

Memo

To: Town of Orangeville Council

From: Kate Burgess, Conservation Lands Planner, CVC

Date: March 12, 2021

Re: Update on the Island Lake Conservation Area Management Plan

BACKGROUND

Island Lake Conservation Area (ILCA) is located in the rolling hills of Dufferin County in the Towns of Orangeville and Mono and provides four seasons of recreation. It's 329 hectares of lake, wetland, forest and meadows play an important ecological role in protecting the headwaters of the Credit and Nottawasaga Rivers.

The current ILCA management plan was completed in 1997 and outlines objectives and directions for a 20-year timeframe. This plan, together with an addendum in 2005, set the stage for the development of several key recreational facilities and supporting infrastructure at ILCA, such as the boat launch, docks, picnic pavilions, washrooms, parking lots, viewing platforms, fishing piers and trail system.

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) initiated an update to the 1997 management plan in 2015, which included a delegation to the Town of Orangeville Council on May 25, 2015. CVC staff worked with stakeholders, including Town of Orangeville staff and committee representatives, to examine ILCA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and better understand important considerations for the management plan. The project was paused in 2017 as CVC worked to complete a new strategic plan to guide management of the 7,000+ acres of CVC owned and managed conservation lands. With this plan¹ complete, CVC staff are moving forward with completing a new management plan for ILCA by the end of 2021.

The 1997 management plan and 2005 addendum have served CVC, Credit River watershed residents, park visitors, and the communities of Orangeville and Mono well for nearly 25 years, however, much has changed during this time. Parks across our watershed and the Greater Golden Horseshoe are experiencing record visitation attributed to urban sprawl and population growth and shifting recreational, tourism and leisure trends. The vision² for recreation in Canada is one where everyone is engaged in meaningful accessible recreation

¹ CVC's Conservation Areas Master Strategy 2018-2028 can be viewed at <https://cvc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/conservation-areas-master-strat-web.pdf>

² A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association 2015)

experiences that foster individual and community wellbeing, and the wellbeing of our natural and built environments. As we look at ways to better engage park visitors and meet demand for access to greenspace and outdoor recreation, climate change and other pressures on the natural environment threaten the very natural system that CVC works hard to protect. A new management plan for ILCA will reflect these changes and pressures and present an action plan that balances the protection of natural and cultural heritage values with public access and meaningful visitor experiences.

Completing a management plan for the Conservation Area is an identified priority in CVC's Strategic Plan, *Our Future Taking Shape*, 2020-2022 (Goal One, Direction Nine).

DISCUSSION

Island Lake Conservation Area

Situated in the headwaters of the Credit River, ILCA is CVC's second largest property (*Figure 1*) and represents one of CVC's first land acquisition projects, beginning in 1957.

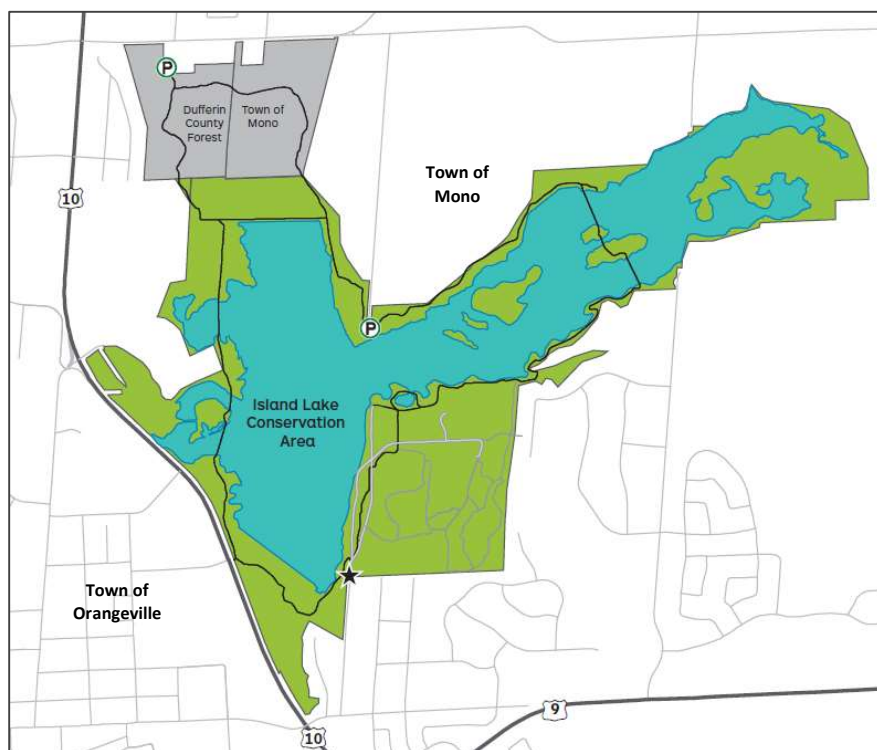


Figure 1: Island Lake Conservation Area

Formerly known as Orangeville Reservoir, Island Lake was created by the construction of two dams in 1967 to improve summer baseflow conditions in the upper reaches of the Credit River. Though the primary function of the reservoir is to dilute outflows from Orangeville's Water Pollution Control Plant into the Credit River, it also provides diverse, year-round water-based recreation activities in the headwaters region.

Characterized by a large reservoir surrounded by wetlands, upland forest, plantations and meadows, ILCA spans 329 hectares and first opened its gates to the public on June 17, 1970. The park has experienced a lot of changes since that time in response to a growing regional population and shifting demographics. Once known as a place for fishing and duck hunting, the recreational landscape has adapted to offer more water-based recreation and a

range of community and family-oriented events. As one of CVC's flagship conservation areas, it also functions as an outdoor classroom for students attending Upper Grand District School Board programs and has become an important greenspace within the surrounding communities.

Visitor analytics provide important insight into how people access and experience CVC parks. CVC collects information on park visitors through visitor information surveys, automated trail counters, postal codes and formalized visitor observations to support conservation areas planning and management. ILCA has seen a 200 per cent increase in overall visitation over the last six years; from 75,200 visits in 2014 to 225,100 visits in 2019. This increase in visitation is largely attributed to recent infrastructure and programming additions, including the completion of the Vicki Baron Lakeside Trail, events such as the annual maple syrup festival, Canada Day fireworks and an amphitheatre that hosts weddings, events and theatrical performances. Fishing, hiking, canoe/kayaking, dog walking, exercising, and social and family gatherings are also popular activities.

Management Plan Process

The management planning process for ILCA includes three phases of work: situation analysis, strategic directions development, and final decision making.



The **Background Report** is a situation analysis of the natural, cultural and social values of the conservation area. The report summarizes key findings within technical reports and studies relevant to conservation area planning to help understand pressures and provide recommendations for consideration through the management planning process. The *Background Report*³ was completed between 2016-2017.

The **Strategic Directions** phase includes the development of guiding statements (vision, commitments, objectives, directions and outcomes) and conceptual plans and artistic renderings. A Strategic Directions Report summarizes input received through consultation, provides the rationale for decision making and shows the transformation of ideas into policies, projects and programming initiatives.

The **Management Plan** presents a final vision for the conservation area and elaborates on directions and actions outlined in the Strategic Directions Report through more detailed management direction, conceptual design and policies. This plan guides infrastructure development, park management and operations, restoration and natural resource management, recreation and programming, and community partnerships over a 25-year timeframe with evaluation and updates at appropriate intervals. Implementation planning including costing and phasing is also provided.

Project Milestones and Timelines

CVC is committed to working with project partners to complete a management plan by the end of 2021. We are currently in the Strategic Directions phase. Key project milestones and timelines as outlined below in Figure 2 are estimates and are subject to change.

³ The Island Lake Conservation Area Background Report can be viewed at https://cvc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/rpt_ilcamp_backgroundreport_f_20200824.pdf



Figure 2: Island Lake Conservation Area Management Plan Project Milestones

It is anticipated that CVC's Board of Directors will approve the ILCA Management Plan by the end of 2021. CVC will then seek municipal council endorsements in Quarter 1 of 2022.

Project Engagement

CVC aspires to work collaboratively with our communities, partners, stakeholders and park neighbours to develop a management plan for ILCA. A variety of audiences will be engaged throughout the project (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Engagement Plan

Municipal Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates/meetings as needed • Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Committees of Municipal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates/meetings as needed • Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Municipal Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates as needed • Management Plan Endorsement
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates/meetings as needed • Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Community Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Advisory Committee
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Mailouts • Public Surveys • CVC Website and Social Media • Public Information Centres (minimum 2) • CVC staff available to public at any time
Indigenous Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit Valley Trail Indigenous Roundtable • Stakeholder Advisory Committee • Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation's Department of Consultation & Accommodation
Project Partners e.g. Credit Valley Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings as needed • Stakeholder Advisory Committee
CVC Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates/meetings as needed • Technical Advisory Committee • All Staff Open House(s)
CVC Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates as needed • Management Plan Approval
Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings as needed • Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The project's Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) represents a broad range of voices and community interests and provides a forum to communicate and support development of the Plan. The SAC will meet regularly throughout the project to share ideas and provide input into the future vision for ILCA.

The Town of Orangeville is well represented on the ILCA SAC:

- Charles Cosgrove (Manger of Parks and Facilities) represents the Town of Orangeville
- Mark Whitcombe represents Sustainable Orangeville
- Paul Charbonneau represents the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

A complete list of organizations represented on the SAC is provided in *Attachment 1*.

CONCLUSION

This report is intended to keep the Town of Orangeville Council informed about the Island Lake Conservation Area Management Plan. CVC staff welcome Council's questions and input at any time during the management planning process.

For questions and comments, please feel free to contact the project manager:

Kate Burgess

Conservation Lands Planner
Credit Valley Conservation
1255 Old Derry Road
Mississauga, ON. L5N 6R4
Tel: (905) 670-1615 ext.386
Email: kate.burgess@cvc.ca

ATTACHMENTS

1. Island Lake Conservation Area Management Plan's Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Attachment #1: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Central Counties Tourism
Credit River Metis Council
Credit Valley Trail, Orangeville Chapter
Credit Valley Conservation
Dufferin Board of Trade
Dufferin County
Dufferin County Cultural Resources Circle
Eco Camp
Fishing Friendly Inc.
Friends of Island Lake
Headwaters Communities In Action
Heritage Advisory Board, Town of Mono
Island Lake Rowing Club
Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, Town of Orangeville & Dufferin County
Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
Ontario Parks
Orangeville Business Improvement Area
Orangeville Lions Club
Recreation Advisory Board, Town of Mono
Rotary Club of Orangeville
Rotary Club of Orangeville Highlands
Sustainable Orangeville
Theatre Orangeville
Town of Mono
Town of Orangeville
Upper Grand District School Board