

TO: The Chairman and Members
of the Board of Directors,
North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority

ORIGIN: Troy Storms, Manager Lands & Stewardship
Sue Buckle, Manager Communications & Outreach

DATE: October 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area Trail Proposal and
Update

Background

The Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area, (LECA) overlooking the City of North Bay, offers significant natural and heritage features attracting a variety of trail users hikers, dog walkers, photographers, naturalists, and families who enjoy a variety of four-season activities. It has a growing appeal to mountain bike users and has the potential to be developed as destination opportunity for eco-tourism regionally.

NBMCA engaged Alpine Bike Parks a trails specialist firm from British Columbia to inventory the existing trails, identify management and maintenance issues, and recommend a path forward.

It is important to mention that The LECA Trail Network Master Plan did not fully address an environment analysis of the trail density and its impact on the ecology of the escarpment, including trail density and the ecological sensitivities on the escarpment.

FRI Ecological Services was retained to conduct an environmental screening of the Alpine Bike Parks report with respect to the trails' impacts on existing natural heritage features from existing trail use, proposed trail improvements and proposed trail maintenance. This report was brought to the NBMCA board June 2016.

From information contained in these two reports, NBMCA developed the LECA Trails Proposal finalized in May 2018. This Proposal takes into consideration the existing trail usage, the desirable density, trail maintenance requirements, and environmental sensitivities.

This proposal recommends a trail network of approximately 18 km, density of 11.5 km/km², and the removal of trails from the ecologically sensitive areas. It incorporates a plan for multi-use cross country trails, downhill bike trails and a community bike park.

This proposal will help create increased opportunity for outdoor recreation, enhancing physical and mental health as well as an appreciation of the escarpment's natural environment. It can increase attraction to the LECA as an eco-tourism site, a destination for recreation and competitive mountain biking events, bringing economic stimulus to the region.

LECA trails traverses land owned by NBMCA, the City of North Bay, the Department of National Defense, and two private property owners. NBMCA staff have been working with DND and the private property owners to secure formal agreements which confirm the terms and conditions for use of these lands for trails. A letter of intent has been signed with one property owner, and others are in draft pending final approvals.

Analysis

NBMCA has made progress in securing agreements and letters of intent with the property owners and have the confidence needed to proceed with the process of finalizing the trail configuration and plan for trail development.

In the past year, the North Bay Mountain Bike Association (NB MBA) has formed and established a solid membership base. This volunteer group has proceeded to develop trails and a pump park on crown land with the permission of and appropriate permits from the crown. Staff have met with the NB MBA and have commenced discussions with NB MBA to assist in the development and maintenance of the LECA trails.

Given the scope and resourcing required to proceed with the LECA Trail development, a dedicated Project Coordinator would be an asset to move this project forward.

Next Steps

The Project Coordinator will oversee the finalization of the property owner agreements, the trail design, development of operational plans, engaging NB MBA and other partners, securing funding, and developing procedures for maintenance and ongoing operations.

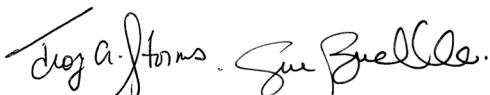
Attached is an overview of the process and plan for moving forward.

Conclusion

Public demand for the trails on the escarpment for biking and other recreation activities is high. NBMCA has developed a plan which recognizes the demand and respects the environmental sensitivities of the escarpment. Moving forward requires additional resourcing in the form of a Project Coordinator, with the financial support of stakeholders and partners to bring to fruition.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION:

That the Board of Directors receive the report, and Further direct staff to proceed with the process outlined for the development of the LECA trails.



Troy Storms, Manager Lands & Stewardship
Sue Buckle, Manager Communications & Outreach



Brian Tayler, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer



Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area Trail Proposal

Update – October 28, 2020

Initial Proposal (2011- 2020)

Action	Partners	Status	Timeline	Highlights
Public Consultations	NBMCA / public	Completed	Oct 2011 – Report to Board Nov 2011- Initial Town Hall Oct 2012 – Form Adv Cte June 2018 – Updated Trail Proposal August 2019 ongoing – North Bay Mountain Bike Association (NBMBA)	Gather input and feedback during Initial Proposal phase
Consultation with Property Owners	Public and Private Property Owners	Progress made towards agreements	2011 to present	New property owners, Environmental Assessment by DND, property swap
LECA Advisory Committee	Multi-stakeholder, variety of public users, City of North Bay	Provided advice through Initial Proposal Phase	Formed Nov 2012 Role to review reports, provide feedback; New members May 2018	Input contributed to identification of priorities, needs, trail proposal
LECA Draft Master Plan	Alpine Bike Partners	Complete – Board received.	May 2015	Overland trails, Downhill trails, Bike Pump Park
LECA Draft Master Plan - Environmental Screening Report	FRI Ecological Resources	Complete – Board received.	April 2016	ID Environmentally Sensitive Areas
LECA Trails Proposal	NBMCA	Complete – Board approved.	May 2018	Trail density 11.5 km/km ² (previous 17km/km ²) – draft trail configuration

Phase 2: Design & Implementation (2021-2023)				
Action	Partners	Status	Timeline	Highlights
Project Oversight	NBMCA : CAO/ Manager Lands & Stewardship/ Manager Communications & Outreach	Proposed Project Manager to coordinate project; 3 year position	January 2021- December 2023	Develop and implement 3 year workplan: Final trail design; Trail management statement; Communications plan; Funding/resourcing; Maintenance Plan Oversee construction EcoTourism opportunities
Agreements with Property Owners	Department of National Defense	Draft awaiting approval	DND Approval 4-6 months	5-year agreement; option to extend.
	Ski Ridge Estates	Draft in progress, awaiting solicitor comments		Richardson Ridge Trail only; no additional trails at this time.
	Nordfibre Company Golden Estates Ltd.	Letter of Intent Signed	Agreement to be formalized	Agreement requires final trail design
	City of North Bay	Formal permission pending		

Final Trail Design & Construction	FRI Ecological Resources	Flagging enviro sensitive lands		
	North Bay Mountain Bike Association (NB MBA)	Preliminary discussions about ongoing partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail configuration • Trail construction • Community engagement • Signage • Trail ambassadors • Ongoing maintenance 	August 2019 - ongoing	NBMCA initial discussions 2020; establish terms of reference / agreement
	Public via Community Outreach	Post/unveil final trail plan virtually, website	Initial plan posted on website; public meeting May 2018; ongoing public info	
Operational Plans	Project Coordinator NB MBA	Pending Project Coordinator appointment	2021/2022	Trail Management Statement; Funding, Communications, Maintenance, Signage, Ambassadors, Events
Maintenance & Operation	NBMCA in partnership with NB MBA	To be developed as part of work plan – year 3	Initial discussions with NB MBA Oct 2020	Trail ambassadors Maintenance Plan Multi-use
Support & Resourcing	NBMCA City of North Bay NB MBA Other stakeholders	Project Coordinator to coordinate; grants, partnerships, ongoing funding; ecotourism opportunities	2020-2023	Business Plan; Prioritize elements Consider special events;

LECA Trail Plan 2020-2023
Oversight/Coordination
 CAO / Manager Lands & Stewardship / Manager Communications
 *Project Coordinator (3 year/pending resourcing)

Resourcing/Support: NBMCA / City of North Bay / NBMBA / Grants / In-kind 2020-2023+

<p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DND – 4-6 m • Private Property Owners: 1 Letter of Intent Signed; 2nd pending legal review • City of North Bay • North Bay Mountain Bike Association 	<p>Final Trail Design and Construction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordinator • FRI Ecological • NBMCA • NBMBA • Community Partners 	<p>Operational Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordinator • NBMBA • Community Stakeholders • Other partners 	<p>Maintenance/ Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordinator • NBMBA • Volunteers
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2020-2021

2021 / 2022

2021/2022

2021/2022/2023

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • Requires final trail design • Terms vary 5 / 10 year terms with option of renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flag sensitive areas • Reroute trails around sensitive areas • Trail configuration to meet density goals • Respect multi-use • Plan for future events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Plan • Trail Management Statement (multi-use) • Funding Plan • Communications Plan • Signage, Volunteers • EcoTourism Business Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail Ambassadors • Annual Maintenance Plan • Special Events • Sustainability
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