

FRIENDS OF PETRIE ISLAND
AMIS DE L'ÎLE PETRIE



www.petrieisland.org

Report to the City of Ottawa for the 2014 Summer Season
December 31, 2014

This was the Friends of Petrie Island's seventeenth year of operation, we maintain and operate the picnic area, nature trails, nature center, various outdoor displays and facilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

A late spring reduced May attendance but overall attendance was good for the year, see Table 4. The entrance road was closed for 17 days in May and the trails were closed for 35 days

- We hired 4 summer students through Careers Canada program (\$12,590) which allowed us to expand our Junior and Youth Naturalist programs (37 sessions and 715 participants) and 626 children from 10 schools took our tours.
 - We received a Trillium grant for \$13,500, which allowed us to hire a Native Flora program coordinator. The grant was used to promote memberships, recruit volunteers to work on projects to remove invasive species, wrap trees for Beaver protection, and plant native species in our Wildflower garden. We also held fund raising events, educational events and tours for adults as well as improving the nature trails and hosting a River day which featured 8 environmental organizations.
 - Wednesday work crews maintained the trails and improved signage and displays, built picnic tables and participated with Ecology Ottawa in two cleanups.
 - The new tent was used for FOPI programs and displays (50 events), and was also rented out as a fundraiser 17 times.
 - We continued our activities as River Watchers and took samples for Riverkeeper for the second year
 - Obtained from the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority 20 Butternut trees and they also produced a report on shoreline erosion.
 - The river beaches were closed 14 days, and the East beach was closed 4 days this year.
 - The total value of grants and donated labour and materials was \$42,000.
 - FOPI partnered with the Rideau Canoe Club to run weekly camps for 6 weeks for 10 – 12 year olds in the summer.
 - The Friends of Petrie Island completed a ninth year of turtle nesting studies
FOPI continued interactions with City staff on signage, recreational planning, forestry, tree wrapping and/or removal of dangerous trees.
 - We improved our outdoor nature signage with updated information on plants and animals and also increased the number of signs.
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- **PARTNERSHIPS**
 - FOPI continued interactions with City staff, Parks and Recreation, Forestry, Park planning,
 - Ottawa Duck Club - Duck counts
 - Ottawa Riverkeeper – River Watch
 - Turtle Day with presentation from Little Ray's Reptiles
 - Clean ups with Ecology Ottawa

- Carleton University class on removing invasive plants
- Rideau Canoe and Kayak Club summer camps
- Rideau Conservation Authority produced a shoreline erosion plan and provided 20 Butternut trees

PARTNERS FOR RIVER DAY

- Ottawa Stewardship Council
- Ottawa Carleton Wildlife Centre
- Nature Museum
- Ecology Ottawa
- Ottawa Riverkeeper
- Geological Society of Ottawa
- Invasive plant Council

SITE IMPROVEMENTS – FOPI

- Majority of work was done on Wednesday mornings; some groups also participated in general cleanups
- Improved the Nature Centre with new pumps for aquariums
- We built 2 new picnic tables and renovated others
- We made improvements to the tent purchased last year and it was rented 17 times and used for programs and activities 50 times. We added patio stones for the floor and space for information panels.
- We replaced a vandalised sign and platform on Bill Holland trail with Trillium funds

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.
- Monitoring is important, (70 hours per week) to protect the environment and for public safety and has led to reduced levels of vandalism and damage. The first major vandalism after 12 years occurred this year when the sign and platform on the Bill Holland trail were almost completely destroyed, presumably by people at a bush party in late fall.
- The City opened the beach washrooms, May 17 to Sept 1, 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 14 days and the East beach 4 mainly days due to high E. coli readings. (Some of the closings were based on heavy rainfall and speculation of high 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.
- The new entrance information signs at the bend were used by many new visitors and we received good comments on them.

ATTENDANCE

- Attendance fell in May due to flooding which limited access to the trails and the area but the total for the year was 315,609.
- 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 its various educational programs. Junior Naturalist ages 2-6, and Naturalist ages 6-10 were very successful, with a total of 715 children at 37 sessions. We gave 10 tours to schools with 626 students plus parents and to 1 daycare. We also ran a fall Junior Naturalist program with 6 events attended by 65 children.

Opened the centre daily in June, July and August and on weekends in May and September (7700 visitors) Theme days were held with nature displays, including a 14th Wildflower Walk and our annual Turtle Day, which included a presentation from Little Ray's Reptiles

Katherine Forster was hired with a Trillium grant

- to promote membership (20 new members)
- Organize volunteers and groups to work on environmental projects,
- invasive plant removal, 40 participants
- tree wrapping with wire for Beaver protection,
- planting along the river for shoreline erosion protection (70 trees and 74 plants)
- Organized four new adult tours, and River Day with 8 environmental groups
- Hosted 48 students from 15 countries as part of an International camp project

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

- FOPI members continued Turtle counts on Turtle Pond, fewer turtles were observed on Turtle pond but were observed in other areas probably due to high water levels in the spring
- A ninth turtle nesting study was conducted by FOPI with some members of the public. Poaching of turtle nests by racoons and skunks continue to be a major hazard for turtles, with over 100 nests being poached.
- Wood duck boxes (Ottawa Duck Club) were less well used
- FOPI continues to participate in the River Watch program for Ottawa Riverkeeper on the Ottawa, which included taking four samples over the summer to measure clarity, PH, dissolved oxygen and phosphate levels.
- The greatest amount of damage continues to be from beavers felling or damaging mature trees. Staff measured and reported on 30 large trees taken down by beavers in the spring
- Goose control measures seem to be working and were used again this year.

SUMMARY

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

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

1. 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

2. 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 continuation of a drone program by the City and supported by FOPI.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. We support twice yearly meetings of Staff and user groups to review operations and make improvements. No fall meeting was held.

7. Future plans could include a playground with an historical or natural theme.

8. We still receive complaints that the canoe launch is too small and very unstable.

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FRIENDS OF PETRIE ISLAND EXECUTIVE

Chair	Al Tweddle
Vice-chair	Paul Le Fort
Secretary	Paul Le Fort
Treasurer	Doug Drouillard
Website	David Villeneuve
Members at Large	Gil LeBlanc,
Interpretive Program Committee	Paul Le Fort, Al Tweddle, Bill Bower, Katherine Forster
Liaison with Rideau Club	Sarah Kennedy

STAFF

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