

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	June 13, 2019
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-26-19
Title:	Recreational Trails Master Plan - Draft
Prepared by:	Sarah Johnson
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee of the Whole as presented as per Resolution <i>CW129-19</i> ; Endorsed by Council on June 27, 2019 as per Resolution <i>CC47-19</i> .

Recommendation

1. **That the draft Recreational Trails Master Plan be received; and**
2. **That the draft Recreational Trails Master Plan be made available for public review.**

Executive Summary

The Recreational Trail Master Plan (RTMP) was initiated in late 2016. The project experienced some delays in the process due to staffing changes and changes at the consulting company. The project was taken over by staff, with the assistance of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority staff, in 2018 and it was worked on in house until the completion of the draft that is subject of this report.

The next steps are to have the draft Recreational Trails Master Plan reviewed by the public, key stakeholders, agencies, and municipalities. This review will assist in determining if there are any outstanding matters and if we need to make further changes. Staff plan on holding a public meeting in late June or early July, and to have the commenting period completed by the end of July and a final draft ready for review and approval in the fall of this year.

Background and Discussion

In 2016 several requests came forward regarding trail use and access, a large portion related to motorized all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in County Forests and on the CP Rail Trail. Staff were directed to complete a comprehensive Recreational Trails Master Plan (“RTMP”) for all of the County forest properties and the CP Rail Trail. The Plan was intended to outline the vision, goals, and objectives necessary to conserve County Forests and trails while considering the needs of the community.

Staff hired a consultant to assist in the project in late 2016. The anticipated timeline for the project with the assistance of the consultant was the end of 2017. However due to staffing changes and changes within the consulting company, the project was delayed. County staff, with the assistance of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) staff, began the process of completing the project in house.

Staff completed a draft of the Plan in May of 2019. The intention is to release the draft for review by the public, stakeholders, agencies, and municipalities, in order to seek comments and feedback. A public meeting will be scheduled for late June or early July. In addition to this, the commenting period for this draft is anticipated to end on July 26, 2019. After this date staff hope to bring a final document to Council with recommended changes based on the comments received. During the commenting period, we plan to connect with all of the trail user groups that have requested additional or new uses. The RTMP will deal with those existing requests and any future ones. The RTMP will also provide direction for the next 12 years and places priority on several action items to improve the properties and trail user experience subject to future budget considerations. Attached to this report is a draft of the recommendations/action items that have been identified in the draft RTMP.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

In consideration of the nature of this Plan, in that existing or proposed uses could change in the future, specifically as a result of a use becoming an uninsurable risk, or Council determines it to be unreasonable because of risk and liability, staff have added wording that recognizes that the RTMP is a ‘living document’ and that the RTMP and related agreements may need to be updated as necessary.

Financial and Resource Implications

This project is being completed in house by staff and will not require any additional funds. Once the RTMP has been finalized and approved by Council, the action items will identify future projects and improvements to the properties and trail user experience which will be subject to future budget approvals.

Relevant Consultation

- ☒ Internal – Clerk’s, Legal Services, Transportation Services, Tourism, Economic Development, Finance
- ☒ External - Municipalities and agencies will be consulted as part of this review. Interested public members and groups will also be engaged including those that have participated in the process to date.

Appendices and Attachments

[Draft Recreational Trails Master Plan - June 2019](#)

Draft Recommendations/Action Items Identified in the draft RTMP (attached)

Draft Recommendations/Action Items

Table 2: On-Going Trail Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Target Timeframe
1	That the County commit to ongoing recreational trail planning and management to provide maximum benefit to the community, to capitalize on the area’s natural beauty, and to brand Grey County as a significant Outdoor Recreation Destination.	On-going
2	That the County annually consult with trail users and user groups to assist staff with setting implementation priorities, applying for grants, and to formalize a promotion and management of the trail system. Staff will provide recommendations from these discussions to County Council where required.	On-going
3	That the County consider Friends of Forest Groups, through individual agreements, to propose trail improvements for County Forest areas.	On-going
4	That the County commit to identifying high priority locations for gates and access restrictions to reduce trail damage from illegal use of County Forest lands.	On-going
5	That County staff with partners and stakeholders to create a prioritized list of desired trails, bridges and other features to upgrade, replace and expand the network.	On-going
6	That the County reviews all development plans to identify opportunities for neighborhood trails and trail linkages including around schools.	On-going
7	That the County use the new review process in this Plan for considering new trails use requests or trails expansion requests as outlined in this report.	On-going
8	That the County commit to continually updating a trails inventory that includes the condition of trails, location of trailheads, parking areas, and points of interest.	On-going
9	That the County promote and educate trail use etiquette.	On-going
10	That where possible the County improve the accessibility of trails and trail linkages.	On-going
11	That the County commit to improving existing trails on one County Forest property per year which may include maintaining trail surfaces, trimming and removing vegetation as necessary, reducing erosion, and constructing stream crossings and bridges as necessary.	On-going
12	That the County maintain capital and operating budgets for trail improvement projects, including a capital reserve for trails projects.	On-going
13	The County shall replace and install signs in accordance with any applicable County signage policy, as resources permit.	On-going
14	That the County consider utilizing signage for public education and interpretative signage about some of the features in a forest property.	On-going
15	That the County consider a unique name for each forest tract, in accordance with the County’s asset naming policies and procedures.	On-going

Table 3: Short Term (1–3 Years) Trail Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Target Timeframe
1	That the County consider parking expansion plans for Forests/Trails that are being highly utilized or forests/trails that the County wants to promote.	As necessary
2	Develop user friendly trail maps to post on the County website, and work towards more print material including maps, brochures, or a booklet. Develop pamphlets for individual user types or subject matter.	1 – 18 months
3	That the County consider appropriate amenities and infrastructure upgrades for trails that are highly utilized properties.	1 – 18 months
4	That the County consider on-going staff resources for trail monitoring and maintenance.	1 – 18 months
5	That the County consider updating the signage/branding for Grey County Trails to be used on signage and printed materials such as brochures, and for promotion and events.	1 – 18 months
6	That the County work with law enforcement agencies, municipalities, stakeholders with respect to permitted uses compliance on trails and reporting.	1 – 18 months
7	That the County develop an up-to-date, visible, effective and consistent trails signage system including trail identification, mapping, educational signage, a code of conduct for trail users, and signage to alert trail users of the potential risks/ hazards associated with using trails. Trail signage should also be used to clearly indicate allowable and non-allowable trail uses. That the County commit to expanding the trails inventory to include information about trail length, difficulty, uses, and maintenance.	1 – 18 months
8	Consider Grey Sauble Conservation Authority’s risk management guidelines	1 – 18 months
9	That the County consider a process or agreement to work with mountain bikers to plan a biking system of trails after receiving County approval.	1 – 3 years
10	Develop a Grey County Trails Guide Booklet and consider developing an app for smart devices or look at coordinating with existing websites or services.	2 – 3 years
11	That the County identify portions of the trail system as designated for specific uses (e.g. mountain bike, hike, equestrian) on trail maps and signs, as per signage strategy and permitted uses by-law, to minimize conflict between trail users.	2 – 3 years
12	Work with municipalities in urban areas to increase trail presence and look for improvements.	2 - 3 years
13	That the County consider a process or agreement to work with mountain bikers to plan a biking system of trails after receiving County approval.	1 - 3 years

Table 4: Long Term (4–12 Years) Trail Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Target Timeframe
1	That the County review the feasibility of expanding uses within some of the County Forests	4 – 6 years
2	Review and update the Grey County Recreational Trails Master Plan.	7 – 12 years