



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

No.	2019-P181
To	Board of Directors
Date	2019-04-11

For DECISION

Subject/Title

Federal Approval for the Implementation of the Responsible Trail Management Project – Phase 2

Purpose of the Submission

- To obtain the Board of Director's approval to officialize 16.5 km of trails in Gatineau Park as part of the implementation of the Responsible Trail Management Project.

Recommendation

- THAT the Board of Directors grant Federal Approval pursuant to section 12 of the *National Capital Act*, for the addition of 16.5 km to the official trail network in Gatineau Park and related trail improvement works, as identified in Appendix A; and
- THAT the preparation and signature of the Federal Approval associated with this submission be delegated to the Executive Director, Capital Planning Branch.

Submitted by:

Daniel Champagne, Executive Director, Capital Planning
Name

Signature

Submitted by:

Anne Ménard, Acting Executive Director, Capital
Stewardship
Name

Signature

1. Authority

National Capital Act, section 12

2. Project Description

A proposal from the Quebec Urban Lands and Gatineau Park Division to add 16.5 km to the official trail network has been received for review by the Federal Approvals and Heritage Program Division. Gatineau Park offers an official trail network of approximately 200 km in length. Over time, park visitors have created over 330 km of unofficial trails resulting in concerns related to the ecological integrity of the Park. The intent of the Responsible Trail Management Project is to reduce fragmentation by re-naturalizing over 200 km of unofficial trails that are causing habitat fragmentation in order to better conserve the Park's ecological health. The intent is to integrate other existing unofficial trails into the official trail network only if they can be formalized in a manner that is consistent with the Park's conservation objectives. This work will be done in collaboration with user and volunteers groups.

The intent of the Responsible Trail Management Project is to reduce ecological fragmentation in Gatineau Park caused by the creation and use of unofficial trails, while offering a network of trails that provide a diversified and safe experience that is responsive to visitor needs. Phase 1 of the new 16.5 km includes 8.6 km of existing winter trails that will now become official year-round, and 1 km of a former roadway. During the winter, these trails will be used for snowshoeing, snow biking and backcountry skiing. In the summer, they will be used as hiking and mountain biking trails. The implementation of this phase of the project is not dependent on the formalization of other trails identified in future phases of the Responsible Trail Management Project.

Some minor trail improvements are required to formalize the trails for the official network. These works include the trimming of vegetation, manual trail levelling and clearing, the installation of minor drainage features and trail signage. Removable bridge structures will be installed where required to protect watercourses and wetlands. Trail improvements and maintenance will be undertaken by the NCC in collaboration with volunteers. All works will be undertaken in accordance with the environmental practices identified in the Mitigation Measures Form prepared for this project.

3. NCC Staff Analysis / Risks and Mitigations Measures

The proposal is consistent with the policy direction in the Plan for Canada's Capital (2017-2067) which supports efforts to "work with Park users to ensure respectful recreation that meets the growing and diversified interests of users, while ensuring conservation, such as the 'leave no trace' philosophy. The NCC will work with user groups to forge sustainable relationships between people and nature" (p. 48). The Plan identifies a "New Gatineau Visitor Centre and Improved Trails" as one of its 17 Milestone Projects (p. 48).

The 16.5 km of trails to be made official are located near the eastern Park boundary between the Meech Creek Valley and Wakefield. The Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005) identifies the trails under the Conservation and extensive recreation zone (C2) and the Agro-tourism and Conservation zone (AC1). Although multi use trails are permitted under the AC1 zone, the C2 zone does not permit any new trails, with the exception of the Trans-Canada Trail and short inter-trail connections. Therefore, the proposal is, in part, inconsistent with the Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005), which is currently under review. Through the Master Plan renewal process, it has been confirmed that the unofficial trails proposed to be formalized as part of the Responsible Trail Management Project – Phase 2 are expected to form part of the update to the official trail network that will be included in the renewed Master Plan.

The purpose of this submission is to allow the proposed trail formalization to proceed in advance of the renewal of the Master Plan. This will enable the NCC to continue scheduled trail improvements planned for Summer 2019. It is anticipated that pursuing this course of action will help to maintain momentum with the support of the trail users and volunteer groups that have collaborated in an ongoing manner with the NCC to develop this project and that are critical to its successful implementation. Given the NCC's extensive outreach effort to engage these stakeholders, staff recommends proceeding with the implementation of Phase 2 this summer, pending the outcome of the Master Plan renewal.

4. Strategic Links

- Corporate Priority 4 – Modernize the planning framework to provide for timely and effective coordination of federal land use and design in the Capital Region and renew the Gatineau Park Master Plan.
- Corporate Priority 5 – Be a value-added partner to create lasting legacies that serve as sources of pride for Canadians.
- NCC Plans:
 - Plan for Canada's Capital (2017-2067)
 - Gatineau Park Master Plan (2005) – Plan review is underway

5. Consultations and Communications

Since 2014, the National Capital Commission has held five rounds of consultation with trail user groups and the general public as part of the Responsible Trail Management Project. Targeted consultation events were held during June-October 2014, April 2015, October-November 2015 and in March 2017. This was followed by a session for the general public in April 2017. More than 80 organizations were invited to participate in these discussions. The 2017 session for the general public attracted 110 participants and an online survey of meeting participants and members of the public on the NCC's distribution lists generated 1,033 responses.

6. Next Steps

- April 2019: Approval letter to be prepared in accordance with the Board's decision.
Summer 2019: Phase 2 – Trail improvements implemented in collaboration with volunteers.
Early 2020: Presentation of final Plan to the NCC Board of Directors for approval.

7. List of Appendices

Appendix A – Map of unofficial trails to be added to the Gatineau Park official trail network

8. Authors of the Submission

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Appendix A – Map of unofficial trails to be added to the Gatineau Park official trail network as part of Phase 2

