



Planning & Building Department

To: Community Development Committee

Subject: Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project: Update Report on 2010 Activity and 2011 Work Program

Report Number: PB-19/11

File Number: 502-02-54

Report Date: February 7, 2011

Wards Affected: 1

Date to Committee: March 7, 2011

Date to Council: March 21, 2011

Recommendation: None. Update for information only.

Purpose:

- Address goal, action or initiative in strategic plan
- Establish new or revised policy or service standard
- Respond to legislation
- Respond to staff direction
- Address other area of responsibility

Reference to Strategic Plan:

Managed Growth	Protect the escarpment lands, the rural countryside, prime agricultural land and the <i>Greenbelt</i> from urban development.
Environmental Stewardship	Continue to co-ordinate and expand on environmental stewardship efforts with community and regional partnerships.

Background:

Purpose of Cootes to Escarpment Park System

The foundation for the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project is the unique ecological corridor from Cootes Paradise marsh to the Niagara Escarpment. This south-facing protected microclimate contains six environmentally significant areas and creates ideal habitat for a wide diversity of species.

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System is intended to link together and manage the 1,500 hectares of natural areas owned by eight different agencies and organizations including the City of Burlington. The Vision for the Park System is that it will be known internationally as a protected, permanent and connected natural lands sanctuary from the Bay to the Escarpment that promotes ecosystem and human health within Ontario's Greenbelt.

Partner Agencies

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project is a collaborative process involving:

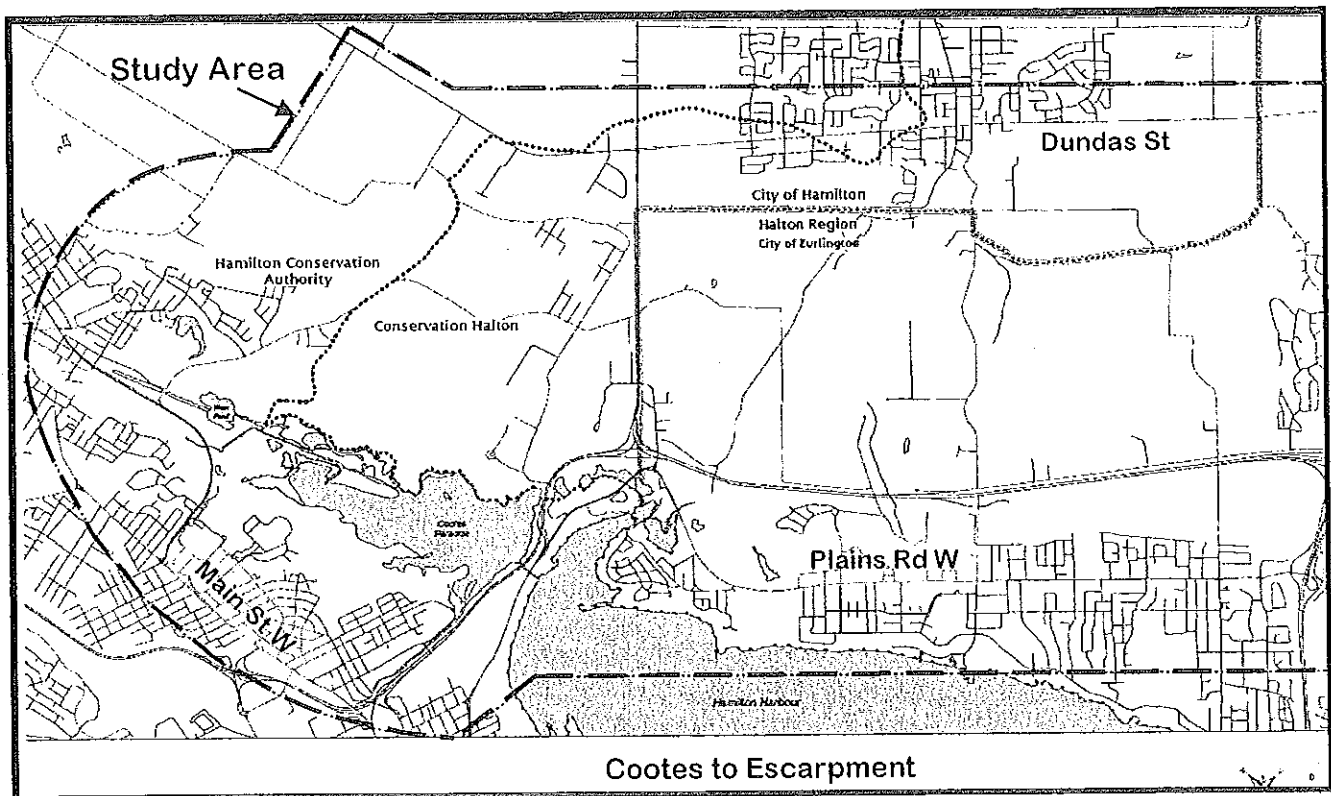
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Conservation Halton
- City of Burlington
- Hamilton Conservation Authority
- City of Hamilton
- Halton Region
- Hamilton Naturalists' Club
- Bruce Trail Conservancy
- Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan Office.

**Council Direction
February 1, 2010**

On February 1, 2010 Council adopted the following resolution:

"Endorse the "Cootes to Escarpment Parks System: A Conservation and Land Management Strategy" Final Report; and

Direct staff to collaborate with partner agencies and landowners to complete the implementation actions required to secure the foundation of a Cootes to Escarpment Park System."



Update Report

This information report provides an update on the activities of the Cootes to Escarpment Project Steering Committee in 2010 and a look ahead at the work plan for 2011.

Discussion:

2010 Project Milestones:

Approval and Official Project Launch

The vision and mission of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project was approved in principle by all of the project partners in late 2009 and early 2010, including Burlington Council as noted above.

The official launch of the project was held at the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) on February 6, 2010 and was attended by representatives of the partner agencies, including Burlington's Mayor and the Regional Chair. This event was also an opportunity to thank and recognize the 28 members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee who met frequently over the course of the project to provide input and advice to the partner agencies.

Project Terms of Reference

The Cootes to Escarpment Steering Committee, which includes the nine project partners, continue to guide the project. Rosalind Minaji, Coordinator of Development Review in the Planning and Building Department, is the current City of Burlington representative on the Steering Committee.

Project Terms of Reference were approved by the Steering Committee on July 5, 2010 to provide a structure for ongoing work. These Terms of Reference make clear that the actions of the Steering Committee will not assume or supersede the responsibilities of individual landowners, including project partners, to protect, restore and manage natural lands in the Park System.

The Terms of Reference are a working document and will be updated from time to time to ensure that they continue to reflect the aims, roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee.

Project Recognition

On April 19, 2010 MPP Ted McMeekin made a statement to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to highlight the importance of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System and offer his support to the Project.

On May 30, 2010, the Cootes to Escarpment Project was awarded the 2009 Ian Shenstone Fraser Memorial Award from Ontario Nature.

In addition, RBG's Dr. David Galbraith, the Chair of the Project Steering Committee, was awarded the 2009 Dr. Victor Ceciloni Environmentalist of the Year Award by the Hamilton Conserver Society in recognition of his work on several initiatives including the Cootes to Escarpment Project.

Friends of the Greenbelt Funding

Through much of 2010, the Steering Committee worked to secure funding which would allow the project to gain momentum. In August, the Cootes to Escarpment Parks System Project was awarded \$50,000 in renewed grant funding from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation (an initial grant of \$185,000 was awarded in 2007).

Ontario Trillium Foundation Funding

In November, the Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded the project \$149,800 over two years to support the development of a governance structure, land securement strategy, and communications and marketing strategy. This funding was officially announced at a media launch in January 2011.

Collaborative Project Agreement

In order to make application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a Collaborative Project Agreement was drafted and signed by the project partners in June. This Agreement states that the parties seeking funding from the Trillium Foundation have agreed to collaborate to achieve the vision of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System through the cooperation of the parties and other organizations interested in working together to build capacity and opportunities to protect nature, enhance ecological restoration and ensure sustainable and appropriate recreational uses on protected properties owned by the parties.

The RBG is the Lead organization in this collaborative application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, taking responsibility for overall project and financial management. All parties in the project will employ a shared leadership approach to undertake key project activities.

Project Manager

The Friends of the Greenbelt funding was used to support the position of a half-time Project Manager for one year in order to provide staff resources and initiate the development of a land securement strategy for lands within the Park System. The Trillium Foundation grant has allowed the Project Manager position to be increased to a full time position for two years.

Project Manager Deborah Herbert started work in September 2010. She will support the Steering Committee in developing work plans, fundraising, community engagement, communications and events, and developing and implementing Project activities. Ms Herbert's office is located at the RBG Centre on Plains Road as an in-kind contribution by the RBG to the project.

Community Engagement

A project web site has been created: www.cootestoescarpment.ca and a Facebook page launched. The web site contains copies of the Cootes to Escarpment Report as well as media releases and contact information. A large retractable banner for the project has been created for use at conferences and events.

In October a hike was organized for members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee in order to help re-engage the public in the project.

2011 Project Work Plan:

Governance

Trillium Foundation funding will be used to support the creation and implementation of a governance model for ongoing collaboration between the project partners.

Evaluation criteria and potential governance models will be developed over the next six months with assistance from the Project Manager, with an implementation plan to be approved in the Fall.

Land Securement Strategy

One of the primary goals of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project is to connect and expand the existing green space in the Project area. In 2011, the Steering Committee will be developing and implementing a Land Securement Strategy to help achieve this goal.

This Strategy will include an assessment and recommendations for the

conservation of each of the potential additional park lands identified in the Final Report. It will also include a strategy for promoting stewardship on properties adjacent to park system lands.

The firm of Orland Conservation has been retained to assist in the development and implementation of the Land Securement Strategy.

Community Engagement

Funding through the Trillium Grant will be used to develop a formal communications and marketing plan for 2011 and beyond. This plan will be used to enhance public awareness, commitment and support for the Park System vision and implementation actions.

The Cootes to Escarpment Project will be featured at a March 2011 international greenbelts conference in Toronto. A site tour is being organized as a mobile workshop for conference participants.

A community event is tentatively planned for April to kick-start the development of a brand and logo for the project.

Financial Matters:

Project Funding

The ongoing activities of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project are funded through a \$50,000 grant from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and a \$149,800 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Future Costs

Any City of Burlington financial commitments (other than staff time), required for the implementation of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System will be subject to future Council approval.

Environmental Matters:

Ecological Importance of Park System

Many parts of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System are recognized as Provincial Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, Regional Environmentally Significant Areas and Provincial Wetlands.

The natural areas within the Park System contain some of the most botanically rich lands in Canada and provide habitat for many important bird, reptile and amphibian, fish and insect species, including many species at risk. Overall, 1,582 species of flora and fauna have been documented through biological inventories of the study area.

Conclusion:

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System will link together 1,500 hectares of natural areas owned by eight different agencies and organizations. By continuing to support the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project, Council is committing to a shared vision for the stewardship of this important and unique natural system.

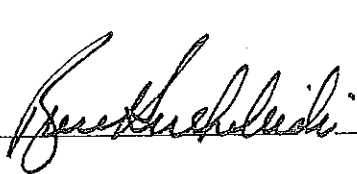
Respectfully submitted,



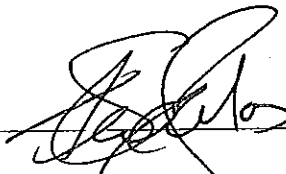
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Approvals:

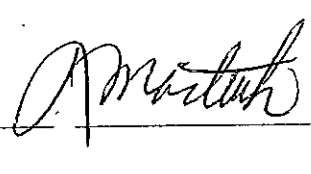
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City Treasurer



General Manager

City Manager

To be completed by the Clerks Department	
Committee Disposition & Comments	
	01-Approved 02-Not Approved 03-Amended 04-Referred 06-Received & Filed 07-Withdrawn
Council Disposition & Comments	
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