



Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Management Advisory Board

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Message from the Chair:

As Chair of the Management Advisory Board, I am pleased to provide an introduction to this newsletter. Although it has been almost a year since our last electronic newsletter was released, we have been busy and are now able to share our undertakings in a more in-depth way. In this issue, we are very pleased to announce the launch of a new website. Through this website we will be able to share information in a timelier manner. I encourage everyone to visit the website to see what it has to offer. Another Board initiative was the formation of several subcommittees which are working to provide information needed to assist us in making future recommendations. Preparation for management planning has been underway for sometime and is expected to formally begin in the next few months. This newsletter also provides information on our first open houses scheduled for Apsley and Buckhorn.

I hope that you find these topics and others included in this newsletter informative and I hope to see you at one of our open houses.

Kim Dunford

Communications:

It is the mandate of the Management Advisory Board to ensure that we provide as much open communication as possible to keep all informed of the management planning process and our activities.

Central to ensuring information regarding our functioning (Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, meeting summaries, subcommittees, etc.) is available to all who are interested, was a repository for this information – a website.

We welcomed the co-operation of Ontario Parks and the Ministry of Natural Resources in working with us on the time consuming effort of creating a website. We think we have provided the stakeholder community and the general public with a very informative website that will be updated on a regular basis as new information is available.

NEW Website!

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new website for Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park. This website takes the place of the old website for the previous Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park (Bottle & Sucker lakes area) and can be found on the Ontario Parks website under non-operating parks. This is where it shall be housed until the park is fully operational (after an approved management plan is in place). The link to this new site is:

<http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/kawa.html>

We will continue to produce newsletters from the Board, as work or information warrants. From now on, the newsletters will be produced in electronic format only, in an effort to be fiscally responsible. These newsletters will also be posted on the website for easy access. **It is very important to provide your e-mail address to the park office if you wish to receive future newsletters directly.** That's if you haven't already done so. Our electronic mailing list is now at 440 addresses.

It's Official

On April 21, 2005, the Ontario Government formally placed into regulation the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park.

This means the area now has an established boundary and size (37,587 ha) and is officially a provincial park.

If you have received mailings in the past from the Ministry of Natural Resources concerning the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park, we need to ask if your address is still current. If you have had a change of address or an upcoming change of address please let us know. Contact the MNR office in Bancroft (613-332-3940 x216).

Subcommittees

The Charter has outlined the role of the Management Advisory Board in the planning and management of the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park and empowered the Board to establish subcommittees to assist in undertaking our mandate when required. We initially provided a structure under which subcommittees would be established and those included the identification of clear objectives for the subcommittee and a specific timeframe under which the work would be completed.

To date, three subcommittees have been established. A brief description of these three committees is provided here; detailed information such as the Terms

of Reference and membership on these can be viewed on the website.

Kawartha Highlands Ecological Integrity Subcommittees:

This subcommittee is presently active and has been established to construct the framework under which the protection, preservation and restoration of ecological integrity will help guide management planning and the administration of the park. Prior to the completion of the preliminary management plan for the park, the Ecological Integrity Subcommittee will provide the Board with detailed recommendations based on "The State of Ecological Integrity Report for the Kawartha Highlands". There will be an ongoing requirement for this subcommittee to remain active.

Trails and Roads Subcommittee:

This subcommittee is presently active and has been established to identify roads and trails that are to be recognized as **pre-existing roads** and trails for the purposes of the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act, 2003, ***excluding the proposed new access roads***. The intent of this subcommittee is to develop and submit a draft plan of the recommended motorized trail and road system to the Management Advisory Board for consideration as recommendations for the Minister on the approved road and trail system for appropriate motorized vehicle use.

Essential Services Subcommittee:

This subcommittee has been established to address the need for immediate action on operational issues relating to the health and safety of both persons and the environment. The intent of this subcommittee is to put into effect temporary measures until future direction is developed through Park Management Planning.

What Is 'Ecological Integrity'?

One of the most important goals of the planning and management of the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park is the protection of the ecological integrity of the area. Although Parks Canada has been mandated to protect ecological integrity since 1988, the KHSS Park will be the first Ontario provincial park where the protection of the area's ecological integrity has become one of the most important elements in the park's planning and management. This is an achievement to be proud of for all those who worked towards this piece of important legislation.

In order to understand the meaning of "ecological integrity" the Board members heard a series of lectures on the topic. We learned that our ecosystem is composed of non-living (granite bedrock, limestone bedrock, sunlight, water, air, climate, minerals...) and living elements

(bacteria, plants and animals) and that these elements coexist and support each other in a great union of *biological community* and habitat we call *ecosystem*. We further learned that life in each ecosystem is supported by a number of *functions* such as nutrient cycling, photosynthesis and the hydrologic cycle. Each ecosystem possesses a variety of species that in a web of interdependencies support each other and balance their output. This so called *biodiversity* greatly contributes to the area's healthy stability. The greater the variety of life the better chance for survival in the face of negative impacts.

Ecosystems are not stagnant, they change. Natural disasters such as wildfire, flooding, drought or other so-called natural disasters bring about changes which may result in death or departure of some of the ecosystem's players. We learned, however, that these are healthy changes as they create a new healthy habitat where a new life may begin. As opposed to the negative impact of pollution, over-harvest and habitat destruction imposed on healthy ecosystems by a man. Only a high degree of ecological integrity (natural health) may successfully protect ecosystems against the destructive forces such as natural disasters or human activities. This is why the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act stipulates that the protection of ecological integrity is paramount in the planning and management of the future park.

The definition which is presently being used by the MNR and Ontario Parks:

"An ecosystem has integrity when it is deemed characteristic for its natural region including the composition and

abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change, and supporting processes."

In our learning process we are examining the mosaic of biological communities of the Kawartha Highlands noting the areas of ecological excellence or species that are at risk.

Board Appointments

In August 2004, the Terms of two of our Board Members expired: Janice Griffith and Tom Flynn.

In March 2005, the Lieutenant Governor signed Orders in Council for the appointment of two replacement members: Tom Flynn and Tom Cole. Mr. Flynn has been reappointed and Mr. Cole was a past member of the Kawartha Highlands Local Stakeholder Committee. See the website for biographies on all Board members, past and present!

In August 2005, the terms of five (5) more Board members will expire. If you feel that you might like to become involved in Board work (review the Terms of Reference on the website, particularly Section 2.2) you must apply on line at the Public Appointments Secretariat:
<http://www.pas.gov.on.ca/scripts/en/BoardDetails.asp?boardID=140657>

It is important to note that members appointed to the Board do not represent other organizations while participating in Board work.

Public Open Houses

Apsley Community Centre:

Saturday May 28, 2005 (10-3pm)

Buckhorn Community Centre:

Saturday June 4, 2005 (10-3pm)

In preparation for management planning, the focus of these two open houses will be on Charter elements which have prescribed time lines. Specifically, this includes:

- the identification of those roads and trails within the area that may be considered pre-existing, as well as
- the potential for two new access roads into the Park.

A consultant will be hired by MNR to evaluate the potential for two access roads into the Park. The consultant will be available at the open house to explain the Environmental Assessment process and discuss any questions, concerns or comments you may have.

Current trail mapping will be displayed for public input and review. It is important that anyone with knowledge of existing trails and roads in the Park examine the information collected for completeness and accuracy. Information concerning the history and use of individual roads and trails is welcome.

Information is also being sought from individuals who may:

- have kept annual notes of freeze up and ice out on the park lakes, species check lists, and any other information on the natural history of the area, and/or
- have knowledge of the cultural history of the area.

This information will provide a better foundation for planning the future of the area.

In addition to the above, staff and Management Advisory Board members will be on hand to discuss the management planning process and schedule.

Summer Operations

- ❖ This summer you can expect to see a continuation of the canoe route and campsite maintenance activities. This will be completed, as in past years, by several junior and stewardship ranger crews, as well as park staff.
- ❖ Ecological Land Classification field work will be ongoing this summer to support the management planning process.
- ❖ Work will be continuing on any remaining road and trail mapping required as a result of new information provided at open houses.
- ❖ The campsite inventory will be completed to assess the condition of sites against provincial park standards. This will finalize work started last year.
- ❖ Site specific problems will be addressed where possible. This will focus on immediate threats to the environment or public health and safety.