



April 29, 2009

Dear FAC Member,

Re: Forest Master Plan and Advisory Committee Workshop Update

The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on the following:

1. Open House (March 26 2009)
 - o Motorcycle Trail Riders
2. Report to County Council regarding camping (April 28 2009)
3. The Métis Council of Northumberland
4. Next Forest Advisory Committee Work Shop
5. Next Steps before a final report on Trails and Hunting goes to County Council (July 15 2009)
6. Other business

- 1) Open House, Baltimore Community Center, March 26 2009

The Open House was a huge success with over 400 people attending! The format was drop in between 2 PM to 8 PM to view a series of 30+ display panels and take the opportunity to talk one-on-one with staff and consultants. There were comment sheets available which are currently being analyzed and compiled into a report. Of the 221 comment sheets submitted, 60 were from people who lived outside the County and largely referred to concerns with the motorcycle trail riding and hunting proposals. The remaining 161 comment sheets submitted were from people who live inside Northumberland County and covered a variety of uses including support for the horse, hiking and cycling trails and overall approach to implementing management in the Forest; however they were several comments which expressed concern over the motorcycle trail riding and hunting proposals. We hope to have some statistics on these comments before the next FAC work shop. Thank you to all of you who attended or helped spread the word, the turn out was far beyond what we expected!

- a. Motorcycle Trail Riders

There was a strong trail rider presence at the Open House. Staff had the opportunity to speak with many of them and provide back ground information which better explained the outcome for the motorcycle trail riding proposal (from what they had been told). Many of these riders, including the president of the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders (OFTR), stated that they would be willing to compromise on the single track trail network based on County staff's guiding factors and objectives for recreation when staff explained some of the adversarial nature of the previous meetings with the OFTR and Northumberland Trail Riders (NTR); the president of the OFTR offered to provide some new faces to revisit options for single track motorcycle trail riding. The NTR has since been in contact and a follow up meeting to discuss a compromise is scheduled for May 4th. Therefore there could be a new proposal at the next FAC work shop regarding this use.

2) Report To County Council regarding camping in the County Forest

Recent observations on weekend outings to the Forest by staff have found that there is a significant amount of weekend camping occurring. A large “tent city” was observed at the foundation on Dunbar, which included up to 10 tents, several BBQ’s and of course a campfire. The people were observed drinking alcohol and had one small “mud truck,” although no ATV’s or trail motorcycles were seen. They camped for at least 2 full days. Another camp was found to the east of Beagle Club Road and included patio stones and a makeshift port-a-potty, along with a campfire. As we are nearing the fire risk season, staff felt that immediate action was necessary to prevent such activities from occurring as the fires pose a severe threat to the Forest. Further these “open air fires” are in infraction of the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand’s “Open Air Burning By-Law 95-2001.” A report (attached) was prepared and presented at the special County Council session on April 28th 2009 where Resolution 137:04:09 was passed (attached, with a By Law to come) to ban camping in the County Forest, effective immediately. Six “No Camping” signs will be installed in the next 2 weeks. This will be enforceable by the O.P.P..

3) The Métis Council of Northumberland

The Métis Council of Northumberland approached Northumberland County at the Open House and requested that a thorough consultation be carried out prior to finalizing any recommendations on the County Forest at County Council. The Métis Council indicated that the County would be obligated to undergo extensive consultation with them to ensure their rights to the land were not being negatively impacted. An article in Northumberland News followed, prior to a meeting with County staff which occurred on April 8th 2009. Communication between staff and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has concluded that while we are not obligated by legislation to undertake a consultation process with the Métis Council we are strongly encouraged to provide a forum for discussion to address concerns in regards to the Forest Master Plan. The County does not see any of the current trails and hunting proposals as creating a negative impact on the Métis people of Northumberland. We are preparing an information package for them and will report back to you prior to finalizing the recommendations for County Council.

4) Next Forest Advisory Committee Work Shop

We last indicated that May 14th 2009 would be the next work shop, however due to the volume of work we are experiencing, the FAC work shop will be held on **Thursday, JUNE 11th 2009 at 7 PM at the County Building (Council Chambers).** The purpose of the next FAC will be to review the proposals in their final form as preparation for the report to Council. Staff had previously indicated that we would like to survey and have one-on-one meetings with all FAC stakeholders. Due to time constraints we are now considering combining stakeholder meetings per interest and shared trail use. I will update you as soon as possible, thank you for your patience on this matter.

5) Next Steps before the final trails and hunting report goes to County Council

A meeting is scheduled with Dr. Marsh to discuss the finalization of the Trail Study report. Dr. Marsh will join us at the next FAC along with the facilitation team. A meeting is scheduled with the Township of Alnwick-Haldimand to discuss the Forest Master Plan’s Trail and Hunting proposals as well as road allowances and enforcement.

6) Other business

The facilitator's FAC website has been terminated; you will now find a message which indicates the work shops we have had to date, ending at the Open House. Please continue to use the County's Forest website for all reports, updates, calendar of events etc.

The summary from the February 26 2009 work shop is complete (and attached) as well as posted online. Those of you on the mailing list will receive hard copies shortly; others can certainly contact me to request a hardcopy as we know these are exceptionally large files.

The prescribed burn occurred on April 15th 2009 in the North East corner of the Forest (near Pratt and Dunbar) with great success. The ongoing restoration of tall grass prairie and savannah remnants is contributing largely to a landscape approach to preserve this globally rare habitat and the species which depend on it. Visit the Rice Lake Plains section of the County forest website for more information.

In closing, as always, Bill Pyatt and I are available to address questions, concerns and ideas you may have as we finalize the trails and hunting components of the Forest Master Plan. I will be in touch again soon.

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Encl. (2).