

# Mess to marvelous on tap for Warkworth Conservation Area

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WARKWORTH -- The Warkworth Conservation Area will take on a 'tamed' new look this year with the help of volunteers and funding from various sources.

That's what Lower Trent Conservation (LTC) has in mind with a new master plan it's developed for the conservation area in consultation with community representatives.

One of them, Janice Allen, a member of Trent Hills Community Policing, said the conservation area has become a disgrace.

"It's a mess," Ms. Allen said before a March 23 LTC public meeting held to explain the master plan. "It's supposed to be the centrepiece of Warkworth and it's not. We're not proud of it at all."

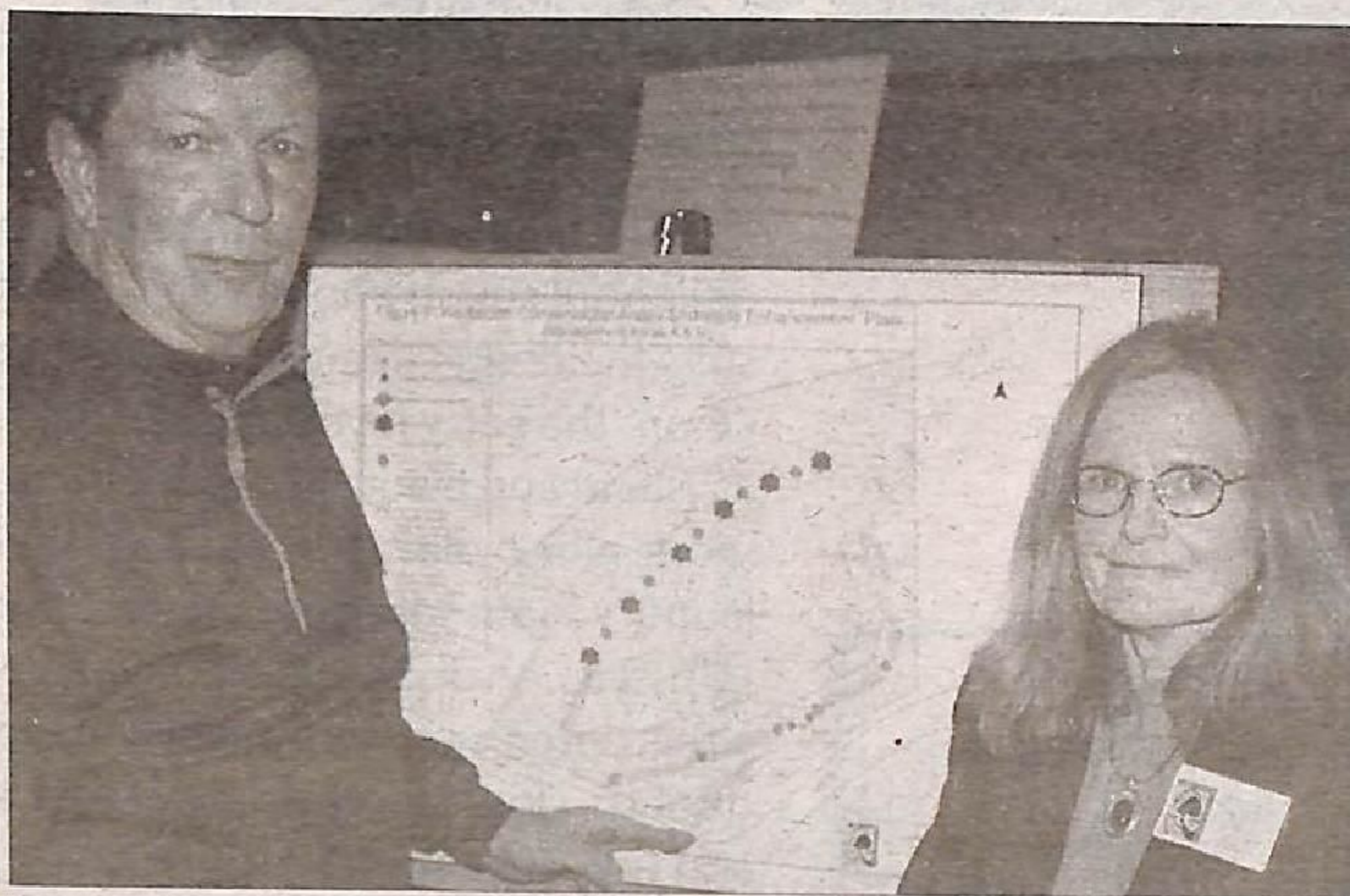
She said the LTC property has been a negative meeting place for years for youth whose inappropriate behaviour out of sight has included tossing firecrackers into tall, dry grass. Cleaning up the area to improve visibility would make the community feel safer, Ms. Allen said.

The draft document calls for pruning the existing native species of vegetation to be able to see Mill Pond better while planting more that are low-growing, including shrubs that will add variety and colour to the buffer zone along its banks. All non-native plant species are to be removed, including the Norway maple trees to be replaced with native hard maple and red maple. Dead trees and limbs considered dangerous or a fire hazard will also be removed from the wooded area on the hill above Mill Pond and boulders will be placed at the bottom to discourage ATV access.

"We understand the feeling is it's overgrown and wild and not suitable as the centrepiece of the community," said LTC general manager Glenda Rodgers.

The master plan, an update of one done in 1999, fulfills the community's desire for a more maintained look in keeping with its urban setting, but balances it with the conservation authority's requirements of vegetated shorelines and native species, she said.

The proposed work will serve as a



JOHN CAMPBELL / THE INDEPENDENT

WARKWORTH -- Bob Rowe and Lower Trent Conservation general manager Glenda Rodgers gave an overview of the updated master plan for the Warkworth Conservation Area at a public meeting last week.

demonstration project to promote the Healthy Shorelines-Clean Water program that Lower Trent has developed to encourage conservation.

"We want to raise awareness about the importance of shoreline naturalization," said Caroline Zawadzka, the Lower Trent's landowner contact specialist. Ninety per cent of all living things in lakes and rivers depend on the ribbon of life for survival, said Ms. Zawadzka.

The need for change was brought to the agency's attention last fall by Bob Rowe and Bob Stephens whose properties adjoin the 2.8 acres owned by the Lower Trent.

"We thought it could be improved on," Mr. Rowe said.

Others representing a cross-section of the community shared the two men's concerns when approached for their views. The conservation authority responded by organizing a steering committee that included members of local organizations and municipal representatives.

Roughly \$10,000 in grants has been applied from four funding sources, including the Ministry of Natural Resources' Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement program.

"If we do get the funding to move forward, we're relying on the involvement of the community to help us with the planting and then, in the long term, with the maintenance," Ms. Rodgers said.

Local residents and a group of high school students from Brighton have been recruited to begin cleaning up the conservation area April 20.

Two suggestions have come from the community, to install a viewing platform on the south side of the pond near Old Hastings Road, and a fountain in the pond but the latter proposal drew an objection at the public meeting.

"Some would say it's aesthetically pleasing which is debatable," said Bob Leary, a local photographer. "The sight of the pond reflecting maples at their best on the hillside makes for an iconic image. To me that's a very big part of the charm of Warkworth."

But that image would be lost forever with the addition of a fountain that disturbed the water, he said.

Ms. Rodgers said the master plan will be amended to incorporate feedback from the public meeting and presented to LTC's board of directors April 15 for approval. Implementation will begin based on the amount of funding received, she noted.

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