

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	November 28, 2019
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-44-19
Title:	Recreational Trails Master Plan
Prepared by:	Sarah Johnson
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	

Recommendation

1. **That the draft Recreational Trails Master Plan (RTMP) be received and approved as presented; and**
2. **That staff be directed to implement the recommendations/action items identified in the RTMP based on the timeframes indicated and subject to budget approval.**

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 in May 2019 and now the final draft, the subject of this report.

The RTMP has been reviewed by the public, key stakeholders, agencies, and municipalities. There have been multiple meetings informal and formal including a public meeting held earlier this year. The comments received has assisted staff with finalizing the final draft of the RTMP and has helped to establish the recommended action items to tackle over the next few years. Staff are recommending approval of the RTMP and to start implementing the proposed recommendations/actions items subject to future budget approval.

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. Releasing the draft for review by the public, stakeholders, agencies, and municipalities, in order to seek comments and feedback. A public meeting was held on July 25, 2019 with a commenting period ending on August 23, 2019. Although it was not possible to accommodate all requests staff have created a document that creates a balanced approach between different user types and different areas.

Some of the highlights of the RTMP are that it has introduced evaluation criteria for new requests, either on existing trails or for new trails both on the CP Rail Trail and in County forest properties, this will greatly reduce the amount of time that it takes to get back to individuals or groups who come forward with a trail request and will also improve customer service.

Other changes would introduce the use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATV’s) up to Grey Road 18 from Sunny Valley Road, as well as the consideration of side-by-sides on the CP Rail Trail up to a maximum width of 54” (which is the current maximum width of ATV’s permitted on the trail). This width is based on the current design of the gates on the CP Rail Trail. Any wider than 54” would allow small vehicles (beyond just ATVs, such as automobiles) to be able to access the trail and would negate the purpose of the gates to prevent illegal trespassing of vehicles. Should the RTMP be approved, Staff would bring these changes forward through a revised agreement with the ATV Clubs in early 2020. The Plan also provides direction for signage, maintenance and monitoring.

The RTMP provides 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

The RTMP has identified action items for future projects and improvements to the County Forests and County Trails in order to improve the overall trail user experience. These action items would be implemented based on the suggested timeframes indicated in the RTMP and would 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

[Recreational Trails Master Plan - November 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 an ongoing program for improving/maintaining existing trails, as budget allows.	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
16	That the County consider a process or agreement to work with any interested users to plan a system of trails, where feasible.	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 that the County wants to promote and where possible work with partners	As necessary
2	That the County consider appropriate amenities and infrastructure upgrades for trails that are the County wants to promote and where possible work with partners	As necessary
3	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
4	That the County work with law enforcement agencies, municipalities, stakeholders with respect to permitted uses compliance on trails and reporting.	1 – 18 months
5	That the County develop a signage strategy including up-to-date, visible, effective and consistent trails signage system, 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 permitted and non-permitted trail uses. That the County commit to expanding the trails inventory to include information about trail length, difficulty, uses, and maintenance.	1 – 18 months
6	That the County consider risk management guidelines.	1 – 18 months
7	That the County develop a policy and procedure for hunting and trapping on County-owned lands.	1 - 3 years
8	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. 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
9	In municipalities where the CP Rail Trail traverses urban areas, work with the municipality to increase trail presence and look for opportunities for improvements.	2 - 3 years
10	That the County consider an Adopt a Trail program.	2 – 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