

FRIENDS OF PETRIE ISLAND
AMIS DE L'ÎLE PETRIE



www.petrieisland.org

Report to the City of Ottawa for the 2013 Summer Season
November 1, 2013

This was the Friends of Petrie Island's sixteenth year of operation and our ninth with the new beach open. The City provided lifeguards and daily maintenance and operated the beach house starting in mid June and closing the 3rd week in August, except for Labour Day weekend in September.

HIGHLIGHTS

- High water levels from late April until June, closed the trails for a period of 60 days. The entrance road was also closed for 12 days.
- The river beaches were closed 5 days, and the East beach was only closed 1 day this year.
- Funds generated included: \$13456 In grants, \$650 in donations and a value of \$15910 in volunteer labour for a total of \$30,018 - *see Summary, tables 3 and 4, appendix A*
- FOPI partnered with the Rideau Kayak and Canoe Club to run weekly camps for 6 weeks for 10 – 12 year olds in the summer.
- The Friends of Petrie Island completed an eighth year of turtle nesting studies
- Junior nature program was continued and we added a program for ages 7 to 12 and we had 6 School tours
- The first stakeholders meeting to deal with the Petrie Island Master Plan was held.
- We purchased and installed a 20 X 30 ft. Tent for programs and activities.
- The city initiated a new goose control program using a remote control air and land drone.
- We participated in the Ottawa RiverKeeper Watch program which included taking and analyzing river samples.
- New information signs requested in 2006 were installed in May of this year at the Bend in the road.
- New dock for canoes and kayaks was installed.
- We improved our outdoor nature signage with updated information on plants and animals and also increased the number of signs.

PARTNERSHIPS

- FOPI continued interactions with City staff
- Ottawa Duck Club - Duck counts
- Ottawa Riverkeeper – River Watch
- Turtle Day with presentation from Little Ray's Reptiles
- Ottawa Voyageurs Walking Club - Orleans Royal Canadian Legion
- Knights of Columbus E Waste day
- Clean ups and a grant application with Ecology Ottawa
- Carleton University class on removing invasive plants

- Rideau Canoe and Kayak Club

SITE IMPROVEMENTS – FOPI

- Improved the Nature Centre, set up 2 new aquariums
- We set up an outdoor pond for animal use, and 2 rabbit cages.
- Majority of work was done on Wednesday mornings; some groups also participated in general cleanups
- We built 6 new picnic tables and renovated 8 others
- We prepared a new stone dust base for the tent

OPERATIONS

- Spring cleanup in cooperation with Ecology Ottawa and monitoring of the picnic area and trails was provided by Friends of Petrie Island, using volunteers and students hired with City funding \$8,124 along with a Careers Canada grant of \$13,456
- Monitoring is important to protect the environment and for public safety and has led to reduced levels of vandalism and damage. No major damage or vandalism has occurred this year.
- The City opened the beach washrooms, May 21 to Sept 2, provided daily garbage collection and beach grooming maintenance, materials and grass cutting
- City provided regular lifeguards from mid-June to the end of August for the two beach areas. The River beaches and the East beach were monitored separately and opened accordingly. The river beaches were closed 10 days and the East beach 3 days due to high E. coli readings.
- Geese were considered to be the main factor in the beach closings. The City continued studies for geese control. The City hired a company with a drone for geese control and consequently the number of geese was drastically reduced.
- Dragging of the sand areas continues to be a concern as it may affect turtle nesting
- The new sign should help reduce parking complaints although the pay and display were still up in October and caused some confusion.

ATTENDANCE

- Attendance was reduced in May and June due to flooding which limited access to the trails and the area.
- Attendance figures are based on car counts multiplied by 3 persons in May, June, July & August – figures represent person-hours of use
- Figures are found in Table 1 of Appendix A.

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

FOPI continued the programs they began last year: Junior Naturalist ages 2-6, Naturalist ages 6-10, were successful. A program for 11+ ages was unsuccessful. We gave tours to schools (4) and to daycares (2). We ran our 10th Turtle Day and added an Edible Plant Walk Tour, and a Salamander Day.

A volunteer, Katherine Forster, edited and updated the plant signs (adding French names, updating ecological properties and doing other updates as needed) that were part of our ongoing self guided tours. These plant signs are installed in the Wildflower Garden and along the Turtle Trail and Bill Holland Trail for visitors to learn more about native plants. She also created new signs for grasses and ferns and some other plants that are found on the island. The wildflower garden beds were maintained by volunteers throughout the summer and some transplanting was done. The director established a third garden bed near the Nature Centre with the help of a volunteer.

Jim Robertson's 4 slide shows continue to be available on our website and are very popular. Dawn to Dusk , Birds of Petrie , Seasons in a Small Wilderness, and Turtles were viewed over 300 times

- 25 Junior Naturalist programs were held during the summer and fall, ages 2 – 6,
- Opened the centre daily in June, July and August and on weekends in May, and September
- Theme days were held with nature displays, including a 13th Wildflower Walk and an 12th annual Turtle Day which included a presentation from Little Ray's Reptiles
- We held an E waste day in co operation with the Knights of Columbus, and a Jane's Walk for the 5th year.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

- FOPI members continued Turtle counts on Turtle Pond
- 5 of the twenty Butternut trees planted in 2008/09 have survived.
- An eighth turtle nesting study was conducted by FOPI with some members of the public. Snapping turtle hatchlings were observed in different parts of Steumer park the last week in August and the first week in September. Poaching of turtle nests by racoons and skunks continue to be a major hazard for turtle, with over 100 nests being poached.
- Wood duck boxes (Ottawa Duck Club) were again well used
- FOPI continues to participate in the Riverwatch program for Ottawa Riverkeeper on the Ottawa River this included taking four samples over the summer to measure clarity, PH, dissolved oxygen and phosphate levels.
- The largest amount of damage continues to be from beavers felling or damaging mature trees
- FOPI continues to oppose a bridge at Petrie Island
- New Geese control measures seem to be working.
- Staff also attended a one day training session with the Riverkeepers for Riverwatchers

SUMMARY

The main beach has been in operation for nine years and FOPI has operated and developed the picnic area and trails over the past sixteen years.

Some of the issues FOPI has championed for several years were completed this year.

1. **New Signage requested by FOPI in 2006 was installed in May 2013. They provide useful information on Petrie Island rules and activities and we have received good comments on them.**
2. **Parking: More information was installed on the signs. There were some questions about the actual period when the public has to pay.**
3. **Review of washroom operation – there are still requests for the washrooms to be open in early May and September earlier in the morning (9:00am) and the weekends in early May and September, and porta-potty could also be installed earlier, and later in the year**
4. **The e coli counts were better this year resulting in fewer closures, and there was less goose feces on the East Beach and the grass areas in general thanks to the initiation of a drone program by Bob Monette and supported by FOPI.**
5. **Shelter – we purchased and installed a tent for programs and public events, but we still feel there is the need for the addition of other shelters and amenities in the park and should be addressed by the City, as there is no mention of it in the Master Plan.**
6. **FOPI does not agree with holding large events in Steumer Park, especially when they interfere with turtle nesting and public use, such as the opening of the beaches.**

7. **The location of large events should be moved from the East Beach to the centre area, the East beach was blocked off to the general public for several days for each of two large events this year. This was recommended last year but not implemented.**
8. **We support twice yearly meetings of Staff and user groups to review operations and make improvements,**
9. **Future plans could include a playground with an historical or natural theme.**
10. **The new canoe launch was installed in June, we received complaints that it was too small, and is very unstable.**

Al Twedde, Chair, Friends of Petrie Island
(613) 824-1188 - hatwedde@rogers.com

FRIENDS OF PETRIE ISLAND EXECUTIVE

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Interpretive Program Committee	Paul Le Fort, Al Twedde, Bill Bower, Katherine Forster
Liaison with Rideau Club	Sarah Kennedy

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Caleigh Delle Palme
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Julie Williams
Eva Kasanda
Frank Ogilvie