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Info Item 1
Halifax and West Community Council
October 9, 2018

TO: Chair and Members of the Western Common Advisory Committee

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY:

Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation

-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 17, 2018

SUBJECT: Annual Report re Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan

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

- *HRM Charter*, Section 79 (1) including (k) recreational programs and (x) lands and buildings required for a municipal purpose

- *HRM Charter*, 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 Common 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 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 programing;
 - (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 meeting of the WCAC, a motion was passed requesting staff to produce an annual report on the progress of the implementation of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan. The Committee 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 such an annual report from staff.

DISCUSSION

The focus of work in 2017/18 in implementing the Master Plan has been in the construction of trails. The WCAC met six times in the last year and reviewed matters outlined below.

Budget Allocation

The Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan recommended that regular funding be allocated towards the implementation of the plan and as such, \$50,000 has been included in annual capital budgets. In 2017, construction was tendered for Phase 1B and this section of trail was constructed by Cobequid Construction (Attachment A). In 2018, construction continued with Phase 1C which includes consulting design for a bridge crossing at Nichols Run. At the time of this report, \$100,000 is available in reservation for Phase 1C. Funding for bridge design will come from the \$100,000 reservation and any remaining funds will carry forward for continued construction of the trail.

Trail Progress

To date, 1900 metres of trail has been cleared, grubbed and surged (large rock fill). Mulch and gravel has been placed on one branch of the trail, however, due to it also being the access for construction, the trail cannot yet be finished and opened to the public. The date for accessing this trail is to be determined, based on the rate of construction and feasibility of creating a separate access point for construction.

Staff considered the option of being able to complete and open a section of trail by creating a new access point from a local subdivision for the construction, but determined that the safety concerns related to conflicts between public use of the trail and ongoing construction could not be mitigated. Consequently, the

existing access point behind the Prospect Road Community Centre remains, and the small section of trail remains unfinished.

WCAC members have provided considerable input regarding trail specifications. Amendments to the Master Plan were proposed with the hope of expanding the trail width from six to ten feet in certain sections to support cycling. However, the WCAC decided to adhere with the proposed six-foot-wide trail as per the Master Plan to maintain as much of the natural setting as possible. Members also provided their input regarding the 'barrier free' determination of the trail system.

Construction Issues

Based on their awareness of the community, trails, and the current usage of the Western Common, the WCAC has discussed the construction timeline of the trail development. Trails are being constructed to ensure there is as little disruption to the environment and wilderness state of the park as possible. As a result, larger equipment cannot be used to clear the trail, making the construction of the trail slower and to some degree more cumbersome. These issues have been considered, but the need to preserve the natural setting has outweighed the slower construction.

Operations, Accessibility and the Environment

Illegal dumping can be problematic in some areas of HRM so staff monitor sites as much as possible. The Western Common is not exempt from this issue and Parks & Recreation staff work to mitigate this on a regular basis. Awareness of the site being a municipal park has increased and as construction continues, there will be greater ability for it to be monitored on an increased basis.

Accessibility has been addressed in the Master Plan, however, the standards for accessibility continue to evolve. Initially the trail was defined as 'barrier free', however, the construction of this trail, following the natural topography does not allow for a fully 'barrier free' trail to be constructed. The concern is related to the grade of the trail, based on the natural topography. Consequently, the trail is being designed and built to achieve as many barrier-free standards as are practically possible. On sections of trail which exceed the grade standards, rest points, benches, and supports are being added.

With regards to the environment, staff's objective in implementing the Master Plan is to maintain as much of the natural setting as possible. This objective is being achieved through trail construction which is being done in a manner that minimizes disturbance of natural features.

Next Steps

As noted, the next phase of trail construction requires a design of a bridge to cross Nichols Run. The bridge construction is challenging; consequently, it could increase the cost of the next phase of work or reduce the length of trail that can be completed. The implementation of this phase is being assessed by staff and will include input from the WCAC.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this report. Funding is allocated in the capital budget for the construction of the trail and overall implementation of the master plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community engagement in the preparation of this report. Extensive consultation occurred in the development of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan and the Advisory Committee includes members of the public.

ATTACHMENTS


Attachment A Phasing map 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.

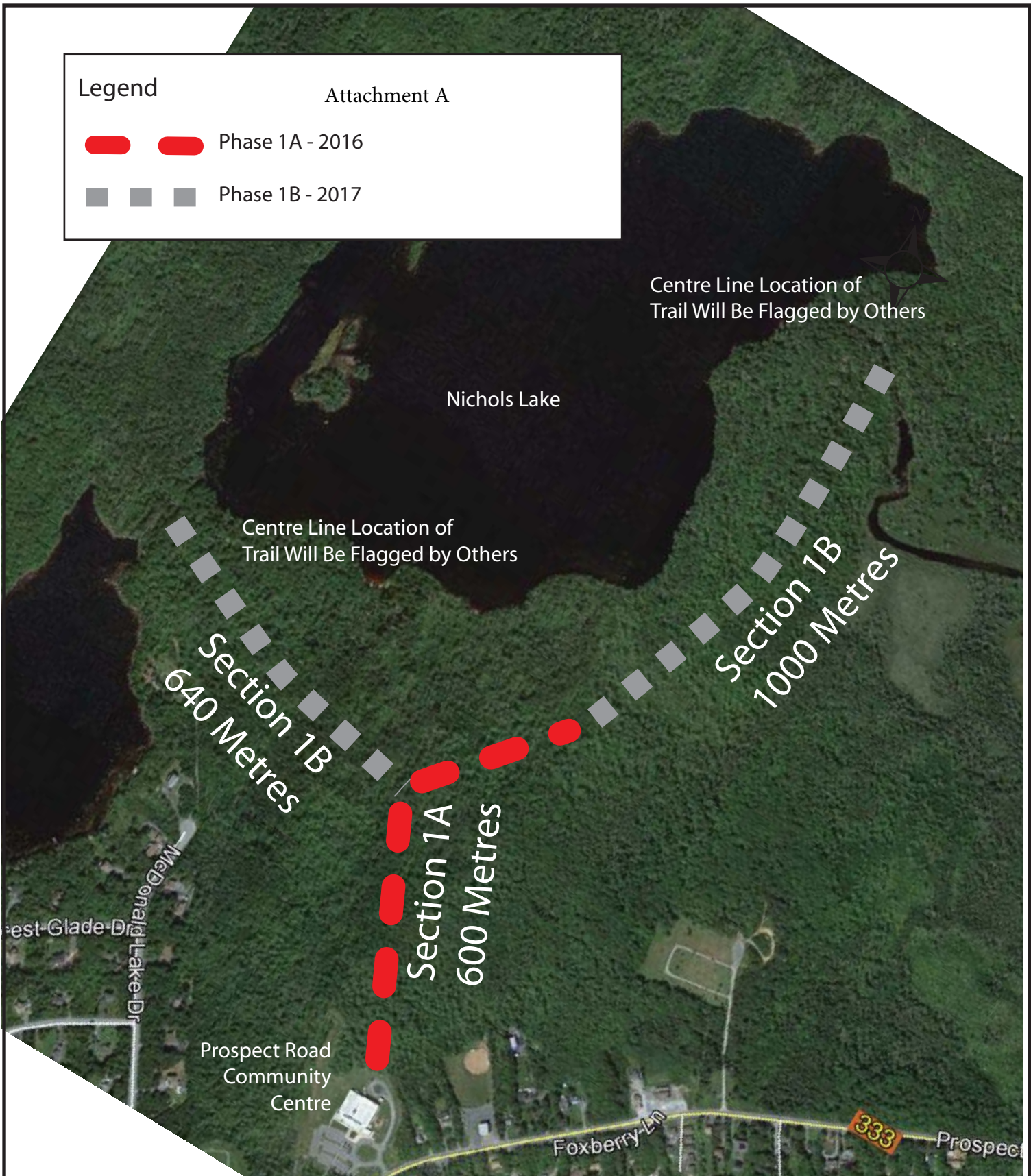
Report Prepared by: Gareth Evans, Recreation Planning Specialist, 902.292.1264

Legend

Attachment A

  Phase 1A - 2016

   Phase 1B - 2017



Project: Nichols Lake Trail
2141 Prospect Road, Halifax, N.S.

HALIFAX

Title: Trail Location & Distances

Scale: N.T.S

Drawn By:

Tender No:

Date:

Approved