

Report to/Rapport au :

**Community and Protective Services Committee
Comité des services communautaires et de protection**

and Council / et au Conseil

**March 14, 2013
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Submitted by/Soumis par :

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Ref N°: ACS2013-COS-PRC-0003

SUBJECT: PETRIE ISLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

OBJET : PLAN DE GESTION DES ÎLES PETRIE

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Community and Protective Services Committee recommend Council approve the Petrie Islands Management plan as the primary tool to guide the long term management of Petrie Islands, a 291 hectare conservation and recreation area located on the Ottawa River.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des services communautaires et de protection recommande au Conseil d'approuver le Plan de gestion des îles Petrie comme premier outil pour orienter la gestion à long terme des îles Petrie, une aire de conservation et de loisirs de 291 ha située dans la rivière des Outaouais.

BACKGROUND

The Official Plan for the City of Ottawa states that the City will protect forests, wetlands and other natural features and that the City will determine how these lands can best be managed to ensure their environmental health. The Petrie Islands Management Plan, prepared in 2010/2011, provides a means to fulfill this objective. Based on a comprehensive review of ecological conditions, and with significant input from the public and stakeholder groups it will guide the long term management of this important conservation and recreational site located on the Ottawa River.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Petrie Islands is a 291 hectare City of Ottawa property comprised of alluvial islands, wetlands and forests along the Ottawa River. Petrie Islands offers a rare example of a largely natural island and wetland complex and is recognized as provincially significant wetland. The property is divided into three major components. Approximately 59 per cent of the area is designated as conservation land (Grandmaitre Ecological Reserve and Petrie Marsh), 10 per cent is recreational land (Stuemer Park and parts of Queenswood Forest) while the remaining 31 per cent is open water within and between the islands and the shore. The City of Ottawa Official Plan designates the upland portions of Petrie as “Urban Natural Feature” and “Major Open Space” and the wetland pieces as “Significant Wetland”.

The overall objective of the plan is to ensure the long term protection of the significant ecological features and functions of the Islands while providing sustainable opportunities for appropriate recreational activities.

The plan does this by:

- Being based on a twenty-five year planning horizon
- Using the results of an ecological assessment to guide long term management
- Designating four activity zones within Petrie Islands which identify appropriate types and intensities of human activity based on conservation objectives
- Specifying management and development priorities based on five specific goals

The highlights of the planning process and the contents of the plan follow.

Petrie Islands Activity Zones

The primary management tool for Petrie Islands is the designation, within this Plan and for the purposes of this Plan, only, of four activity zones. They are based on conservation objectives and the quality of the natural habitat and direct the location, type and intensity of human activity on the islands. Application of the activity zones will ensure the long term health of the natural environment and a sustainable level of human activity within Petrie Islands. They are summarized below.



1. Primary Conservation Areas

- 48% of the total land and water area
- Focused on the protection of ecological diversity and the support of natural functions
- No recreational facilities provided and public access not supported or facilitated
- Grandmaitre Ecological Reserve and Petrie Marsh

2. Natural Environment Areas

- 11% of the total land and water area
- Focused on the protection of ecological diversity and the support of natural functions
- Low impact recreational activities permitted (hiking on designated trails, non-motorized boating, fishing)
- Grandmaitre Ecological Reserve and Queenswood Forest

3. Recreation Areas

- 10% of the total land and water area
- Permits relatively intensive recreational activity in a natural setting (beach use, recreational pathways) and supporting services (parking areas, washroom and change facilities)
- Includes Steumer Park and portions of the Queenswood Forest

4. Channel Areas:

- 31% of the total land and water area
- Open water between the islands and the mainland
- Under provincial jurisdiction
- Promotion of low impact recreational use (canoe and kayaking)

Management and Development

Management and development priorities for Petrie Islands are based on five goals and were established through public consultation and extensive discussion with stakeholders. They are summarized below.

1. Protect Ecological Integrity

Plan specifies the means to preserve natural habitats and ecological functions

- Describes management approaches based on four defined activity zones
- Guides management of invasive species (eg Canada Geese)
- Provides protection for ecologically significant habitats

2. Provide Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Plan supports a range of appropriate recreational activities

- Guides location and intensity of activities (eg. trail activities, boating , beach use, fishing) based on four defined land designations
- Supports appropriately scaled special events in designated locations

3. Offer Public Education Opportunities

Plan supports a range of educational opportunities to increase awareness and support for the protection of the natural environment

- Proposes the use of partnerships for the delivery of educational programs
- Supports the placement of natural and cultural interpretive signage at key locations (beaches, trails, destinations)

4. Maintain Community Security and Safety on Petrie Islands

Plan provides the means to ensure that visitors can experience a safe and enjoyable visit to Petrie Islands

- Proposes a level of service which is appropriate to the clientele and the setting (eg hours of operation)
- Ensure that risks are managed by providing visitors with adequate information to allow them to make safe choices

5. Provide Management Through Partnerships

Plan supports expanding the use of partnerships in the delivery of programs and activities

- Identifies partnership opportunities
- Proposes the means to facilitate the use of partnerships

Plan Implementation

Given that the primary management focus of Petrie Islands is conservation, the proposals are modest in scale and are to be implemented over a five to ten year period. They will be funded through Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services capital and operational budgets leveraged by partnership agreements where possible.

The following are proposals within the plan that will require funding (based on 2012 dollars) over the coming years:

- Development of an overall communications strategy to create a better awareness and understanding of the role of Petrie Islands and the opportunities that it offers to visitors. This will include the development of site signage. (\$40,000)
- Improvements to the trail network including drainage, surfacing and trail definition (\$50,000)
- Widening of the access road over the causeway to improve pedestrian, cycling and emergency vehicle access to the island (\$500,000 to \$1,000,000)

Conclusion

The Petrie Islands Management Plan provides a framework for the management and operation of Petrie Islands over the next twenty-five years. The plan gives clear direction for the protection of its ecological values while offering the means for appropriate and sustainable recreational opportunities to be offered to the public. The plan also recognizes the important role of partnerships and the benefits to the City of working with organizations such as the Friends of Petrie Island in the delivery of recreational and educational opportunities and programming.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

Development of the plan took place in 2010 and 2011.

Public notification of consultation opportunities was achieved through:

- Advertisements for public consultations in community newspapers
- Public notices on the City of Ottawa website
- Direct e-mail notification of community associations and special interest groups
- Publication of public service announcements

Significant opportunities were provided for public input and review of the plan as it was prepared. These included

- Two stakeholder workshops; the first to gather initial input and the second to refine management recommendations presented in a draft plan.
- Two open house public consultations to inform the community and to gather input for the preparation and refinement of the plan
- The use of surveys and feedback sheets to gather public input

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

The Councillor is aware of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Sufficient funding is available within existing Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services capital budgets for the signage at Petrie Island identified in the Plan Implementation. Any additional funding requirements will be brought forward through the annual capital budget process for Council approval once final costs and timing for plan implementation are completed.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

ITS will work closely with Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services to develop a detailed work plan and business cases for technology initiatives that may be required to support this plan. This work plan and business cases where required, would be evaluated and approved through the City of Ottawa ITS intake process for all new technology requests.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

HC2 – improve Parks and Recreation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Petrie Islands Management Plan- Final

DISPOSITION

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services department will carry forward the recommendations from this report.