



# Conservation Advisory Board Meeting Agenda

Thursday, October 10, 2019



# **Notice of Meeting**

## **Conservation Advisory Board**

**Thursday, October 10, 2019**

**4:00 p.m.**

**at HCA Main Office, 838 Mineral Springs Road, Ancaster, ON**

- 1. Chairman's Remarks** – Terryberry
- 2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest**
- 3. Delegations**
- 4. Approval of Agenda**
- 5. Member Briefing**
  - 5.1. Ecological Monitoring Program – Lesley McDonell & Colin Oaks
- 6. Chairman's Report on Board of Directors Actions** – Terryberry
  - CA1922 Cootes to Escarpment Update and Management Plan Report
- 7. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**
  - 7.1. Minutes – Conservation Advisory Board (August 8, 2019) – Terryberry
- 8. Business Arising from the Minutes**
  - 8.1. Westfield Christmas 2020 Ticket Purchase Pilot – Rondalyn Brown & Christina Jager
- 9. Staff Reports/Memorandums**
  - 9.1. Visitor Management & Vehicle Parking Review – Costie/Hall
  - 9.2. Saltfleet CA Wetland Design – Verbal Update – Peck
  - 9.3. Upcoming HCA & Partner Events – Costie
- 10. New Business**

**11. Next Meeting – Thursday, December 12, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.**

**12. Adjournment**

# **HAMILTON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

## **Conservation Advisory Board**

### **MINUTES**

**August 8, 2019**

Minutes of the Conservation Advisory Board meeting held on Thursday, August 8, 2019 at Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area commencing at 4:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

**Maria Topalovic, Chair  
Lloyd Ferguson  
Cheryl Larocque  
Wayne Terryberry**

**Cynthia Janzen  
Duke O'Sullivan**

**REGRETS:**

**John Barkovic, Lydia Cartlidge, Joanne Di Maio, Chris Michels, John Shaw**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**Rondalyn Brown, Grace Correia, Gord Costie, Bruce Harschnitz, Christina Jager, Scott Peck, Jaime Tellier, Nancy Watts – HCA Staff**

**OTHERS:**

**Media – Richard Leitner**

### **1. Chairman's Remarks**

Maria Topalovic welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated the regrets for the afternoon. Maria advised the members that Chris Michels had tendered his resignation from CAB, citing other commitments that are limiting his availability to attend meetings. Chris served on CAB for 10 years. He wished his fellow CAB members and HCA well for the future.

### **2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

There were none.

### **3. Delegations**

There were none.

#### **4. Approval of Agenda**

The Chair requested any additions or deletions to the agenda. Maria advised that under item 5.1, Gord Costie would be providing a short member briefing on the HCA auto gates and pay and display parking programs.

**CA1927                      MOVED BY: Cynthia Janzen  
                                    SECONDED BY: Duke O'Sullivan**

**THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.**

**CARRIED**

#### **5. Member Briefing**

##### **5.1. HCA Auto-Gates and Pay and Display Parking Programs – Verbal Update**

Gord Costie provided an update on the HCA auto gates and pay and display parking programs, including a history of the evolution toward automated parking facilities. Following a review of other organizations' practices and a business case, HCA's senior staff approved the first pay and display machine to be installed at Valens Lake Conservation Area in 1996. More recently, HCA has been migrating to auto-gates for our larger Conservation Areas. To date, auto-gates have been installed at eight Conservation Areas. By Fall of 2019, two more gates will be installed at Eramosa Karst CA and Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area.

Auto-gates allow HCA customers to have access to our conservation areas, seven days a week, from sunrise to sunset. They are proving to be extremely effective and efficient. The gates have reduced staff time to open and close Conservation Areas. They also facilitate traffic calming, increased security, and ensure all users are paying equally.

The introduction of auto-gates is also being attributed to the marked increase in membership pass sales and day pass purchases observed in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, membership pass sales reached a record high; 2019 sales to-date are comparable to 2018. Customer feedback has been very positive.

There are upfront costs associated with installing the auto-gates. The costs are dependent on planning/fieldwork and site conditions. There are also maintenance costs. The auto-gates can be subject to vandalism. However, staff have found that some damage can be repaired somewhat simply and inexpensively.

Continued use and expansion of the auto-gates system is outlined in HCA's strategic plan. Other Conservation Authorities and Ontario Parks have expressed interest in HCA's successful piloting of this program.

Members inquired about the nature of vandalism and specifics on how membership passes and day passes are purchased and used at the gates. Gord advised that both systems accept debit and credit and that pay and display machines are available for those that do not have a membership pass. The cost of a day pass can be discounted from the purchase price of a membership pass within one week of the purchase of the day pass.

Duke O'Sullivan inquired about the ability to generate user statistics through membership passes or the automated gates, indicating that this information would be beneficial to marketing staff. Gord responded that the auto-gates do have the potential for this type of programming, however, that it can be costly. Gord added that currently, the auto-gates are being used to facilitate access but that user data may be pursued in the future.

Lloyd Ferguson inquired about the ability to produce access records in the event of an incident. Gord indicated he was uncertain if that information could be easily produced, however advised that HCA has video camera security in many of its locations.

The members also suggested that the day-use ticket could be used to promote the membership pass, volunteer events or opportunities, or other HCA products. Gord advised that the ticket is not yet used for marketing, that staff are promoting the membership pass to users in other ways. Staff are also working toward creating a system where the day-use pass will be valid at all other CA's on the same day.

Wayne Terryberry commended staff for this type of parking program, adding that many people are looking to HCA as a model. Maria thanked Gord for his presentation, adding that it is great to hear that the system is working well for HCA, and that some other Conservation Authorities may follow suit.

**CA1928                      MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry  
                                    SECONDED BY: Cheryl Larocque**

**THAT the verbal update on HCA Auto Gates and Pay and  
Display Parking Programs be received as information.**

**CARRIED**

## **6. Chairman's Report on Board of Directors Actions**

Maria advised there has not been a meeting of the Board of Directors since the June CAB meeting and therefore there was nothing to report. Any recommendations from the June meeting and today's meeting will be presented to the Board in September.

## **7. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

### **7.1. Minutes – Conservation Advisory Board (June 13, 2019)**

**CA1929**

**MOVED BY: Cheryl Larocque**

**SECONDED BY: Duke O'Sullivan**

**THAT the minutes of the June 13, 2019 Conservation Areas Advisory Board meeting be approved.**

**CARRIED**

## **8. Business Arising from the Minutes**

## **9. Staff Reports/Memorandums**

### **9.1. Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration – Project Update**

Scott Peck presented a summary of the memorandum, highlighting the history and intent of the initiative to create the Saltfleet Conservation Area. Beginning in 2013, HCA began acquiring land to create a new conservation area in the east end of our watershed. Through the creation of wetlands, the lands will be used to attenuate natural hazards. The wetlands will also create natural heritage features and create recreational opportunities for the public. Scott reviewed the funding available and used to-date for acquisition of five properties in the Stoney/Battlefield Creek watersheds above the escarpment. He highlighted properties purchased, some to acquire existing natural heritage features, others for proximity to existing land holdings, and those needed for planned wetland creation projects required for flood attenuation.

Scott advised the lands for acquisition have been identified through an Environmental Assessment (EA) and that each acquisition is presented to the Board of Directors directly for approval. Subsequent to the EA, lands have been acquired, and staff have now retained a consultant to complete the wetland design work. The preliminary design work will be presented to CAB in October.

Scott highlighted funds that have been engaged to make the project possible, thanking Hamilton Conservation Foundation (HCF) staff for their work in securing the funding. Following completion of the wetland design, WP&E staff will then begin working with Capital Projects and Strategic Services staff for master planning to create the recreational infrastructure.

There is approximately \$1.5 million remaining in the land acquisition fund. The EA indicates implementation costs are approximately 15 million. Therefore, there is a need for ongoing fundraising. Project staff will rely on HCF staff to assist with funding for the development of the lands.

The members inquired about the lands acquired to-date being sufficient to achieve the goals of the project. Scott advised that achievement of goals will be incremental. Erosion mitigation objectives and a notable improvement for flooding can be achieved with the available lands. The full benefit envisioned in the EA requires all four wetlands to be created. There was discussion regarding the boundaries of the Conservation Area and lands required to complete the project. The members also inquired about timing for trail development around the new wetlands. Scott clarified that parking and recreation infrastructure will be part of the master plan process.

Funding for the project was also discussed. Scott advised that the Green Municipal Fund was accessed for the wetland project design. Through the Hamilton Conservation Foundation, staff will be soliciting funds from the GMF and the municipality for subsequent years of this multi-year project. Grace Correia added that foundation staff are creating corporate partnerships now for when the design work is ready.

**CA1930                      MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry  
                                    SECONDED BY: Lloyd Ferguson**

**THAT the memorandum entitled Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration – Project Update be received as information.**

**CARRIED**

## **9.2.    Westfield Admission Tickets for Major Special Events**

Rondalyn Brown welcomed the members to Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area (WHVCA). She also introduced Christina Jager, Assistant Manager of WHVCA, to assist with answering any questions on the report. Rondalyn then presented a summary of the report, noting that WHVCA events have been becoming more and more popular over the years, leading to large numbers of visitors causing parking-related safety issues and affecting visitor experience. Staff conducted a review of similar facilities' practices to address high volume events, and are now proposing to



implement a ticketed system for WHVCA's most popular events, including those for Maple Syrup, Halloween and Christmas.

The members discussed with staff the limiting factors for capacity. Rondalyn advised that both parking and the capacity of the village are limiting. Staff have proposed a number of tickets based on an average number of people that would fill the 250 known parking spaces. There are an additional 50 parking spaces that are required for volunteers for the events.

The members also discussed other potential alternatives, including shuttling visitors from a larger parking area, expanding existing parking and hosting more event dates per season.

There was discussion regarding societal trends toward more ticketed and reservation systems. Staff added that a marketing and communications plan would be required initially to convey the new system to the public to prevent visitors arriving at a full event until there was greater awareness of the new system in the community.

Wayne Terryberry offered his experience as a volunteer at a WHVCA event. He shared that the large crowds are taxing for volunteers and observed that visitor experience was also affected. Wayne also requested feedback from other facilities about their experiences transitioning to a ticketed system, if other similar scenarios have occurred.

Lloyd Ferguson expressed concern with the impacts of limiting visitors and tabled a motion to refer the report back to staff to provide additional management options and return to the Advisory Board in October. The members agreed with the request for additional information.

Maria thanked everyone for the good discussion and appreciation that staff will bring additional information forward.

**CA1931**

**MOVED BY: Lloyd Ferguson**

**SECONDED BY: Duke O'Sullivan**

**THAT the report be referred back to staff to provide additional management options and to return to the October CAB meeting.**

**CARRIED**

### 9.3. Upcoming HCA & Partner Events

Gord Costie presented the memorandum, highlighting popular events that have been happening at HCA's facilities, including WHVCA. Camping at Valens Lake Conservation Area sold out for the holiday weekend. The Spencer Gorge/Webster Falls shuttle transported the equivalent of 500 cars a day over the Civic Holiday weekend. All areas are very busy. The Dundas Valley is currently readying for the Equestrian Ride, a fundraiser for trail maintenance within the Conservation Area. There are many events throughout August at Wild Waterworks and WHVCA. Moving into September HCA will host the Bright Run, Christie Antique and Vintage Show, Autumn Stroll, and Tough Mudder. Gord finished the presentation highlighting Telling Tales, a very successful partner event, hosted by WHVCA.

Lloyd Ferguson commented on the weather having a positive impact on our revenues. Gord responded that good weather and weather proof events have contributed to the revenues.

**CA1932                      MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry  
                                    SECONDED BY: Cheryl Larocque**

**THAT the verbal update on Upcoming 2019 HCA & Partner  
Events be received as information.**

**CARRIED**

#### **10. New Business**

There was none.

#### **11. Next Meeting – Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.**

The next meeting of the CAB is scheduled for Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 4:00 p.m., at the HCA Main Office.

#### **12. Adjournment**

Maria thanked everyone in attendance and staff of Westfield Heritage Village for hosting the meeting. On motion, the meeting was adjourned.

# Report

**TO:** Conservation Advisory Board

**FROM:** Lisa Burnside, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

**RECOMMENDED BY:** Gord Costie, Director, Conservation Area Services

**PREPARED BY:** Rondalyn Brown, Manager Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area

**DATE:** October 10, 2019

**RE:** Christmas 2020 Ticket Purchase Pilot

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## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommends to the Board of Directors:**

**THAT Westfield initiate a pilot program for date specific ticket sales for the 2020 Christmas evening program and further,**

**THAT staff evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot and report back to CAB regarding its ongoing potential.**

## BACKGROUND

At the August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Conservation Advisory Board (CAB) meeting, a report titled “Limited Ticket Purchase for Westfield Special Events” was presented. The report highlighted that “Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area’s (WHVCA) growing success on popular days provides amazing opportunities. However, sometimes it can also cause capacity, safety and logistical issues and less positive visitor experiences.” When there are too many visitors, there are long line-ups for services, overcrowding in buildings being interpreted by our volunteers and limited access to popular activities. This seriously compromises the visitors experience and is a health and safety issue for staff and volunteers. When parking on site is full, visitors park on the road. This is a safety concern especially for the evening programs.

To address these issues, the report recommended that a “system for limited, date-specific tickets be implemented for special events at Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area for events that can potentially exceed parking or event capacity”. The Conservation Advisory Board referred the report back to staff in order for additional management options to be considered with a recommendation to come back to the October CAB meeting.

## **STAFF COMMENT**

Following the direction provided by CAB, HCA staff have further reviewed this issue and have formalized several management options and they are detailed as follows:

### **1. Christmas Program 2020 – Ticket Sales Pilot Project**

The staff preferred and recommended option is a pilot project for the Christmas program in 2020 to sell tickets in limited quantities for specific dates. 1,200 tickets would be available for each event day which is based on event and parking capacity. Visitors with tickets would be assured on-site parking and guaranteed entrance to the event. The site would maintain a safe and comfortable capacity providing optimal experience for visitors and staff. Implementing a pilot for 2020 provides a 10 month timeframe for a marketing campaign to inform visitors of the ticket program to help make sure only those who have purchased tickets arrive for the event.

### **2. On Street Parking Control**

Vehicles parking on the highway is a safety concern for daylight events and even more so for evening events when it is dark. The shoulder on Kirkwall Road is unpaved, narrow and there are no streetlights. HCA could request the City of Hamilton sign the immediate street area as “No Parking”. When the parking lot is expected to be filled clear signage and municipal by-law and police support will be required to address visitors parking on the road. This solution is dependent on by-law and police support and does not address that the visitor has already planned their journey and arrived to the site, to find the parking lot full and no available parking.

### **3. Shuttle Buses**

The cost and effort of providing a shuttle service was considered. These resources include the cost of buses; the rental cost to use another site; the extra staffing for parking; and the cost of maintaining the additional parking lot (snow ploughing/sanding and lighting for evening programs). An offsite shuttle hub location also requires considerations related to way finding signage and marketing and education efforts so that visitors do not drive directly to Westfield. All of these items require additional resources that is beyond the means of Westfield. Unlike the Telling Tales events where visitors come and go throughout the day, with an event like Christmas, many visitors will be wishing to leave at the same time after fireworks at the end of the evening which

would likely lead to long line ups for bus return to the offsite lot. Safety at an isolated off-site location, especially on a winter evening, would also be a concern.

#### **4. Increased Parking on site**

Westfield's 2018 Master Plan notes that parking space at Westfield can be insufficient during large events and further, that alternative options are to be considered with event planning.

The 2018 Master Plan identifies areas with current parking and areas for consideration to increase the parking capacity. The existing parking lot(s) are noted for improvements to layout and vehicle circulation.

This work is currently underway with the front parking lot and autogate project for Westfield. The land surrounding the rental house may also be considered for more parking now that the tenant has vacated.

The service area, back of house, behind the agricultural barn is noted to be expanded for "Staff and Volunteer Parking". It is the intent of this area to be improved for staff and volunteer parking so that spaces can be freed up in the main parking lot for visitors. Work has begun on cleaning up this area to allow for future expansion.

Development work in these two areas would increase the visitor parking spaces by 20% to 360 and are recommended as part of the HCA parking review report to implement parking enhancements at Westfield.

Parking in the field north of the entrance to Westfield has been utilized, however, formalizing this parking area is problematic due to seasonal flooding. Further study of the seasonal flooding would be required should we wish to improve parking surfaces and drainage in this grass overflow area. It may not be possible or feasible to adequately handle drainage and provide year round parking in this location.

Increasing the number of parking spaces alone, however, does not solve the issue. There could still be more visitors attending than parking spaces available and beyond the capacity of the Village based on a quality visitor experience.

#### **5. Cancelling Programs**

Westfield has worked very hard to build attendance at its public events and other revenue generating activities. The public have an expectation of Westfield programs. Cancelling events because they are too popular would be lost revenue and would be denying the community valuable opportunities that make the City of Hamilton a great place to live and visit.

## **Discussion**

Based on HCA staff review, the best option considered was advanced tickets for specific dates in a limited quantity for events expected to exceed capacity. It is the safest, most cost effective solution that also offers more opportunity for growth. Staff report that they have received feedback from visitors asking for this option so they may plan their Christmas visit in advance knowing they are guaranteed safe parking on-site and reasonable access to all the activities and services they wish to participate in when it is not over crowded.

The proposed ticket option places Westfield in a position to better manage events for safety and visitor satisfaction. Attendance at multi-day events is not evenly distributed and this option would help spread visitation throughout all available event dates. It also allows for more successful expansion because if ticket sales maximize the available event space there is greater potential for adding more dates. Westfield would add a Christmas date to the schedule for 2020 and be open on Sunday, December 20, 2020. Based on historical statistics, this would be the most popular Sunday. It would also be after all three evenings so anyone not able to get into the evening event would be able to enjoy Westfield on that Sunday, subject to ticket availability.

With the proposed increased parking spaces and the additional Sunday opening, the overall attendance potential for Christmas 2020 would be greater than the actual Christmas attendance average in the last three years, which is just shy of 4,600 visitors.

The proposed pilot 2020 ticket program is broken out as follows:

- Saturday December 5, 2020 – 1,200 tickets
- Saturday December 12, 2020 – 1, 200 tickets
- Saturday December 19, 2020 – 1,200 tickets
- Sunday December 20, 2020 – 1,200 tickets, however, longer day event with possible vehicle turnover with potential for additional tickets (to be determined)
- Total: 4,800

This provides a greater capacity overall so more people are able to enjoy the event resulting in higher revenue for Westfield.

Advanced ticket sales will allow the conservation area to grow in a more sustainable way that preserves the natural and cultural treasures we strive to protect and preserve while still providing quality opportunities that are educational and entertaining for the community.

This option follows successful operating procedures at similar facilities such as Black Creek Pioneer Village and Doon Heritage Crossroads. Both these sites operate their Christmas programs with limited ticket sales. Conservation Halton has pre-purchased tickets for their Christmas Town at Mountsberg.

## **Marketing and Communications**

Communicating the change to the public will be a key element to success. Some visitors already think they are buying a guaranteed ticket when they purchase on-line and won't be surprised to see event dates to select from. Other visitors are asking for this option and will be pleased to have it in 2020. Below is a framework of a marketing campaign to inform visitors of the new system and promote the benefits of the ticket system:

1. A mail out to all HCA pass holders, with a letter explaining the changes to the event, and a copy of the 2020 Westfield Heritage Village CA brochure, would be the first step.
2. The Marketing Department would also include the information about the change in the HCA e-newsletter, which will be sent monthly through the year, as well as building and creating a Westfield Heritage Village CA e-newsletter to reinforce the message. Leveraging the 2020 media buy and including the information that this is now a ticketed event on all Christmas event promotions, will add no additional costs. This will include online ads, radio and promoted and boosted social media posts and ads. Information about limited tickets will be added to all event listings, including the HCA calendar, Westfield and HCA websites, and other outside event listings.
3. Onsite signage will assist with getting the message out, while also promoting the Christmas events through the year. Westfield Heritage Village CA staff can assist with communicating the message through their customer interactions at regular Sunday and earlier special events. A Christmas flyer, with information about the limited tickets, can be created earlier in the year for Westfield staff to hand out to visitors.
4. A plan will be developed to address those visitors who arrive at the ticketed Christmas event without having purchased a ticket. Staff will engage with such visitors to determine what information and steps they referenced to hear about the Christmas event and explain the ticket system. It is possible that last minute cancellations may open up some spaces for drive up visitors. A discount or free admission to another regular or special event at Westfield could be provided for compensation to address disappointment if the event is sold out.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGE**

The initiative refers directly to the HCA Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023:

- **Strategic Priority Area – Conservation Area Experience**
  - Initiatives – Develop visitor and parking management strategies to support conservation areas for sustainable recreation, education and tourism

## **AGENCY COMMENTS**

Not applicable

## **LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Investment in a new ticketing system to accommodate the more intricate admissions sales system may be required and costs have been incorporated into the 2020 operating budget in this regard.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This report identifies HCA's commitment to providing a safe environment for both staff and visitors by developing visitor and parking management strategies that also help to improve the visitor experience. The proposal is a pilot for the 2020 Christmas Program and staff will report back to CAB on the results of the pilot project and recommendations to move forward based on the experiences of the 2020 program.





# Report

**TO:** Conservation Advisory Board

**FROM:** Lisa Burnside, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

**RECOMMENDED & PREPARED BY:** Gord Costie, Director, Conservation Area Services  
Matthew Hall, Director, Capital Projects & Strategic Services  
T. Scott Peck, MCIP, RPP, Deputy CAO/Director, Watershed Planning & Engineering

**DATE:** September 19, 2019

**RE:** HCA Conservation Area - Visitor Management & Vehicle Parking Review

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**THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommend to the Board of Directors:**

**THAT Staff be directed to implement the following directions outlined in the report titled “HCA Conservation Area - Visitor Management & Vehicle Parking Review”;**

**Recommendation #1 – HCA staff implement immediate parking enhancement opportunities at Artaban Road, Tiffany Falls, Devil’s Punchbowl, Tew Falls and Westfield Heritage Village to optimize number of parking spaces, traffic flow and signage;**

**Recommendation #2- HCA staff undertake steps to consider expansion of the Artaban road parking lot through a Niagara Escarpment development permit;**

**Recommendation #3 – HCA staff undertake steps to establish an interim parking lot and trail connection to the Dofasco Trail for the Devil’s Punchbowl at the Saltfleet Conservation Area;**

**Recommendation #4 – HCA staff further examine and explore additional options for safe visitor access to Tiffany Falls;**

**Recommendation #5 – HCA staff work with various agencies and partners such as City of Hamilton, Tourism Hamilton, Hamilton/Burlington Trails Council etc. to encourage transportation alternatives;**

**Recommendation #6 – HCA develop a marketing campaign and website enhancements to increase turnover and shorter term stays at areas with limited parking and encourage visitation to less frequented areas and when there is capacity;**

**Recommendation #7 – HCA staff ensure that the approved 10 year Masterplan Strategy incorporates detailed review of parking at all areas through the Master planning process.**

## **BACKGROUND**

In February 2019, a report titled “HCA Conservation Area Vehicle Parking Review” was presented to the Conservation Advisory Board with the following recommendation **“THAT HCA staff be directed to undertake the parking inventory as detailed in the report titled “HCA Conservation Area Vehicle Parking Study”, dated February 1, 2019.”** This recommendation was endorsed by the Conservation Advisory Board and approved by the Board of Directors at their March 7, 2019 meeting.

As noted in the report, the parking review will assess the supply at individual HCA areas and identify capacity gaps, provide potential recommendations for parking strategies that support these HCA areas while conserving the natural features of the area, and building upon the existing parking system.

A project steering committee comprised of senior HCA staff was struck and has met multiple times in the past months as part of finalizing the parking inventory assessment and obtained input from Conservation Area staff. From this work, the steering committee had identified steps that had already been taken to address visitor and parking issues by way of the following initiatives:

1. Implementing the shuttle service at Christie Lake to service Spencer Gorge Conservation Area on weekends April through October and examining each year how to make this more effective
2. Utilizing shuttles to bring visitors to the Telling Tales Festival event at Westfield Heritage Conservation Area by the third party organizers
3. Having HCA staff on site to meet with visitors to provide trail etiquette and information regarding other conservation areas to visit.

4. Increasing posting of trail signage and brochures highlighting the need to stay on the trail for visitor safety and conservation of the associated natural areas.
5. Working through HCA website and social media directing people to authorized access points and providing visitor education.
6. Working with the City of Hamilton regarding municipal No Parking and No Stopping signage and associated municipal by-law enforcement.
7. Installing automated access gates at conservation areas and installing trail and vehicle counters to provide information regarding the number of visitors accessing areas.
8. Allocating capital budget dollars to maintain internal HCA roads through tar and chip and/or paving.
9. Allocating capital budget dollars to improve various HCA parking areas with site specific measures such as clean up, line painting, creation of overflow parking and/or expansion
10. Re-opening both the Merrick lot and Artaban lot in the Dundas Valley

Following the review of work already undertaken, the committee then determined the next outcomes to be taken to further improve the situation. This report highlights five key visitor management and parking program areas with associated action items to be implemented.

#### Key Visitor Management and Parking Program Areas

1. Identifying High Use Conservation Areas through Parking review metrics
2. Addressing High Use Conservation Areas with Visitor and Parking Issues
3. Optimizing Mass Transit and Non-motorized Vehicle Access to Conservation Areas
4. Marketing and Communication
5. Master Planning and Operational Improvements

This review was undertaken with an understanding of our role as the area's leading environmental agency and our role as a landowner. The lands owned by the Hamilton Conservation Authority contain physical features, flora and fauna of national, provincial and local significance and these lands were acquired to preserve these features while

developing these lands as appropriate for passive recreation and environmental education. In developing the five key program areas with the associated action items, the first priority is ensuring the environmental features of the lands are maintained and that the Hamilton Conservation Authority is leading by example as it relates to the management of our lands while ensuring positive and safe visitor experiences.

## **STAFF COMMENT**

As noted in the background section above, five key visitor management and parking program areas have been identified with associated information and action items.

### **1. Identification of High Use Conservation Areas through Parking Review Metrics**

HCA has approximately parking capacity for 7,322 vehicles in its parking areas, as shown in the table below with the vast majority at Christie Lake, our main event area and shuttle hub location for Spencer Gorge that can handle large numbers of cars.

Our major conservation areas generally have adequate capacity for current visitation, except for certain special events at Westfield Heritage Village.

2018 data from autogate and pay and display machines at our unattended parking areas demonstrate the high volume at three smaller parking facilities which tend to be associated with waterfalls or iconic escarpment areas. It is important to note that these figures do not include HCA annual vehicle pass holders or unpaid vehicles. Parking tickets issued in 2018 by City of Hamilton bylaw for road side waterfall areas also demonstrate pressure these areas experience. Ridge Road has armour stone along the road way to help prevent parking and likely results in the lower number of tickets, and staff also report visitors utilizing parking at the Devil's Punchbowl market and walking along Ridge Road.

Staff note through site visits and maintenance that Tiffany Falls, Devil's Punchbowl and Artaban Road are extremely busy on weekends and holidays throughout the year and vehicle congestion issues are common. Further, staff working in these areas have noticed a high turn-over at these locations as the hikes to the waterfall attractions are very short and staff report that through interaction with visitors that many are unaware of the Bruce Trail connection for Tiffany and Sherman Falls and greater connections to the Dundas Valley.

While Spencer Gorge is handled by the shuttle on weekends and public holidays during the operating season, staff report parking pressures at Tew Falls mid-week during the fall leaf colours in October.

<b>CONSERVATION AREA or PARKING LOT NAME</b>	<b>PARKING SPACES</b>	<b>AUTOGATE PAID VEHICLES</b>	<b>CITY BY-LAW PARKING TICKETS</b>
Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve	12	no gate or pay machine	
Beverly Swamp	14	no gate or pay machine	
Tiffany Falls	20	10,314	378
Artaban Road	21	4616	775
Devil's Punch Bowl	22	10,433	186
Monarch Trail	22	367	
Chippawa Rail Trail	23	no gate or pay machine	
Iroquoia Heights	25	no gate or pay machine	
Borer's Falls	27	no gate or pay machine	
Felker's Falls	30	no gate or pay machine	
Dundas Valley HCA workshop & area	30	350	
Merrick Orchard	36	1908	
Hermitage	40	4226	
Hamilton to Brantford Rail Trail - West	42	no gate or pay machine	
Eramosa Karst	60	912	
Crooks' Hollow	86	941	
Spencer Gorge	248	23,162	2200
Dundas Valley Main Parking	265	4816	
Westfield Heritage Village	300	Staffed gate	
Valens Lake	354	Staffed gate	
Fifty Point	862	Staffed gate	
Christie Lake	4,783	Staffed gate	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,322</b>		

- **Paid Vehicles only entering through unattended parking areas, does not count HCA annual pass holders or unpaid visits**
- **Spencer Gorge parking lots are closed weekends and public holidays during shuttle operations**

## 2. Addressing High Use Conservation Areas with Visitor and Parking Issues

As part of the development of the parking inventory and through an understanding of current conservation area operations, Spencer Gorge Conservation Area, Tiffany Falls and Artaban Road in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area as well as the Devil's Punchbowl Conservation Area have been identified as high use areas with associated parking issues. Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area also experiences parking issues during some special events.

### **Spencer Gorge / Tew Falls**

- Visitation and parking issues at the Spencer Gorge are being addressed on weekends and public holidays through the high operating season through the operation of the visitor shuttle and partnership with Park Bus. The Board of Directors have provided direction to staff that this shuttle operation will continue as part of the annual operations for this conservation area.
- In season, during the week, Tew Falls parking area receives significant visitation and handles the bulk of vehicles for Spencer Gorge. Staff have identified that improvements to this lot would optimize traffic flow, number of parking spaces and visitor experience. This work could require an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), NEC review and approval based on final scale and scope of enhancements.

### **Tiffany Falls**

- Tiffany Falls is a highly visited area that is serviced by a small parking lot. It is important that HCA continue to work collaboratively with City bylaw enforcement to control and enforce no parking regulations to address spillover parking along Wilson Street. While there are no options available to physically enlarge the existing parking lot, some measures can be taken on site to optimize the lot to enhance traffic flow and angular parking.
- Additional options will need to be explored for this area, bearing in mind the single trail and viewing platform and overall limited space and capacity of the area. Several options for further detailed consideration and investigation have initially been identified to include:
  1. Continue with operation of the existing parking area with an increased focus on promoting short stays, increased visitor turnover and off-peak visitation. This would also involve signing the area to advise that picnics are not permitted in this location and reviewing photography permits and parking access for Bruce Trail members.
  2. Promote walk-in access through nearby HSR bus stop and Bruce Trail.
  3. Potential for the development of a new larger parking lot for this site on HCA lands adjacent to Tiffany Falls located north of Wilson Street with

frontage on Lower Lions Club Road. There is additional work to be completed to determine the feasibility of this proposal. This includes:

- i. Completion of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine if it is acceptable according to HCA and City of Hamilton requirements to develop a parking lot on the lands as the majority of the area is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area. This work would take approximately 1-year to complete and would require the services of an outside consultant.
- ii. The subject lands are located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, within the Protection Area designation and a Development Permit would be required for the development of a parking lot in this area. The above noted EIS would form part of this application.
- iii. A review of traffic issues and pedestrian crossing requirements would need to be completed and reviewed with the City of Hamilton. Wilson Street is a major thoroughfare within the City and specifically Ancaster with a 70km/hr speed limit at the Tiffany Falls area

#### **Artaban Road Parking Lot**

- This parking lot receives significant visitation, particularly now that Lions Club road has been signed as No Parking. Its popularity is associated with visitation with Sherman Falls which is not owned by HCA but is located adjacent to HCA lands and associated trail system. It is important that HCA continue to work collaboratively with City bylaw enforcement to control and enforce No Parking regulations to address spillover parking on Lions Club Road.
- Staff have identified that improvements to this lot would optimize traffic flow, number of parking spaces and visitor experience and could be promoted further as an offsite parking location for Tiffany Falls for visitors to access by walking the Bruce Trail connection.
- There is the potential to formally expand the parking lot at Artaban Road adjacent to the existing HCA parking lot. There is additional work to be completed to determine the feasibility of this proposal. This includes:
  - i. Completion of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine if it is acceptable according to HCA and City of Hamilton requirements to develop a parking lot on the lands as the majority of the area is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area. This work would take approximately 1-year to complete and would require the services of an outside consultant.
  - ii. The subject lands are located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, within the Protection Area designation and a

Development Permit would be required for the development of a parking lot in this area. The above noted EIS would form part of this application.

### **Devil's Punchbowl**

- Auto gates installed in this parking lot have demonstrated its popularity and high utilization. Staff have identified that improvements to this lot could optimize traffic flow, number of parking spaces and visitor experience
- While the current lot would benefit from improvements, there are opportunities for additional parking to be created within the adjacent lands that comprise part of the Saltfleet Conservation Area to provide additional parking on an interim basis until the design work for the wetland is completed in 2020 and Master Plan which is timed for 2021. Subject to the above, on the east side of First Road East with an existing driveway, a parking area and a trail could be created to connect to the Dofasco Trail. Signage and promotional materials would be needed to inform the public of this option.
- In the longer term, as additional lands are acquired, there is potential for a gateway to service the Devil's Punchbowl area.

### **Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area**

- Staff have identified that improvements to this lot would optimize traffic flow, number of parking spaces and visitor experience
- Lack of sufficient event parking at certain special events at Westfield have been identified as an issue to address parking and crowd management.
- Staff are bringing forward a separate report entitled "2020 Christmas Ticket Purchase Pilot" for consideration on managing parking and visitation during high volume special events for the area.

### **3. Optimizing Mass Transit and Non-motorized Vehicle Access to Conservation Areas**

- As noted in earlier comments above, efforts have been made to encourage visitors to utilize services such as Park Bus or through public transit as available or regional and local trail and cycling networks. These efforts should be enhanced to promote transit through municipal transit (HSR), enhancing as appropriate trail connections and regional trail and road hiking and cycling networks to reduce parking demand
- Through the parking review, staff have identified three areas with HSR connections

### **Parking Areas with HRS stop within 500 metres**



<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	<b>BUS NUMBER</b>	<b>BUS NAME</b>	<b>STOP LOCATION</b>
Dundas Valley	5	DELAWARE	MAIN at EWEN
Felker's Falls	43	STONE CHURCH	PARAMOUNT opposite AUCKLAND And PARAMOUNT at APEX
Tiffany Falls	5	DELAWARE	At 1039 WILSON

- Staff have identified that it would be beneficial to inquire with HSR the possibility of moving the bus stop location on Wilson Street closer to the Tiffany Falls parking lot
- The overall work of promoting transit and local trails will involve a high degree of public education and is also part of the action items noted in Section 4, Marketing and Communications.

#### 4. Marketing and Communication

- For specific high use areas, identify the closest off-site parking areas, linked by trails and create walking tour suggestions for visitors to access the areas from a little further away, and highlighting places and sights along the way, to make the hike more appealing. For example, accessing the Devil's Punchbowl by getting there along the Dofasco 2000 Trail, seeing the boardwalk section through the Vinemount Swamp and other sights along the escarpment brow.
- Increase and improve on-site messaging. Signage could be created along the lines of "Found it a little busy here today? Try visiting during the week or earlier in the morning for a more secluded experience." This can also be encouraged on Instagram and Facebook.
- Improve website messaging with peak times and suggested times to visit for the best experience and also add parking information to each of the affected area's section of the website.
- A brochure could be created for all of our East Mountain areas (Devil's Punchbowl, Saltfleet, East Mountain Trail Loop, Dofasco Trail, Karst, etc.), both for area information and to communicate the needed messages in these areas.
- Update information on our Trip Advisor and Google pages and as well as Waterfalls Hamilton website through the City of Hamilton.
- Automatic Gates and Pay and Display Machines – a new ticket with multi conservation area access is a new option. There are 10 locations that have this feature for 2019, with additional areas proposed in 2020. This feature can be

marketed once all machines are operational. This option allows for a visitor to go to multiple locations for one daily price and the idea is that it will encourage shorter term stays as visitors can attend multiple locations thereby increasing turnover.

## 5. Master Planning and Operational Improvements

- In addition to the above noted items that have either been implemented or will be implemented within existing programs or through further site specific considerations as appropriate, there are issues that require further consideration which can be identified through the development of master plans/management plans or through conservation area operations. This would include such items as:
  - i. Continued implementation of the HCA's auto-gates and pay and display for parking areas.
  - ii. Refinement of parking use and parking lot configuration to maximize the area available for parking within existing parking lots.
  - iii. Visitor and parking management through such initiatives as a limited number and specific date ticketing system for events and programs.
  - iv. Continued work with our municipal partners regarding "No Stopping" and "No Parking" signs and enforcement in these areas. It is important to note that the HCA can only manage issues on HCA lands, issues related to the use of municipal roads and road right of ways is the responsibility of the affected municipality.
  - v. Development of master plans and management plans to guide the management of our conservation areas with an eye to anticipate long term visitation trends with associated infrastructure requirements.
  - vi. Including information within master plans as guidance regarding the use of conservation areas and trail classification to better understand how visitors can impact the natural features of the lands and also how the number of visitors can impact visitor experience.
  - vii. Providing direction regarding the need for continued land acquisition to ensure the conservation of our watersheds natural features while providing passive recreation opportunities. The Land Securement Strategy will also provide direction in this regard.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGE**

The initiative refers directly to the HCA Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023:

- **Strategic Priority Area – Organizational Excellence**
  - Initiatives - Update our website to increase access to information and services
- **Strategic Priority Area – Conservation Area Experience**
  - Initiatives – Develop visitor and parking management strategies to support conservation areas for sustainable recreation, education and tourism
  - Initiatives - Continue to expand installation of automatic gates across our conservation areas
  - Initiatives - Work with partners such as the City of Hamilton, the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System, and the Hamilton Burlington Trails Council, to enhance trail networks for recreational uses

## **AGENCY COMMENTS**

Program implementation will require working with partner agencies such as the City of Hamilton, Tourism Hamilton and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. This work would include no parking and no stopping signage as appropriate, parking enforcement on City roadways, working with City of Hamilton Natural Heritage Planners regarding development within environmentally significant areas, promotion and visitor education with Tourism Hamilton as well as working through development permits for new or expanded parking areas with the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

## **LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Implementation of this program work will be incorporated into departmental work plans with associated approved operating and capital budget resources being utilized as approved and allocated annually. Some parking lot enhancements can be undertaken in 2019 through the 2019 capital budget as resources and time permits.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Visitor and parking management will continue to be a main program area for the HCA into the foreseeable future. The recommendations flowing from the five program areas outlined in this report will continue to be the primary focus of our efforts to preserve the natural resources on our conservation area lands while ensuring a positive visitor experience.

## **Upcoming 2019 HCA & Partner Events**

### **Ghost Walks**

**October 5**

**Dundas Valley Conservation Area**

**Hermitage Parking Lot, 621 Sulphur Springs Road, Dundas**

Walk into the haunted woods at night with the only tour of its kind anywhere! Experience the conflict between calm and fear. A quiet stroll in the forest mixed with dark energy from one of the oldest communities in Ontario. Soon you arrive at a place filled with ghost stories told over generations at this hidden historic gem. It's just your group, alone in the dark with ghosts. Stories of tragic love, cults and the coachman who still walks among the trees. Visit [www.ghostwalks.com](http://www.ghostwalks.com) for more information.

### **Migration Bird Hikes in the Dundas Valley**

**October 6, 8:00 to 10:30am**

**Dundas Valley Conservation Area**

Join our resident ornithologist James Lees to look for birds at the most exciting time of year! Fall migration is the perfect time to see large numbers of song birds, water birds and hawks on the move. For more information, cost and to register, visit [www.conservationhamilton.ca](http://www.conservationhamilton.ca).

### **A Taste of Warm Bread**

**October 6, 12:30 – 4:00 pm**

**Westfield Heritage Village**

**1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton, ON L0R 1X0**

Come and taste a little history! Warm, soft, crusty – bread is the theme of this day. Learn how different types of breads are made in hearths, woodstoves and the bake oven. Free samples! For more information visit [www.westfieldheritage.ca](http://www.westfieldheritage.ca)

### **Thanksgiving Weekend Campout**

**October 11 – 14**

**Valens Lake Conservation Area**

**1691 Regional Road 97 (R.R.#6), Flamborough, Ontario N1R 5S7**

Reserve your campsite to avoid missing out on this busy weekend. For more information, please call Valens Lake at 905-525-2183 or email

### **Thanksgiving Weekend**

**October 13 and October 14 12:30 – 4:00 pm**

**Westfield Heritage Village**

**1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton, ON L0R 1X0**

Bring the whole family for a wonderful afternoon in the country exploring the people and places of early Ontario. For more information visit [www.westfieldheritage.ca](http://www.westfieldheritage.ca)

### **Ghost Walks**

**October 19**

**Dundas Valley Conservation Area**

**Hermitage Parking Lot, 621 Sulphur Springs Road, Dundas**

Walk into the haunted woods at night with the only tour of its kind anywhere! Experience the conflict between calm and fear. A quiet stroll in the forest mixed with dark energy from one of the oldest communities in Ontario. Soon you arrive at a place filled with ghost stories told over generations at this hidden historic gem. It's just your group, alone in the dark with ghosts. Stories of tragic love, cults and the coachman who still walks among the trees. Visit [www.ghostwalks.com](http://www.ghostwalks.com) for more information.

### **Migration Bird Hikes in the Dundas Valley**

**October 20, 8:00 to 10:30am**

**Dundas Valley Conservation Area**

Join our resident ornithologist James Lees to look for birds at the most exciting time of year! Fall migration is the perfect time to see large numbers of song birds, water birds and hawks on the move. For more information, cost and to register, visit [www.conservationhamilton.ca](http://www.conservationhamilton.ca).

### **Pumpkin Sunday**

**October 20, 12:30 – 4:00 pm**

**Westfield Heritage Village**

**1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton, ON L0R 1X0**

A fun event for the whole family, especially the little ones! Featuring pumpkin-themed games, demonstrations, crafts and activities. Bring your camera! For more information visit [www.westfieldheritage.ca](http://www.westfieldheritage.ca)

### **Haunted Halloween**

**October 25 and October 26 6:30 – 9:30 pm**

**Westfield Heritage Village**

**1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton, ON L0R 1X0**

Something curious is happening in the village! Find out what as you explore by lantern, pumpkins and moonlight. For more information visit [www.westfieldheritage.ca](http://www.westfieldheritage.ca)

**Ghost Walks****October 31****Dundas Valley Conservation Area****Hermitage Parking Lot, 621 Sulphur Springs Road, Dundas**

Walk into the haunted woods at night with the only tour of its kind anywhere! Experience the conflict between calm and fear. A quiet stroll in the forest mixed with dark energy from one of the oldest communities in Ontario. Soon you arrive at a place filled with ghost stories told over generations at this hidden historic gem. It's just your group, alone in the dark with ghosts. Stories of tragic love, cults and the coachman who still walks among the trees. Visit [www.ghostwalks.com](http://www.ghostwalks.com) for more information.

**Road2Hope****November 3 & 4****Confederation Beach Park**

An annual marathon, half-marathon, 10k and 5k weekend. Saturday's events include the 5k and 10k, while the marathon and half-marathon take place on Sunday. This race is ranked as the #1 Boston Marathon qualifier race in Canada and attracts runners from around the world. The portion of the run along the waterfront is one of the race highlights. For more information visit [www.hamiltonmarathon.ca/](http://www.hamiltonmarathon.ca/)

**Raid the Hammer Race – Don't Get Lost****November 10, 2019****Dundas Valley Conservation Area**

Raid the Hammer Adventure Run combines road running, trail running, navigation, and trekking into one running race. Teams of three tackle mud, steep inclines and uneven terrain on this course. <https://www.dontgetlost.org/raid-the-hammer>

**Friend's Dinner****Saturday, November 9**

The Friends of Westfield host this dinner at Rockton Fairgrounds. Door prizes, auction and great food. Funds raised by the Friends of Westfield support projects at Westfield. Tickets must be purchased in advance (not available online).

**'Twas the Night Before Christmas****Saturday Evenings in December – 7, 14, 21 5:00 - 9:00 pm****Westfield Heritage Village****1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton, ON L0R 1X0**

Enjoy Westfield by candlelight and feel the warmth of the season through music, food samples, fireworks and a visit from Father Christmas. Christmas shopping is available at the Gift Shop and the restaurant features light meals and refreshments. For more information visit [www.westfieldheritage.ca](http://www.westfieldheritage.ca)