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## Trails, bridges in the works Plan for Hungry Hollow unveiled

More than 50 residents turned out Thursday night at the Civic Centre to get their first look at a proposed management plan for Hungry Hollow.

The ravine valley system, which stretches from Cedarvale Park at Main St. and Maple Ave. to Willow Park Ecology Centre in Norval, has been placed in town ownership after many development deals.

Town consultants, North-South Environmental Inc. and The Landplan Collaborative Ltd. are now preparing a plan that will guide future policies and uses in the ravine, which now has worn footpaths, fishing, abundant animal and plant life and provincially significant environmentally sensitive geographical features.

"When the town purchased it last fall, we really wanted to undertake a management plan to outline how we are going to deal with it in the longer term and protect it. And that's really the whole goal," said Warren Harris, manager of parks.

The consultants are building on work they began several years ago when hired by Save Our Ravines, the environmental group which had attempted to stop a housing development proposal in part of the ravine.

"We're now getting the benefit of a lot of background work that was done in the previous season that has really strengthened (information on) the inventory and the ecological factors of the valley," said Harris.

The final draft of the management plan will be released at the Oct. 21 council meeting, and the public will have an opportunity to make more comments over the next couple of months before it's presented to council for final approval in January.

So far the plan is a broad concept that calls for a formal trail system with boardwalks over

sensitive or wet areas, bridges and stairs, all built in stages according to town budgets. The plan calls for compacted stone dust on the 1.5-metre wide trails located in open or flood prone areas and wood chips in wooded areas. As well, there are recommendations for rehabilitation, controlling encroachment, potential sites for parking and education, and future monitoring.

"The overwhelming comment... seems to be a want to minimize any further intrusion in the valley, not overbuilding the trail or the bridges and so on. I think that's what we've tried to do," said Mirek Sharp, principal with North-South Environmental Inc.

Results of a survey on public preferences for the Hollow were also released Thursday night. Of the 75 respondents, the majority were more than 50 years old, followed next by respondents in the age 30-50 group. Only seven in 18-30 age group responded while nine were under age 18. All were regular visitors to the Hollow with the majority living near it. The majority walked the existing trails for relaxation and to enjoy the scenery.

The majority responded they preferred the natural state of the Hollow and don't want motorized vehicles or development near it. Garbage, dog feces, bush parties, and a lack of clear access points also bothered the respondents. The majority also supported the walking of dogs in the Hollow, but only if they were on a leash.

Protection of the natural features was ranked as the number one priority when managing the Hollow, followed by protection of the wildlife habitat and improving and protecting the water quality. They wanted more properly built trails and signs with the natural areas to be left alone.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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