

Halifax North West Trails Association

Report from the Chair – 12 June 2016

Key activities which form part of every year for HNWTA are the Capital and Maintenance projects, funds for which we obtain through proposals submitted to HRM via Halifax Regional Trails in September each year. Believe it or not, we are still working on our Capital project for 2014-15 which involves a Functional Plan for the Mainland Linear Trail. We looked at possible extensions of the trail both to the south (across Highway 102 and linking to the Chain of Lakes Trail) and the north (across Kearney Lake Rd and following the waterline trail to Larry Uteck Blvd). In addition, we looked at potential neighbourhood connections at various locations and a variety of amenities such as benches, lighting, way-finding signage and toilets. Much of the project was contracted out to WSP which, with HRM and HNWTA, hosted an Open House at the Canada Games Centre in September 2015. Early in 2016 we received a draft report on which we made many comments. A second draft has just been received and we will be commenting on this one as well. Meanwhile, many Board members have met recently with Halifax Regional Trails to discuss various projects for consideration in the coming year.

Our Maintenance funding for 2015-16 went towards extensive restoration of the wood chips on the 1-km loop trail in Mainland Common. In addition, we extended a couple of the boardwalks over wet areas and installed risers on the sides of most of the boardwalks and look-off area as a method of enhancing accessibility to users with vision problems.

The Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area Trail Plan was completed in late 2015 after the second Open House in September followed by approval by DNR and NS Environment shortly thereafter. Our partners in this plan, Maskwa and CPAWS, are moving the Plan into a Trail Construction Phase through fund-raising and development of a management plan.

Other more modest activities included:

- installation and filling of a total of 4 doggy bag dispensers at various trailheads
- installation of additional trailhead signs and posts where needed
- a new print run of our trails brochure
- an update and reprinting of the Belchers Marsh brochure
- a presentation hosted by the Keshen Goodman Library in September which introduced our local trails to the 30-35 who attended.

- A Maintenance proposal for 2016-17 was submitted in September 2015 and is in the process of being approved now. No Capital proposal was made since the Linear Trail Functional Plan was still in progress.
- counting trail users on the Linear Trail near Westridge Dr. Well over 80,000 users were counted during the last full year.
- guided walks were led to Blue Mountain in October 2015 (30 participants) and two in May 2016 around Belchers Marsh (Jane's Walk and Halifax Field Naturalists field trip – total of 34 participants, many of whom had never been on the trail previously)
- several of us tended a display at Open Forest Day along the trails of Maskwa Aquatic Club. Over 600 attended and we talked to many of them
- board members of HNWTA along with some of the 50+ other OurHRMAlliance members participated in the Green Network Plan by indicating which areas are worthy of protection and could form part of the Greenbelt. One in particular would be BMBCL Regional Park, only part of which exists now.
- we continue to attend public consultations relating to development proposals in our area; these include Rockingham South along Dunbrack Ave, sub-areas 7 & 8 in Bedford West, the extension of Regency Dr and the Motherhouse lands. Our aim is to insure that public trails are included in all new developments and that special ecological features are protected.
- we participated in the annual clean-up at Belchers Marsh, held this year on Earth Day, April 23. In all, 40 bags of trash were collected – amazing!!
- We are members of NS Trails, which provides access to insurance, Hike NS and HRTA, which provides access to HRM funding for Capital and Maintenance projects.

Our Board members have been busy:

Mike Basford attends Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) meetings. HRTA is the umbrella group to which all community-based trail groups belong. There are about 20 such groups in HRM.

Doug van Hemessen oversees the web site, updates it when necessary, liaises with our host immediaC from time to time and has been sending out the newsletters and notices to members and contacts, via the web site.

Frank Gibson bravely took on the Treasurer's duties in October/November of 2015 and will be presenting the financial reports to you, to HRTA and the Registry of Joint Stocks. Frank also served as the Membership Committee, a job he took on before he assumed the Treasurer's position.

Susan Nasser is our new Secretary with a very tough job trying to capture the essence of the discussions at the regular Board meetings. Susan has also been willing to staff displays at the Canada Games Centre Food Run and a more recent Volunteer Event also at CGC.

Chris Redmond joined the Board during the year and then took on the awesome task of compiling and organizing the input from all Board members on the WSP draft report on the Linear Trail. Turns out we had a lot to say!! That was a trial by fire for Chris!

Sharon Gibson can always be counted on to come up with a food contribution for our monthly board meetings and served as the Nominations Committee for this meeting. I believe that Sharon has also agreed to be our future events coordinator.

Wendy serves as Past-Chair but also as our Writer-in-Residence since she has been preparing regular articles for publication in the Parkview News as well as periodic newsletters for distribution to those on our contact list and for posting on the web site. She is also involved with Walk 'n Roll, attempting to improve walkability in our community and attends monthly meetings of Engage Mainland North, a community round table.

David Richey, although recently retired, is one very busy guy. He remains very involved with the CARP Environment Committee and is still discovering new trails in our area. He made very extensive and detailed comments on the Linear Trail Functional Plan and continues to bring thoughtful comments to all our Board meetings.

In addition we have some other projects underway:

- an interpretive panel or two for installation at the Mill Run trailhead in Bedford is in the design stage
- there has been a delay in working with our volunteer accountant in the submission of income tax forms and HST rebate forms from 2012 to present
- we need to work on a guided hike schedule for summer and fall hikes so we can carry on a tradition of past years. (If there are places you would like to hike to, just let us know)

- we are working to update and replace the two interpretive panels at Belchers Marsh and the one at the top of Westridge Dr at the entrance to Mainland Common Park
- also underway is the design and installation of 2 additional map panels within Mainland Common. We have experienced considerable delays since our lines of communication in working with the municipality have been problematic

And that is my Annual Report! Thank you.

Bob McDonald