

Bancroft council receives annual report from Stewards of Bancroft's Eagles Nest Park



By Nate Smelle

During their meeting on Wednesday, June 7, Bancroft council received the annual report from the Stewards of Bancroft Eagles Nest Park's vice chair Steve Wilkins and chair Dora Yateman. Wilkins opened the presentation by providing council with a list of the Stewards accomplishments in 2022.

The first accomplishment Wilkins highlighted was the new memorandum of understanding established with the Town of Bancroft. Noting that they began working on the MOU more than four years ago, he described it as 'a really good document' that lays out the guidelines and responsibilities of each partner.

Next, Wilkins acknowledged how in 2022 the Stewards updated their strategic plan. Outlining in detail the Stewards' intentions from February 2023 through 2026, he said the strategic plan prioritizes the group's future activities and the tasks that they have planned.

In addition, Wilkins said members of the board met with a representative from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to discuss potential trail expansion into the Crown lands adjacent Eagles Nest Park. The Stewards also conducted an assessment of the Eagles Nest infestation of *Lymatria dispar* (gypsy moths) and provided recommendations to Bancroft council; which in turn saved the municipality money, as spraying was not required. Throughout 2022, Wilkins said they also hosted six sessions of the Nature Connects interpretative program at Eagles Nest Park.

Yateman next filled council in on the Stewards of Bancroft's Eagles Nest Park's plans for 2023. Firstly, she said the Stewards are going to continue investigating possibilities and requirements for trail expansion into the Crown lands beside the park.

We have to have the approvals in place ? the Algonquin approval, and MNRF ? and we need to determine if an archaeological study is needed. That will come through the AOO [Algonquins of Ontario].

According to Yatemen, the Stewards are also planning to transition their website (www.eaglesnestpark.com) to a new format, and add a blog feature. With additional funding from the Community Furtres and the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, she said they have developed a series of 12 facilitated nature-themed educational walks, which will take place throughout the summer up until October 2023.

In 2023, Yateman said some of the Stewards other plans also include: the installation of a donation collection boxes on Eagles Nest;

identify other means of raising funds for park programming and carry them out; and, work with the Town of Bancroft and Hastings Destination Trail Initiative to ensure data collection counters are installed to collect information about park use.

To make sure council understood Phase-2 of the Stewards plan to expand the trail system atop the Eagles Nest, Wilkins explained that the MNRF has given them the go ahead to hike the proposed trail and record its GPS coordinates. Once the Stewards have provided the ministry with the coordinates of the trail, he said they will then apply for a permit. Since they do not plan to take many trees down to create the trail, Wilkins said he does believe it will be difficult to attain a permit from the MNRF.

While it is unknown at the moment whether the Algonquins of Ontario will require them to conduct any searches of the land, Wilkins said ?it sounds like at the most that we may end up having to do test holes every 10 feet.? If any artifacts are found during the searches, he said they will move forward with a full archaeological study.

Acknowledging the positive relationship with the Town of Bancroft, Wilkins said the Stewards have only one new request from council. That being, for council to provide information/protocol for any special events/fundraising events that they might wish to hold in the park.