

Full Authority
18 May 2023
Agenda Item: 10

Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area Phase II Project

Background

The following information is provided from Agenda Items from the 17th of June 2021 and the 16th of June 2022 Board meetings.

17th June 2021, Agenda Item 13

Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area (CRCA) is 400 acres of pristine natural habitat located on the Crowe River. The property was purchased with the assistance of the Nature Conservancy of Canada and is situated at the transition zone between the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Canadian Shield. As a result of its geological makeup, the property supports a diverse biological range of flora and fauna.

Regrettably, 30+ years of abuse by a small group of ATV, campers and public individuals has taken its toll on the property. Garbage is regularly dumped on site, illegal camping and its associated refuse is left behind and ATVers have created a crisscross of trails scarring the landscape, especially close to the Crowe River. Campfires have been prevalent, broken glass from parties and the CVCA outhouse was burned down.

This collection of abusers of the natural property has also led to confrontations between those who visit Callaghan's for an opportunity to enjoy the environment and don't cause any harm.

This conservation area poses many issues since there are numerous access points including the Eastern Ontario Trail Alliance (EOTA) trail that crosses through the property. Efforts are underway to curtail this access point, however, there are other ways to enter the property for those who wish to avoid any penalties from using the EOTA Trail.

Efforts have been made by the CVCA in past years to curtail the illegal activities and this has had very limited success.

1. Signage is usually torn down or ignored.
2. Barriers along the access road worked for a short time until ATVs created access around them.
3. Private security companies have been hired for key weekends, but they are either ignored by the abusers and/or not enough weekends were under surveillance to have enough of an impact.
4. OPP patrols have also been conducted, but it was sporadic in the past.

Ongoing Efforts

Currently, a local volunteer (a Crowe River watershed enthusiast) with many years of other conservation authority volunteer experience has obtained my permission to actively implement the initial phase of a strategy to slow down the illegal activity and discourage the ATV use at CRCA. With two or three other volunteers, natural barriers are being built across the illegal path in the riparian zone alongside the Crowe River to discourage use and remove the thrill from their ride.

As well, a detailed report has been submitted to myself and is attached for the Board's consideration.

Essentially, the objective of the proposed additional work should help to curtail most of the motorized activity and direct people to get off their ATVs and enjoy the area as it envisioned. Stopping all of the ATVs all of the time is going to be an extremely difficult, expensive and resource consuming exercise that will be an ongoing "battle". The effort should be to eliminate destructive behavior as much as possible and make the experience for those who persist as unpleasant activity.

The result of the staff report and recommendation was the following Full Authority motion:

FA Motion G 64/21

Moved by: Jan O'Neill

Seconded by: Dan Bujas

To receive the barricade report and to release funds donated to CVCA for CRCA in the amount of \$7,000 to complete phase 1 (main parking lot) of the project and to direct staff to investigate future funding opportunities for phase two and next steps.

Carried

(A recorded vote was conducted – 8 members supported the vote and 2 members were absent from the meeting)

16 June 2022, Agenda Item 9

Update

- Progress continues to be made with securing the perimeter of Callaghan's Rapids, especially on the east side of the bridge that spans the Crowe River. Recently, the ATV access point on that side has been barricaded by volunteers.
- The CVCA is seeking a financial partner to assist with resolving unauthorized vehicular access to Callaghan's and has continued to engage with the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance (EOTA) regarding the barricade/parking lot for ATV's. The proposal (attached to the Agenda for your reference) was submitted to EOTA for their consideration and possible funding support.

- Recently, a discussion regarding the proposal was held with the General Manager of EOTA. The General Manager was reaching out to the CVCA to determine if a funding partnership was a viable option for the project. Like most organizations, partnerships are an excellent way to stretch funds and our response was the CVCA would be willing to partner with EOTA.
- The EOTA General Manager was pleased at the prospect and stated she would relay the information back to her Board.
- Since that conversation, staff recently received confirmation that EOTA has included the parking lot project in their workplan and would like to partner with the CVCA on a 50/50 split of the expenses.

Further Considerations

- As stated in the proposal, the projected expenditures are \$12,915.90.
- Recent increases to fuel will likely increase this estimate between \$14 to \$15,000.
- EOTA General Manager has stated if the project cost overruns exceed the original proposal, EOTA would cover the expenses.
- The CVCA's volunteers are willing to move as quickly as possible to complete the parking lot project. Some of the preliminary work has been undertaken already in preparation of a positive response such as identifying additional boulders on site and clearing access to the boulders.
- The CVCA has received donations from a private donor, which would cover the CVCA's portion of this project's expenses.

The result of the staff report and recommendation was the following Full Authority motion:

FA Motion G 57/22

Moved by: Jan O'Neill

Seconded by: Jim Martin

That the CVCA continue to foster a partnership with EOTA for the benefit of EOTA trail users while securing the access to Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area and;

That the CVCA Board release 50/50 matching funding in conjunction with EOTA's contribution to ensure the completion of the barricade/parking lot project as soon as possible in 2022.

Carried.

2023 Phase II Plans

Phase II plans are to continue to complete the work of safe ingress and egress to Callaghan's Rapids.

The Phase II plans include 1) reinforcing the barrier built in 2022 by adding additional concrete to "tie" the boulders into one unit to make it as difficult as possible to breach and 2) installing 3 gates to allow for controlled access to the area for the public and emergency personnel in addition to provide access for CVCA maintenance vehicles.

In total, based on the estimate submitted, the concrete work and the three gates would cost approximately \$6,500.

Most of the funding for these components of the Phase II plans have been secured through a generous donation received by the CVCA.

Please see the attached letter and budgetary requirements for further details.

Staff Recommendation

That the CVCA Board release the necessary funding from reserves to pay for the most of the Phase II plans (concrete work and the installation of two gates) as presented in this report and not to exceed the amount of the donation of \$5,000.

Board Decision

TP