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T.V. Commentary
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Region considers hunting ban

By **TIM FORAN**
 Metroland Media Group

Regional staff recommended banning snowmobiles and paintball games in Halton's public forests, but expanding hunting in some of the publicly-owned tracts to include wild turkey shoots to go along with the current deer culls.

However, during discussion Wednesday of what uses should be allowed in the free forests, one councillor asked for a review of whether hunting should be banned entirely, a suggestion ultimately adopted by the planning and public works committee. Council can ratify the recommendations at its meeting tomorrow (Wednesday).

"I think it would be better to not allow hunting in our public parks," Oakville Regional Councillor Allan Elgar told colleagues on the committee. "It might make things easier for the private property owners in that area."

During last year's debate on the controversial Natural Heritage System land use designation adopted recently by the Region, many rural property owners and farmers had expressed concern about urbanites traipsing across their properties, Elgar explained.

Noting the Region's forests back onto private property, he suggested prohibiting hunting might prevent such unauthorized trespassing.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette said the review of a hunting ban should include consultation with the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC), a suggestion accepted by the committee.

Currently, Halton Region allows autumn deer hunting with shotguns and bows and arrows in a dozen of its 14 forest tracts, in periods regulated by Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources.

In January, 2008, the Region's forest

steward advisory committee recommended allowing a spring turkey hunt, as requested by hunters, in seven forest tracts. The turkey hunt would not be allowed in the five forest tracts that make up the Halton Regional Forest Complex, which is where the majority of public use takes place, states a staff report (LPS11-10) on the issue.

Milton Regional Councillor Barry Lee, whose Nassagaweya ward is the site of almost all of the Region's public forests, said he has not heard any concerns from local farmers about hunters trespassing on private property.



RICK BONNETTE

Elgar responded he still believes consultation with HAAC is necessary before the Region gives the go-ahead to expanding hunting to include turkeys.

If council gives the go-ahead Wednesday, Regional staff plan to draft a new bylaw outlining permitted uses in the forests, in line with a forest management plan adopted in 2005.

Major changes would include banning paintball and snowmobiling in the forests.

Regional Forester Ron Reinholt told the committee the recommendation to ban snowmobiles from the forests was the result of a public process that helped craft the forest management plan.

The determination was that the activity is noisy, dangerous and could damage the natural environment, pointed out planning commissioner Mark Meneray.

Reinholt described paintball as an "invasive" sport because players don't stick to the trails and enter restricted management areas. It also leaves paint "on rocks, trees and everywhere else," he said.

Lee said many rural dwellers have planted trees on their properties only to see them killed by snowmobiles. And once snowmobilers set a track, others follow, he said.

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