management plans were completed in August 2016.

This initiative is an excellent example of engaged collaboration, collective efforts and utilized expertise from all partners. Additionally, feedback from community members, including landowners from within the EcoPark boundaries, was also incorporated into the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone and Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plans.

Conservation Halton will be seeking approval/endorsement of the plans by the Conservation Halton Board of Directors. As well, the City of Burlington will be recommending approval of the plans to their Council.

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City of Hamilton's Endorsement for "Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands Management Plan" and "Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plan" will demonstrate Hamilton's support for new joint initiatives to enhance existing programs and fill gaps related to habitat restoration, invasive species control, ecological inventories, environmental monitoring, education and interpretation, and cultural heritage protection.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Not approve the "Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands Management Plan" and "Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plan" documents

The Heritage Lands Management Plans provide a comprehensive and coherent framework for development activities within the EcoPark land boundary. Staff does not recommend this alternative as the plan provides voluntary guidelines to further enhance and protect the unique and significant lands within the EcoPark and aligns with its vision and objectives. The management plan for Burlington Heights Heritage Lands was approved in 2015 and a similar process has been followed for the development of these current management plans. In addition, the remaining partners will likely approve and implement the Heritage Lands Management Plans with or without the participation of the City of Hamilton.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

Culture and Diversity

Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A – Summary of “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands Management Plan”

Appendix B – Summary of “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plan”

Appendix C – Map of the Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands boundary

Appendix D – Map of the Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands boundary

A full copy of the “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands Management Plan” and “Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System: Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands Management Plan” can be found on the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System website:

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