



NOTICE OF MEETING

DATE: September 4, 2025

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Hybrid, In-Person / Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

MEETING: GANARASKA FOREST RECREATIONAL USERS COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Bob Gallagher, Matthew Robbins, Jim Pearson, Jennifer Jackman, Garry Niece, Rick Trumper, Lisa Thompson, Shawn Marshall, Amber Panchyshyn, Alex Schmidt, Carolyn Richards, Peter Wood, Steve Brownell, Maureen McDonald, Karen Graham, Lance Nachoff

1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Call to Order

Land Acknowledgement

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is situated within the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississauga's and Chippewa's of the Anishinabek, known today as the Williams Treaties First Nations. Our work on these lands acknowledges their resilience and their longstanding contribution to the area. We are thankful for the opportunity to live, learn and share with mutual respect and appreciation.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
3. Minutes of Last Meeting – April 3, 2025 - **attached**

4. Adoption of the Agenda
5. Delegations:
None
6. Presentation:
None
7. Business Arising from Minutes:
None
8. Correspondence:
None
9. New Business:
 - a) Ganaraska Forest Parking Lot Infrastructure – **Staff report attached**
 - b) Trail Maintenance Volunteer Programs - **Staff report attached**
 - c) 2025 Forest Fire Season Update – **Staff report attached**
10. Adjourn

MINUTES OF THE GANARASKA FOREST

RECREATIONAL USERS COMMITTEE

April 3, 2025

RUC 1/25

1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Call to Order

The Chair welcomed all present and introduced Shawn Marshall as a new member of the Recreational Users Committee. The Chair called the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee (RUC) meeting to order at 7:02pm.

MEMBER PRESENT: Bob Gallagher, Chair
Matthew Robbins, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
Jim Pearson, Ontario Trail Riders Association
Jennifer Jackman, Ontario Nature
Garry Niece, Hike Ontario
Lisa Thompson, Ontario Federation of Trail Riders
Shawn Marshall, Cross Country Ski Ontario
Amber Panchyshyn, Orienteering Ontario
Alex Schmidt, Ontario Cycling Association
Carolyn Richards, Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs
Peter Wood, Ontario Federation of 4WD Recreationists
Steve Brownell, Municipality of Port Hope
Maureen McDonald, Township of Cavan Monaghan
Karen Graham, Municipality of Clarington
Lance Nachoff, GRCA Board of Directors

ALSO PRESENT: Ed Van Osch, GRCA Forest Recreation Technician
Pam Lancaster, GRCA Conservation Lands Coordinator

ABSENT WITH REGRETS: Rick Trumper, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Club

ALSO ABSENT: City of Kawartha Lakes (position unfilled)

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RUC 1/25

MOVED BY: Gary Niece
SECONDED BY: Maureen McDonald

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee approve the minutes of the November 7, 2024 meeting.

CARRIED.

4. Adoption of Agenda

RUC 2/25

MOVED BY: Lisa Thompson
SECONDED BY: Carolyn Richards

THAT the agenda be adopted.

CARRIED.

5. Delegations

None

6. Presentations

None

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

None

8. Correspondence

None

9. New Business

a) Recreational Users Committee Terms of Reference

Pam Lancaster explained the updates to the RUC Terms of Reference, highlighting that wording and content was updated to clarify the RUC's advisory role to the Board of Directors and that RUC appointee terms are set to four years to align with municipal elections. Additionally, Pam Lancaster identified that Ontario Federation of 4wheel Drive Recreationists were miss labeled in the Terms of Reference and ensured that revisions would be made to the Terms of Reference to reflect the proper wording.

RUC 3/25

MOVED BY: Carolyn Richards
SECONDED BY: Maureen McDonald

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the Recreational Users Committee Terms of Reference for information.

CARRIED.

b) Post Winter Season Update

Jim Pearson posed a question to staff, inquiring as to GRCA's intentions to incorporate signage into the West and East Forests to differentiate between Motorized and Non-motorized uses and seasonality. Additionally, Jim Pearson stated that Northumberland Forest signage model is working well, and that GRCA needs to have more signage outside of the Central Forest. Pam Lancaster informed the RUC that GRCA is incorporating additional trailhead, directional and informational signage throughout the Ganaraska Forest as budgets allow and that Users will see more GRCA signage within the Ganaraska Forest during 2025.

Maureen McDonald asked staff if GRCA can use the local papers, radio and media outlets to inform the public about motorized opening dates. Pam Lancaster responded by explaining that GRCA currently utilizes press releases and e-newsletters to communicate messaging about the Ganaraska Forest. The press releases are picked up by local print and radio media outlets. In addition, GRCA shares messaging via the www.grca.on.ca website and on several social media platforms. Lisa Thompson added that all Ontario Federation of Trail Riders (OFTR) members are familiar with trail closures and that OFTR trails are subject to similar closures and timing. Jim Pearson mentioned that Ontario Trail Riders Association is in favour of installation of gates to close parking lots during seasons closed to motorized use. Carolyn Richards stated that Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs shares GRCA messaging on social media platforms and more signage will not stop non-compliance and that some users will continue to violate posted rules.

RUC 4/25

MOVED BY: Lisa Thompson
SECONDED BY: Peter Wood

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the Post Winter Season Update staff report as information.

FURTHER THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee remind their representative user groups to comply with all posted signage within the Ganaraska Forest.

CARRIED.

c) May 1st Opening Update

Ed Van Osch explained that the Staff Report was completed prior to the March 29, 2025 ice storm that left the Ganaraska Forest Centre (GFC) without power for 6 days and due to this storm GRCA has temporarily closed the Ganaraska Forest to the public. Staff are currently assessing trail damage and addressing hazardous situations on GFC grounds to ensure GRCA to administer the Education program and continue to offer GFC rental space. Once the GFC is deemed safe, staff will move to the trail system to address trail blockages. GRCA is prepared to utilize contractors to address trail blockages that are beyond the scope of staff

abilities and GRCA equipment. The Ganaraska Forest will reopen to all authorized users as scheduled on May 1, 2025. In addition, Ed Van Osch stated that people interested in volunteering with the GRCA should visit the www.grca.on.ca for further information on how they can get involved.

RUC 5/25

MOVED BY: Gary Niece
SECONDED BY: Jim Pearson

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the May 1st Opening Update staff report for information.

CARRIED.

The Chair, Bob Gallagher asked if there are any topics that the RUC members would like to bring to staff's attention for possible inclusion on future RUC agendas. Alex Schmidt asked for an update relating to the Central Forest single-track map. Bob Gallagher suggested that since this topic is already taking place outside the structure of this meeting that Alex request a meeting with staff to discuss this issue. Jim Pearson requests a discussion regarding the reasoning behind the May 1st annual opening date of motorized season, suggesting that GRCA follow the same seasonality as Northumberland Forest. Alex Schmidt also asked for information on why special events are capped at 100 individuals.

10. Adjourn**RUC 6/25**

MOVED BY: Lisa Thompson
SECONDED BY: Peter Wood

THAT the meeting adjourned at 7:46pm.

CARRIED.

The next meeting of the Ganaraska Forest Recreational User Committee is Thursday, June 5, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

Chair



Conservation Lands Coordinator

STAFF REPORT – September 4, 2025

TO: Chair and Members of the Recreational Users Committee

RE: Ganaraska Forest Parking Lot Infrastructure

The Ganaraska Forest Trail system is designed to host various recreational uses and the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) prides itself on its ability to offer a quality experience for all authorized Recreational Users. To ensure that the Ganaraska Forest Trail system meets the needs of the GRCA and current and future Forest users, parking infrastructure is being considered. Currently, the GRCA provides Ganaraska Forests Users with 6 parking lots, located at various locations. Of these 6 lots, 1 is plowed in the winter (GFC Lot). All of these parking lots are identified on the Ganaraska Forest Trail Map [Ganaraska Conservation - Ganaraska Forest Trails Map](#). These lots consist of:

West Forest

- Parking Lots P2, P6 and P7.
- Accommodates all authorized recreational uses.
- Provides direct access to the West Forest.
- Member municipalities encompassing the West Forest do not permit Off-road Vehicle use on municipal roads (maintained, unmaintained, fire roads etc.).

Central Forest

- Ganaraska Forest Centre (GFC) accommodates non-motorized users only (no horse trailer parking/unloading).
- Motorized use is prohibited in the Central Forest.
- Horse Trailer Lot is for horse trailers only; all other parking is prohibited.
- Member municipalities encompassing the Central Forest do not permit Off-road Vehicle use on municipal roads (maintained, unmaintained, fire roads etc.).

East Forest

- Parking Lot P5.
- Accommodates all authorized recreational uses.
- Provides direct access to only a certain portion of the East Forest.
- Member municipalities encompassing the East Forest do not permit Off-road Vehicle use on municipal roads (maintained, unmaintained, fire roads etc.).

Although there are many good things about the various parking lots, there are also many challenges, some of which may have potential solutions:

West Forest Parking Lot Challenges

- No dedicated accessible parking.
- Only single track trails connect to P6.
- P2 is not visible from the road, causing the parking lot and users to be hidden from public view.

- The geometric shape of P2 restricts parking options, often forcing irregular parking.
- Lack of parking lot signage directing road traffic into P2, P6 or P7.
- During peak times, Forest Users are often forced to park on roads, unload then access the West Forest through full parking lots. This activity puts users in direct conflict with the *Off-Roads Vehicle Act* and possibly other municipal or provincial rules/regulations. Road parking can also lead to accessing trails through “trails of convenience” that are not part of the trail system.

West Forest Parking Lot Potential Solutions:

- Install dedicated accessible parking infrastructure.
- Improvements to shape and size of parking lots.
- Addition of navigation signage.
- Improved sightlines to parking lots from municipal roads.
- Re-develop trail system to connect with P6.

Central Forest Parking Lot Challenges

- Limited dedicated accessible parking at the GFC only.
- All parking is in the south-east corner of the Central Forest.
- Hunters are not provided with a parking lot to allow them to access the Central Forest hunting zone. Hunters are not permitted to park at GFC nor in the Horse Trailer Lot.
- Horse trailer parking lot is accessed through a municipal seasonal road (which is not regularly maintained by the municipality).
- Some hunters disregard the Central Forest rules and *Conservation Authorities Act* and choose to drive motorized vehicles into the Central Forest, parking where they choose to access the property. Other hunters park on the side of municipal roads to access the Central Forest.
- Not all trail types connect to the parking areas.

Central Forest Parking Lot Potential Solutions:

- Potential for additional parking lots /relocation of parking infrastructure.
- Install additional accessible parking infrastructure.
- Public awareness campaign.
- Connect appropriate trail types to parking lots.

East Forest. Parking Lot Challenges

- No dedicated accessible parking.
- Municipal laws prohibit motorized vehicles from using municipal roads surrounding the East Forest, therefore limiting the ability to legally access the various East Forest land parcels.
- P5 is located within the Forest and not visible from the road. The parking lot is small. Additionally, the secluded nature of Parking Lot P5 encourage non-compliant activities, including but not limited to camping, campfires and dumping.

- Much of the East Forest is not accessible to motorized users via the P5 Parking Lot.
- Lack of parking lot signage directing road traffic into P5.

East Forest Parking Lot Potential Solutions:

- Installation of accessible parking infrastructure.
- Improvements to shape and size of parking lots.
- Relocating of current parking lot to a more visible and larger location.
- Addition of navigation signage.
- Improved sightlines to parking lots from municipal roads.
- Potential for additional parking lots.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee approach respective user groups and obtain information regarding parking challenges or needs at the Ganaraska Forest.

FURTHER THAT Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee representatives are asked to submit user group comments to the Forest Recreation Technician by November 6, 2025.

FURTHER THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receives the Ganaraska Forest Parking Lot Infrastructure staff report for information.

Prepared by:



Ed Van Osch, Forest Recreation Technician

STAFF REPORT – September 4, 2025

TO: Chair and Members of the Recreational Users Committee

RE: Trail Maintenance Volunteer Programs

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) offers opportunities for individuals and groups to volunteer their time and effort to support trail maintenance within the Ganaraska Forest. One opportunity is the Ganaraska Forest Volunteer Trail Maintenance Program for Groups. This specific program is being revised to make the program more user friendly both in terms of the application and the volunteer activity.

Additionally, the GRCA is updating a Ganaraska Forest Volunteer Trail Maintenance Program for Individuals. This program will allow individuals to participate in Ganaraska Forest projects under direct supervision from GRCA staff members.

To compliment the existing volunteer programs, The GRCA also hosts volunteer events from time to time, whereby participants can attend by themselves, or with friends and family to participate. At these GRCA led events, training and equipment would be provided, unless otherwise stated.

Information about GRCA volunteer opportunities can be found on the GRCA website. <https://grca.on.ca/how-to-help/volunteering/>

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee approach respective users and groups and encourage participation in volunteer opportunities within the Ganaraska Forest.

FURTHER THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receives the Trail Maintenance Volunteer Programs staff report for information.

Prepared by:



Ed Van Osch, Forest Recreation Technician

STAFF REPORT – September 4, 2025

TO: Chair and Members of the Recreational Users Committee

RE: 2025 Forest Fire Season Update

During August 2025, Ganaraska Forest and surrounding areas were subject to a fire ban mandate from the fire chiefs. Throughout this time, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) staff have been communicating with local fire chiefs, Northumberland County/Northumberland County Forest, other community forests, MPP Piccini and Emergency Management Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources regarding Ganaraska Forest fire risks.

So far, during the Forest Fire season the Ganaraska Forest remains open to all recreational users.

The GRCA will continue to:

- Monitor forest conditions and regional fire risks.
- Communicate with those associated with the Ganaraska Forest Fire Committee and community forest managers on an as needed basis.
- Communicate the need and importance to follow property rules and regulation as they relate to reducing fire risk.
- Provincial Offences Officers continue to patrol and enforce property rules including prohibition on BBQ's, campfires, camp stoves, incendiary devises, and fireworks.
- Share relevant municipal/fire department information regarding forest fires.
- Consider GRCA operations within the Forest and take actions to mitigate fire risk related to those operations.
- Call 911 if fire or smoke is seen or smelt.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee encourage their respective recreational organization or municipality to share forward GRCA information regarding forest fire risks and prevention.

FURTHER THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee encourages their respective recreational users to report violations related to BBQ's, campfires, camp stoves, incendiary devises, and fireworks to authorities.

FURTHER THAT the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receives the 2025 Forest Fire Season Update staff report for information.

Prepared by:



Ed Van Osch, Forest Recreation Technician