

Intro for 9.2.1 Holly Woodill: ATVs on Trailways April 20 2023

Community Trail Groups are Registered Non-Profit Organizations and/or a Registered Canadian Charitable Organization that have the organizational objectives:

- to develop, build and maintain trails and park lands
- protect the surrounding environment of the trails, which includes all flora and fauna
- education of the general public regarding the benefits of active living through the use of recreational trails and related programs
- the promotion of active transportation and the safe use recreational trails and trail etiquette
- involve the community in the trails for the safe enjoyment of all

The Shearwater Flyer Trail was a former rail line extending from the Salt Marsh Trail in Cole Harbour to Main Ave/Corsair Dr in Eastern Passage. The trail crossed over mostly provincial land but ended in Shearwater Eastern Passage by crossing DND property.

The original community consultation phase invited the public as always to meetings and surveys which indicated the immediate community preferred non-motorized trails. Until the last public meeting where motorized users came from all over the province to demand a motorized trail. Cole Harbour Parks & Trails Assoc was swarmed, and the Shearwater Flyer was developed as a motorized trail.

The history of maintaining this stretch of trail was costly for the organization in repairing trail damage by, attempting to protect adjacent private property, the loss of turtle nesting areas, damage to wetlands, watercourses, barrens and the creation camps on protected and on private lands (without permission). Three times in the history of the trail forest fires at least two of which cause homes to be evacuated were traced back to these camps. The garbage cleanup from illegal camps, done for private landowners involved trailers and truckloads to be hauled out.

Repairing trail sides, surface, bridge work, garbage and facility added up in monetary costs in the tens of thousands of dollars and the toll on the volunteers. The public non-motorized users were also being harassed by motorized hooligans and the treatment was worse if you even appeared to have a trail steward vest on or identified as CHPTA Volunteer.

CHPTA asked that the Shearwater Flyer Trail be made non-motorized active transportation trail. There were public surveys and consultations by CHPTA and the Provincial Gov. The survey was released to the motorized community prior to CHPTA being informed and we had to promote the survey when we found out about its release weeks later. A frustrating process that led to just over 80% of the population preferring or demanding the Shearwater Flyer Trail become non-motorized. The DNRR Provincial Gov concluded the results were inconclusive the

community was split. The survey was shared province wide with the motorized community including the postal codes to indicate that you lived within the community.

CHPTA asked the province to remove motorized from the designated permitted use on the Shearwater Flyer Trail for public safety, excessive financial burden on the community group, and the taxing the volunteers. CHPTA campaigned for well over a year – before giving the province the decision that CHPTA would relinquish the Letter of Authority for the Shearwater Flyer Trail on Dec 31 2022.

The province looked to ATVANS and the Marine Riders Trail Assoc who ‘manage the Blueberry Run Trail along the Eastern Shore. They are the same group who have seen their trail become all but impassable to anyone without a 4-wheel drive or ATV. The causeway no longer exists and they stated for years on social media they preferred it this way, no walkers no bicycles.

They say they have changed. Here is the most recent post in social media of how they treat trails and the environment, public lands.

https://www.facebook.com/reel/3064832730488841/?s=group_other

The celebrated video clearly shows the illegal abuse of public lands and trails unsafe for other users with the destruction of wilderness/environment.

The ‘public consultation’ held and lead by Barbara Adams MLA for the Marine Riders Trail Assoc as a public engagement meeting on Feb 16 2023.

They asked for volunteers to help them in the area. Groups were not invited to take on the Shearwater Flyer Trail, nor invited.

No one was allowed to ask questions at the meeting. We could submit questions to the Marine Riders Trail Assoc, who had not been awarded the LOA until March 8th. Consultation for LOAs used to take at least a full year.

Some community members were warned not to attend as it would not be in their best interest. Including myself and I was finally convinced to be anonymous. It was a sham of a ‘public meeting’, they were only looking for ATVNS members and motorized users to signup as volunteers. They held another meeting at the Buffalo Club in Cow Bay on March 19 to encourage motorized only members to volunteer from the area and it was another closed meeting. Reportedly not getting the local support they were counting on...

Please understand, not all motorized trail groups or communities behave this way.

St Margaret’s Bay Rail to Trails Assoc and Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Trail Assoc have been successful with integrating motorized and non-motorized users on trails. It was a struggle. Not everyone is happy about Shared Trails. We can not please everyone. Understand that not all trails can be everything to everyone. Trails, parks and greenspaces should be safe places to be enjoyed by all. They should also be the vehicle that is used to protect the shores, wetlands,

watercourses, forests and fields. They should be safe for the users and residents – from the lowly lichens, plodding people to the soaring sharp shinned hawks.

Active Transportation Trails should be ACTIVE PEOPLE POWERED – but above all else SAFE.