



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. Info Item 2
Halifax and West Community Council
March 11, 2020

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Denise Schofield, Parks and Recreation

Original Signed

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 18, 2020

SUBJECT: Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan Annual Report

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- September 27, 2017 Advisory Committee meeting motion:
MOVED by Dusan Soudek, seconded by Beth McGee THAT the Western Common Advisory Committee recommends that the Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to report annually on progress towards the implementation of the Western Common Regional Park Master Plan, similar to a requirement to produce an annual report on steps undertaken with respect to the creation of the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED
- October 10, 2017 Halifax and West Community Council meeting motion:
MOVED by Councillor Zurawski, seconded by Councillor Walker THAT Halifax and West Community Council recommend Halifax Regional Council direct staff to report annually to Halifax and West Community Council on progress toward the implementation of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan, similar to a requirement to produce an annual report on steps undertaken with respect to the creation of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Regional Parks.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED
- October 31, 2017 Regional Council meeting motion:
MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Zurawski THAT Halifax Regional Council direct staff to report annually to Halifax and West Community Council on progress toward the implementation of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan, similar to a requirement to produce an annual report on steps undertaken with respect to the creation of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

- Section 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality
- Section 23 The Council may establish, by policy, citizen advisory committees which shall advise the Council, as directed by the Council

BACKGROUND

The Western Common Wilderness Master Plan (Master Plan) was adopted by Regional Council on June 15, 2010. On May 31, 2016, Regional Council established the Western Common Advisory Committee (WCAC) by Administrative Order 2016-001-GOV with the following responsibilities:

Duties of the Committee

6. The Committee shall monitor the phased development of the Western Wilderness Common and advise Council, through the Halifax and West Community Council, on the community perspective of the implementation of the Master Plan as follows:

- (a) the Committee shall advise Council on detailed planning and development of the Park;
and
- (b) the Committee shall advise Council on environmental sustainability in the Park, including:
 - (i) public access and wilderness recreation programming;
 - (ii) impact of land uses, within and adjacent to the Western Common, on the Park;
 - (iii) ecological diversity and connectivity;
 - (iv) cultural landscapes; and
 - (v) park operational matters

At the September 27, 2017 WCAC meeting, a motion was passed requesting staff to produce an annual report on the progress in implementing the Master Plan. The WCAC suggested the report outline: budget allocation; progress of trail construction; construction issues; and, whether there are issues related to operations, accessibility or the environment. Regional Council subsequently passed a motion requesting the annual report from staff.

DISCUSSION

The WCAC met four times in 2019 with a focus on trail construction, standards outlined in the Master Plan, and potential water crossings. In support of this work, consultant reports were prepared on a bridge crossing over Nichols Run, a watercourse between Nichols Lake and MacDonald Lake, and future trail construction (Attachment A).

Budget Allocation

Highlights of the capital budget for trail and bridge construction in the Western Wilderness Common include the following:

- \$54,555 (excluding tax) was awarded to WSP Consulting for the Nichols Run bridge crossing design, with funding provided from an already approved budget of approximately \$89,000;
- \$5,555 (excluding tax) was awarded to Cobequid Trail Consulting for a report on future trail work, with funding provided from the same already approved budget of approximately \$89,000;
- no additional funds for the Western Wilderness Common are proposed through the Parks and Recreation budget in 2020/21;

- there may be a possible allocation of funds for the Western Wilderness Common in 2021/22 associated with the District 11 Community Integration Fund, which is to be determined through community consultation¹; and
- in 2021/22, new funds are anticipated to be contained within a general account for recreation trails throughout the municipality from which future allocations for work in the Western Wilderness Common may be possible.

Trail Progress

Approximately 1,000 meters of trail has been constructed to date, which includes clearing, grubbing and gravels, but not to a finished state. This is to allow for continued access by vehicles and machinery for future trail construction. The trail work originates at the Prospect Road Community Centre and branches into two sections: one to a waterfall at the eastern edge of Nichols Lake and another to Nichols Run.

Construction Issues

Nichols Run Crossing

The WSP Consulting bridge crossing design work for Nichols Run began with field work in August 2019 and to date, has included:

- survey field work;
- survey drawings;
- geotechnical field work;
- hydraulic analysis field work; and
- preliminary bridge designs.

A draft report is anticipated to be reviewed by the WCAC in early 2020. This is a substantial crossing that will require a significant capital investment in future capital budgets, once the design is finalized.

Future Trail Development

Cobequid Trail Consulting is identifying the best trail route from the north side of Nichols Run to the Old Coach Road section, pursuant to the Master Plan. Several challenges associated with numerous identified watercourse crossings have already been identified and a report is to be presented to the WCAC in early 2020.

Operations, Accessibility and the Environment

On June 5, 2018, Regional Council directed staff to develop a terms of reference for background studies for future secondary planning for a proposed expansion of the Ragged Lake Industrial Park. This industrial development is envisioned within the Master Plan, but matters such as its size and interface with a revised Western Wilderness Common are to be determined. Staff will be providing the WCAC with information on this planning project including a year long study of natural systems in the area, which is to begin in February 2020.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this report.

¹ The Community Integration Fund represents funding for community initiatives because of new or expanded waste resource facilities in the area. The proposed capital budget identifies \$25,000 in 2020/21 for community consultation and \$300,000 in 2021/22 that is to be allocated between the Western Wilderness Common and Prospect Road Community Centre projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community engagement in the preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A Phasing of Nichols Lake Trail

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Gareth Evans, Recreation Planning Specialist, 902.292.1264
Richard Harvey, Manager of Policy and Planning, 902.476.5822

ATTACHMENT A | PHASING OF NICHOLS LAKE TRAIL

