

Copeland Trail Plan Update

CFFA 2023 AGM



Trail Committee Members

- ▶ Don McKinnon - Chair
 - ▶ Catherine Blakely
 - ▶ Jennifer Copeland
 - ▶ Jamie Herbst
 - ▶ Ann Marie Markle
 - ▶ Mark Zielinski

Past Members

- ▶ Marry Anne Greatrix
- ▶ Lindsay Sargent
- ▶ Melissa Maki
- ▶ Margaret Kennedy
- ▶ Greg Cormack



Need for a Trail Plan

- ▶ CFFA have a MOU with MNRF to act as stewards of the Forest & trails.
- ▶ The single track trails have never been formally recognized by MNRF or CFFA
- ▶ Single track trails have been informally built
- ▶ Copeland Forest is different than the County forests:
 - ▶ Higher ecological sensitivity/value
 - ▶ Trails need to accommodate all user types
 - ▶ Permitted uses are less impactful - no logging or motorized vehicles allowed
- ▶ Higher user volumes expected



Trail Plan Vision

Copeland Forest is home to a network of environmentally sustainable, multi-use recreation trails that provide a variety of user experiences.



Desired Experiences

The Copeland Trails offer an invitation into nature where one can experience:

- ▶ Wild scenery and therapeutic benefit of being in nature;
- ▶ Freedom and physical challenge to engage in recreational activities;
- ▶ Refuge from industrialized places;
- ▶ Satisfaction of passing on this natural place to future generations;
- ▶ Trails that vary in difficulty and provide different views;
- ▶ Historical remnants; and
- ▶ Year-round access at no cost.

Trail Plan Content

- ▶ 1.0 Trail Development History
- ▶ 2.0 Vision for the Trails System
- ▶ 3.0 Rationale for the Trail Plan
- ▶ 4.0 Ecological Sensitivities
- ▶ 5.0 Trail Plan
 - ▶ Trail sections review/assessment
 - ▶ Recommended changes/improvements
 - ▶ Recognized Network / trail map
 - ▶ Standardize trail names
 - ▶ Signage
- ▶ 6.0 Trail Maintenance
- ▶ 7.0 Plan Communications
- ▶ 8.0 Implementation & Schedule
- ▶ 9.0 Plan Monitoring



What have we done this past year...

- ▶ Trail User Survey completed and release of results in Summer 2022
- ▶ History of CF and trails (in development)
- ▶ Completion of an Ecological Assessment of the trails by David Hawke (Fall 2022)
- ▶ “Structural Assessment” of the trails by Trail Committee
- ▶ Drafting of recommendations (ongoing)
- ▶ Contributed to the MNRF 2023 work plan

Trail Survey Results – who completed it?

- ▶ About 225 surveys were completed.
- ▶ 40% live locally. 65% of the respondents are from the region.
- ▶ Most of the respondents are considered as regular users - 64% use the Forest at least once per week.

**Copeland Forest
Trail User Survey**



copeland forest
friends association



Share your vision!

Help create a Trail Plan that balances
environmental sensitivities with multi-use
recreation

<https://www.menti.com/a4qpv28z8t>

Trail Survey Results – what people told us..

- ▶ The top 3 activities include: Hiking (74%), Mountain Biking (54%), and Nature Appreciation (50%).
- ▶ The top three desired experiences include:
 - ▶ *To be in a natural/wilderness setting*
 - ▶ *To exercise*
 - ▶ *To do an activity with friends/family*
- ▶ The Forest is used consistently throughout the year with highest usage in the Spring and Fall.
- ▶ The most desired type of trail are narrow trails with some steep features and challenging features.
- ▶ 42% indicated that there were no major issues that need attention. Issues include: shared use conflicts (31%), erosion (28%), and trail widening (21%).

Trail Survey Results – comments..

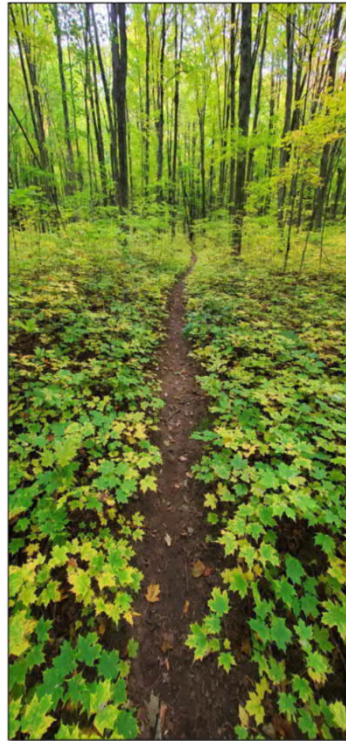
- ▶ Too many intersections / short "connectors"
- ▶ Don't over manage a good thing. *"Copeland is good because it is a more untamed environment."*
- ▶ Blowing the leaves is contributing to trail widening
- ▶ Need for re-narrowing of widened trails, fix erosion issues, get rid of alternate line choices, shut down muddy trails or increase drainage
- ▶ One way signage for downhill specific trails
- ▶ Keep trails technical and difficult
- ▶ Consider closing sections of trails during wet weather/early season
- ▶ There are more than enough trails right now.

Copeland Ecological Assessment

- ▶ Assessment of trails completed by a local ecologist in summer 2022
- ▶ Mapped & walked 90 km of trail (single and double track)
- ▶ About 200 hrs. of effort
- ▶ Overall conclusions:

This assessment project found that while the overall health of the forest is good, trail development in the past and various trail uses have resulted in a few concerns:

<https://www.copelandfriends.ca/trails/>



An Ecological Assessment of the Copeland Forest Trails

For
Copeland Forest
Friends
Association

By
David J. Hawke

November 09, 2022

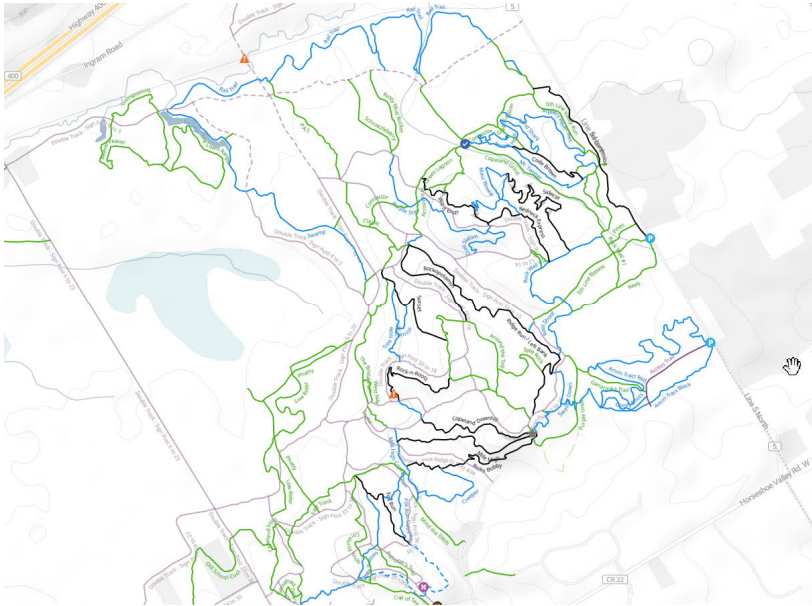
Ecological Assessment

- ▶ What are the concerns:
 - ▶ *compacted soil on the trail;*
 - ▶ *increased and unchecked surface runoff of rain/meltwater;*
 - ▶ *soil erosion on sloped sections;*
 - ▶ *tree root exposure;*
 - ▶ *forest fragmentation and the resultant isolation of wildlife species between trail sections;*
 - ▶ *disturbance of wildlife by presence of humans, dogs and horses.*
 - ▶ *disruption of wet seepage areas either by log corduroy bridges and/or horse hooves.*

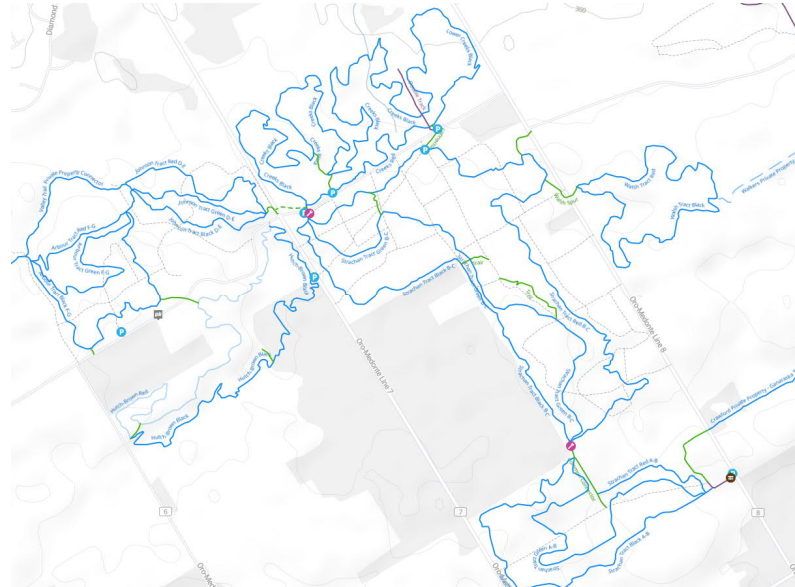


Ecological Assessment – Trail Density

- Copeland Forest – denser trail network



- SCMBC Trails (Bass Lake Side Rd./ 7th Line)



Ecological Assessment – Report Suggestions

1. Continue to prohibit any further trail constructions until an approved trail plan can be adopted.
2. Review suitability of horse riding on certain single track trails sections that have steep slopes or wetland crossings.
3. Upgrade wet crossings to lumber bridges/platforms.
4. Consider trail surface remediation to areas with severe erosion or exposure of tree roots.
5. Close some of the short cuts and crossovers, thus enlarging the 'islands' between the trail sections.

Ecological Assessment – Report Suggestions

6. Consult with the other organizations that are conducting ecological studies
7. Enhance educational messaging regarding uniqueness and fragility of forest ecosystem
8. Install trail markers at intersection points to aid in locating positions of interest. Install trail name signs.
9. Conduct a spring/summer survey for unique botanical communities.
10. Review practice of leaf-blowing in autumn.
11. Consider closing/redirecting trail segments near vernal ponds during salamander migration (March-April).

Structural Trail Assessment

- ▶ In addition to the ecological assessment, a “Structural Assessment” of all single track trails was undertaken by the Trail Committee.
- ▶ Different committee members were assigned zones to assess the trails within
- ▶ About 80 different trails in the data base

TF Trail Name	Old School Trail Name	Zone	Length (m)	Rating (A, I, B)	Usage Level (H,M,L)	Assessor	Typical Width	Grade	Trail Elevation	Erosion	Drainage	Trail Braiding/ Splitting	Structure Condition
5th Dimension		2	1100	A	H	DPM	30"	Downhill trail with 3 steep sections	Ridge (drops into lowland at very end)	Generally limited to the steepest sections. Short section prone to washout from road embankment above - recently repaired. Some gullyng on second step drop.	Good - no wet areas	Widening at bottom of rock pile. Two short section where trail splits	None

Structure Condition	Hazards	Other Trail Visibility	General Comments/Use	Proposed Physical Improvements/Changes	Keep or Close?	Improvement Priority
None	None - other than the three steepest sections	No - runs along 5th Line Road	Well used downhill MTB trail that in relatively good condition. Although noted that it has changed alot over the years (more root exposure). Largely ridden in downhill direction. Signature trail in CF. Nice views of valley to west towards the end. Noted old hunting stands at trail terminus. Not likely a suitable horse trail considering steepness of trail and heavy mtb use. Not noted to be used by horses.	Consider removing the two duplicate short sections of trail splitting. Address the section prone to gullyng.	Keep	Low

Creating the Trail Plan

- ▶ Considering results of: User Survey, Ecological Assessment and Structural Assessment
- ▶ Will consider comments on Draft Plan from user groups
- ▶ Key items being considered:
 - ▶ Confirming that trail is to remain
 - ▶ Reducing the “ecological island” effect
 - ▶ Mitigating trails through wet areas (platforms, detours or closure)
 - ▶ Mitigating eroded sections of trail
 - ▶ Narrowing of widened sections
 - ▶ Review of redundant trails/short connectors
 - ▶ Signage (direction, recommended usage, closures)
 - ▶ Removing features (jumps, berms, etc.). Copeland is not a bike park
 - ▶ Consider temporary restrictions on use of some trails during certain periods

Plan Implementation (the hard part!)

- ▶ Trail maintenance has been done informally through a volunteer crew of mountain bikers (the “Trail Crew”)
- ▶ It has worked well for dead fall clearing, leaf blowing etc.
- ▶ Implementation of the Trail Plan will require a focused effort
- ▶ CFFA will need volunteers – through the User Survey, many people identified that they would be willing to help
- ▶ Some training/experience may be required (i.e. for operation of chain saws)

Next Steps & Schedule

- ▶ Revisiting of a few trails by Committee to confirm recommendations
- ▶ Potential for additional ecological assessment for a few select trails
- ▶ Complete draft trail plan and recommendations (late spring 2023)
- ▶ Present draft Trail Plan to CFFA Board (early summer 2023)
- ▶ Present draft Trail Plan to MNRF (early summer 2023)
- ▶ Present draft Trail Plan to user groups (summer 2023)
- ▶ Finalize Trail Plan and public release (early fall 2023)
- ▶ Trail Plan Implementation 2023-2025

Thank You....we look forward to your
input!

trails@copelandfriends.ca

