Stewards of Cootes Watershed
Stewards of Red Hill Watershed
BRINGING BACK PRISTINE STREAMS

May 10th, 2019

Dear Councillors,

My thanks to City staff for providing this opportunity to include our own submission describing our contribution towards keeping Hamilton clean and green.

We have two separate initiatives each of considerable scope and impact – one in the Cootes Watershed, the other in the Red Hill Watershed. Each program is fervently support by its local neighbourhoods and we feel that they deserve to be recognized separately.

2018 represented our 6th year in the Cootes Watershed and our second year in the Red Hill Watershed. Our presence are in the two complete watersheds found in the City of Hamilton.

We report with great satisfaction that Hamiltonians regardless of where they live in our city, care deeply about the health and biodiversity of their neighbourhood watershed and that our reception in Red Hill has exceeded our expectations. Even more satisfying is that cleanups in both watersheds attract volunteers from across the city and at times from neighbouring municipalities.

Our efforts are guided by a single question: What would it take to get an entire watershed clean and to keep it clean. In tackling Hamilton's two watersheds that are complete from headwaters to Hamilton Harbour we believe that we will be the first city in Canada with this proud distinction and will gladly offer it up to the rest of the country as a more accurate indication of the true nature of our community than perhaps they presently hold.

We conduct 41 cleanups in each watershed each year for a total of 82 Group Cleanups.

To the end of 2018 have held 86 separate cleanup events in Red Hill Watershed and 282 events in Cootes Watershed. Please note that the last report included numbers up to Aug 2018.

Through the hard work of our volunteers we have removed a total of 422,000 lbs of litter and debris from Cootes Watershed and 81,000 lbs from Red Hill Watershed to year's end.

We have completing the resolution of 40 different systemic stressors that are compromising the health of our watershed. Collapsed debris fences, pool water being purged directly into creeks, rainwater being released at the top of a slope causing irreversible erosion and increasing turbidity in our waterways, are a few examples of the type of stressors that we have been working with stake holders to resolve.

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What makes Stewards of Cootes Watershed and Stewards of Red Hill Watershed Unique

- Brought over $640,000 of Provincial and Federal funding into this community

- Cleanups conducted in-water from July to November, creating special demands on equipment, planning and safety protocols

- We own $95,000 of equipment used in the field including the finest collection of waders in the city

- We have developed an array of custom equipment to give our volunteers the ability to work smarter and safer

- We perform extensive reconnaissance in planning our cleanups to ensure safety, to make sure we respect the gift of time given by our volunteers and to minimize the environmental impact of our off trail work.

- We have developed and extensive GIS capability to respect the rights of private property owners and to give our volunteers the best tools possible.

- We empower a group of our finest volunteers to be Crew Leaders and give them extensive training including first aid training every Spring

- We participate in at least 10 days of festivals per year and make at least 20 presentations within the community to share the importance of the local watershed and the role we each can take to ensure its health and biodiversity.

- We co-ordinate our activities extensively with the city, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton, the Royal Botanical Gardens, Ontario MNRF, Ontario MOE, Mohawk College, McMaster University, the Joint Stewardship Board of Red Hill Valley, Local 5167 – City of Hamilton Outside Workers Bargaining Unit,

- Our experience organizing cleanups results in a high level of productivity – 1.3 bags of garbage collected per hour of volunteer time. Which compares very favourably to similar programs

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