

Orienteering in Point Pleasant Park

I'm Pam James, Board member of the Orienteering Association of Nova Scotia.

Orienteering Nova Scotia has identified Point Pleasant Park as a potential area for orienteering in HRM. If you're not familiar, orienteering is an activity where participants travel on foot using a map to navigate between various checkpoints (controls) in a natural area with no set route. It's a full-immersion experience that builds a true appreciation of the beauty and value of our natural resources.

To properly orienteer in an area it is necessary for us to map it to orienteering specifications. These maps usually start with LiDAR data from local sources and are finished with detailed fieldwork by an experienced orienteering mapper who maps detail including vegetation types, human-made features and even rock features and large boulders. Having these maps created is a large capital investment for us as a Provincial Sport & Recreation Organization. As such, we wanted to obtain permission for use prior to making such an investment.

The first Orienteering event in Nova Scotia was held in Point Pleasant Park in 1970. At one time there was a permanent course in the Park. The park had been used for many events and training before Hurricane Juan. Post-Juan off-trail travel was prohibited in the park. As over 17 years have passed, I wanted to inquire about it now.

I wanted to give the following context of the environmental impacts of orienteering activities:

- Infrequent use. Each park and natural area is used at most twice a year, and typically less than once per year. Our events see an average of 30 participants, with our most popular events having up to 90 participants.
- Temporary objectives. In most cases, all navigational checkpoints (controls) are placed in the morning and retrieved the same afternoon, eliminating any chance of long-term foot traffic.
- Route splitting. Total participants in an event are divided among three to seven different courses. These courses use different controls or common controls in a different order, participants select individual routes to the various controls, significantly reducing the likelihood of repeat foot traffic between controls even during the event. The easier level courses typically use established trails for navigation (not off-trail).

- Park manager input. Determine sensitive areas that must be marked out-of-bounds for environmental reasons and other areas more suitable for off-trail navigation.
- Informed participants. Every participant carries and uses a detailed map of the park, including all out-of-bounds areas. Orienteers observed in restricted areas are automatically disqualified.

Together, these make orienteering a uniquely low-impact activity. Yet, the overall impact is greater than zero. Individuals selecting the most efficient route through the park may gravitate toward an existing social trail, if it goes the right direction. Ground coverage trampling near some controls can be visible up to two weeks later. Main trails that start out muddy can become muddier if a lot of participants run through them on overlapping courses.

For more information please see the link below to the International Orienteering Federation Environment and Sustainability page:

<https://orienteering.sport/iof/environment-and-sustainability/>

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions or if there are other stakeholders I should contact. I look forward to hearing from you about orienteering activities in the park.

Pam James

Orienteering Association of Nova Scotia

Point Pleasant Park



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Map makers

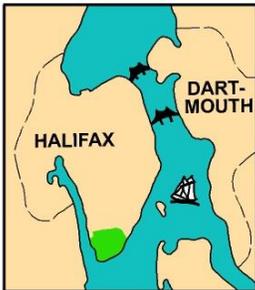
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A Heron's Nest



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|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Paved road | | Contour, slope line | | Out of bounds area |
| | Road, footpath | | Form line | | |
| | Small footpath | | Hill, knoll | | |
| | Fence, stone wall | | Depression, pit | | |
| | High fence, railroad | | Pond, water hole | | |
| | Building, ruin | | Stream, marsh | | |
| | Cliff, boulder | | Uncrossable river | | |
| | Charcoal pit, special feature | | Narrow marsh | | |
| | Stoney ground | | Distinct vegetation boundary | | |
| | Boulder field, cluster | | Open land, rough open land | | |
| | Parking area | | Open land with scattered trees | | |
| | Private property | | Forest run | | |
| | | | Forest difficult to run | | |
| | | | Forest difficult to walk | | |