

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

REPORT NO. 64'

of the

WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (WECEC)

of its meeting held

March 29, 2012

at 5:30 o'clock p.m.

Lou Romano Water Reclamation Plant, 4155 Ojibway Parkway

Members Present at the March 29, 2012 meeting:

Councillor Alan Halberstadt, Co-Chair
Charlie Wright, Co-Chair
Councillor Hilary Payne
Shahbaz Ahmed
Matthew Child
Derek Coronado
Rick Coronado
Roger Dzugan (alternate for Mark Bartlett)
Karen Fallon
Paul Henshaw
Phil Roberts
Tamara Stomp

Your Committee submits the following recommendation:

Moved by K. Fallon, seconded by T. Stomp,

WHEREAS the Lake Erie Coastal Trail will help to bring residents, tourists, government, industry, nature and culture together to enable a naturally, culturally and economically sustainable coastline; and

WHEREAS the Trail will contribute to commitments made in the City of Windsor Environmental Master Plan as well as the County Wide Active Transportation Study;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Windsor and the County of Essex show support for the Lake Erie Coastal Trail being developed by the Carolinian Canada Coalition by sending a letter of support for the continuation of project funding.

Carried.

NOTE: The Draft "Erie Coastal Stewardship Trail Concept Summary November 2011" and the "Draft" letter from the Windsor-Essex County Environment Committee are attached.

NOTIFICATION:		
Mary Brennan, Director of Council Service/Clerk, County of Essex	mbrennan@countyofessex.on.ca	
WECEC members including resource		



Erie Coastal Stewardship Trail Concept Summary

November 2011



Exploring the Story of the Coast
from Essex to Niagara

www.carolinian.org

Coastal Coordinator coast@carolinian.org 519-433-7077
1017 Western Road, London ON N6G 1G5



Inspired by urgent threats to Lake Erie's coastal landscape, Carolinian Canada and partners, are planning a 600 km trail network that will voluntarily bring together citizens, governments and industry, young and old, residents and tourists, rural and urban to connect with the nature and culture of the coast and become part of it.

Located in the most densely populated region of Canada, Lake Erie's north shore is home to some of the rarest and most unique wildlife and habitats in the country. By cycling, hiking, driving or paddling, people will have access to learn about the heritage of the coast of Lake Erie and be inspired to participate in a future where the coastline thrives both naturally, culturally and economically, a source of pride for generations to come.

Motivation

Carolinian Canada is motivated by a strong concern about increasingly destructive impacts along the Lake Erie coast and its major tributaries. For decades, the coast

and adjoining river valleys have been subjected to long and often damaging uses, such as mining, fishing, unsustainable farming, cottaging and other recreational activities, boating and transport, urban and harbour development, and waste disposal which today constitute a growing challenge to environmental health and the sustainability of a healthy Lake Erie coast.

Vision

The vision of this endeavour is of a series of interlocking driving, walking, riding and paddling stewardship trails along the Lake Erie north coast and its major inland river valleys. The trail's ultimate aim is to serve as a catalyst in promoting better overall understanding and care of coastal and associated river valley natural communities and the water quality and quantity, flood control, air quality, wildlife and other ecological services that they offer to environmental health and our economic and social well-being today and tomorrow.

A Stewardship Trail is a route that illustrates successful activities undertaken by people, organizations and businesses which have helped preserve or improve the plant and animal communities and geological health of the coast.

A Historical Approach with an Eye to the Future

On the highly settled landscapes of Carolinian Canada, natural vegetation, floodplains, river channels, water quality and other landscape characteristics owe much to several centuries of farming, drainage, river diversions, dredging, lumbering, fishing and other land use activities. Some areas reflect attempts to arrest erosion, forest, wetland, soil and other damage through conservation and restoration programs and projects. Success stories will be highlighted along the stewardship trail as examples for others. Carolinian Canada is especially interested in protecting species and habitats at risk. Areas where damaging land and water use practices continue will also be engaged with ideas for opportunities for stewardship activities.

Target Audiences

The Stewardship Trail aims to engage coastal communities in protecting and restoring the health of the coast. The trail is an effective tool since it has strong links to key community values such as health, economy, recreation, environment. The focus will be on recruiting new supporters for coastal stewardship such as coastal residents, decision-makers, businesses and visitors that are

active outdoors, but may not currently understand how their actions affect the coast. The program will also aim to increase understanding and engagement among youth, especially those in urban and heavily settled rural areas who have less access to nature, with the view to educating our future leaders and land managers. The program will lay the groundwork for sustainable awareness that can then lead to an active and coordinated coastal stewardship support network.

Work in Progress

Work began on the Erie Coastal Stewardship Trail in 2009, with initial support from Parks Canada and later the Ontario Trillium Foundation and other sources. Numerous meetings, workshops, surveys and other outreach events along many parts of the Lake Erie coast have taken place and will continue in an attempt to build awareness and involvement in the project. Research, information gathering and mapping has also taken place in order to locate promising trail routes and stewardship sites near the coast.

Routes, stewardship sites and partners are being identified in a collaborative, interlocking Erie Coastal Stewardship Trail. The plan is for a system of trails operated by many partners using common guidelines for stewardship learning.

Interactive Stewardship Tours are being developed by local experts for our major themes: Exploring Coastal Processes; Birding Carolinian Hotspots; Reading Stories of People & the Land; Growing Wild Habitat; Saving Species & Unique Communities; Connecting in the Big Picture.

Stewardship Sites

The summer of 2011 focussed on efforts to identify especially instructive places for stewardship in the form of **Demonstration Sites** and **South Coast Heritage Sites**. Demonstration Sites offer specific examples of stewardship best practices, efforts or opportunities, such as a natural shore restoration project. Heritage Sites stand out as major focal points along the coast that address several stewardship themes, illustrate the evolution of the coastal landscape and highlight interactions between human and nature. Stewardship Demonstration Sites and South Coast Heritage Sites are the building blocks upon which a stewardship trail system will be built.

Coastal Leader Trail Hosts

Some partners may become **Coastal Leader Trail Hosts** and as such would plan, establish, manage and interpret sections of the Stewardship Trail. Carolinian Canada's role would be to coordinate activities amongst the trail hosts and partners along the coast, rather than own or manage any specific portion. Coastal Leader Workshops are establishing a founding network of Trail Hosts. A partnership with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust has engaged several Trail Hosts for the cycle route. Trail Hosts may include municipalities, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, Parks, stewardship, trail or community groups, businesses, landowners and others.

Coast Keepers

A network of **Coast Keepers** are generally individual or groups of volunteers who aid in the planning, maintenance, monitoring and interpretation of the stewardship aspects of the trail. In some cases, Coast Keepers are helping to select preferred trail routes while others are involved in exotic species removal, habitat restoration and general trail maintenance and other stewardship related activities. A measure of the success of the trail in meeting its stewardship mandate will be in its ability to motivate and involve members of the public, youth especially, in the creation of the trail network and the protection of the coast.

Implementing a Multi-Modal Stewardship Trail

There is energy, urgent need and high expectations to implement the Stewardship Trail quickly. Experience during the last two years has shown that a multi-modal and road-linked network will engage the greatest number of people to participate over 600 km. A connected walking trail must be a long term goal on this private landscape. In mapping preliminary trail routes, Carolinian Canada has relied to a considerable extent on linking existing off-road trail loops with secondary roads, including some with long stretches of gravel through relatively remote countryside. A range of opportunities will be included for each mode of transportation from speed-cycling and mountain biking to lake paddling, and inland tributary navigation. The short to medium term (1 – 5 years) plan is to promote multi-modal trail experiences focussing on Stewardship Demonstration Sites and South Coast Heritage Sites along the coast and coastal watersheds.

To launch the trail quickly, a road cycling route will be established first. A combination of hiking, paddling, off-road cycling and wheelchair routes will be then be connected by a Coastal Parkway or driving route. This framework will allow the greatest flexibility to build on current momentum and develop enhanced off-road experiences, over time.

Connecting Stewardship Partners, Stories & Actions

Long stretches of the coast have different geologic, ecological, land use and other characteristics. As such, there are advantages in dividing the trail into 3 **Coastal Regions**: from the Detroit River to Wheatley to the Grand River to the Niagara River. These regions will not only set the context for telling the story of different parts of the coast, but also simplify for the trail user. To assist visitors in using these trails, **Coastal Community Hubs** are being identified where trail users can choose from a variety of experiences, route lengths and Stewardship Themes, as well as, find accommodation, food and other amenities and attractions. Hubs will host users as they drive, cycle or hike in surrounding areas. Self-guided **Stewardship Tours** from each Hub will maximize coastal experience and access off-road trails. In this way the Erie Coastal Stewardship Trail can be linked to municipal or other trail opportunities and new trails. **Coastal Trail Information Centres** will be established by **Trail Hosts** in existing visitor facilities to provide trail information, host events and stewardship actions.

Delivering the Stewardship Message

The linkage to Carolinian Canada is a key element in the development and delivery of the stewardship message. Visits to the Stewardship Sites are a fundamental means of learning about and becoming involved in coastal stewardship. An interpretive strategy is being developed including a Stewardship Trail Guide, Website, signage and other social marketing products that will serve as a means of achieving this goal.

Carolinian Canada is primarily interested in this message: that is, in using the trail to promote better understanding and ultimately better conservation, restoration and more sustainable use of the coast.

Enhancing Ecosystem & Community Health

The trail can be used as a motivator to develop corridors of green and enhance habitat connections in Carolinian Canada's Big Picture Conservation Strategy. Stewardship actions along the trail can also help to implement multi-partner Biodiversity Hotspot Conservation Action Plans developed for Carolinian Canada's Ecosystem Recovery Program. Through these programs, the trail can have significant impact on ecosystem functions, water, air and soil quality, community health and climate change survival.

Greening the Future of Lake Erie's Carolinian Coast

Groups and individuals may wish to join in our network and become part of an expanded trail system and stewardship effort. A set of stewardship principles are being developed which can be adopted by partners. Since the 1980's, Carolinian Canada has had a strong record of collaboration with government and non-government groups in the Carolinian Canada region. We wish to bring this experience, and opportunity to potential partners on the Stewardship Trail. We are looking for collaborators who will support a vision for a healthy coastal vision and stewardship work, under principles such as these:

- Protect and restore native plant and animal communities, or ecosystems, and the geologic, hydrologic, climatic and other processes which support them.
- Promote understanding of the land use history accounting for much of the character and state of present vegetation and ecosystem patterns in the Carolinian Canada region.
- Support conservation and interpretation of built and human heritage.
- Protect and restore species at risk / Control invasive species.
- Support ecological and heritage based planning.
- Support land uses that are sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms.
- Promote collaboration in public and private stewardship.
- Accept responsibility for planning, establishing, managing, monitoring or interpreting sections of the trail.
- Others?



Windsor Essex County

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

4155 Ojibway Parkway • Windsor, Ontario N9A 6S1
Tel: 519-253-7111 ext. 290 • Email: aparent@city.windsor.on.ca

(Applicable funding
organization to be filled
in by Carolinian Canada)

March 26th 2012

Re: Funding application for the Lake Erie Coastal Trail initiative submitted by Carolinian Canada.

Dear (applicable representative),

The Windsor Essex County Environment Committee would like to show support for the Lake Erie Coastal Trail developed by Carolinian Canada over the past two years. This trail offers a new way for public and private partners to manage the coastal zone for people and nature. It will help bring residents, tourists, governments, industry, nature and culture together in ways that will enable this living coastline to thrive naturally, culturally and economically, a source of pride for generations to come.

We wish to show our support for the Trail by encouraging Parks Canada to continue to fund this project through the implementation phase. The City of Windsor and the County of Essex both display stewardship roles along our coast and this Trail will contribute to commitments in our Environmental Master Plan and County Wide Active Transportation Study.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Alan Halberstadt
Committee Co-chair

Charlie Wright
Committee Co-chair