

Bryant, Shellie

From: Stewart Coles <scoles@cpaws.org>
Sent: May 23, 2020 2:09 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council
Attachments: cpaws-sk_-_letter_to_council_re_speed_limits_-_23_may_2020.pdf

Submitted on Saturday, May 23, 2020 - 14:09

Submitted by anonymous user: 127.0.0.1

Submitted values are:

Date Saturday, May 23, 2020

To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

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Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable) Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
- Saskatchewan Chapter

Subject re: motion to raise speed limits on Central Ave and McOrmond Dr.

Meeting (if known) Regular Business Meeting of City Council - 1pm, 25th May 2020

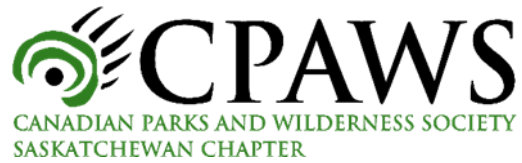
Comments See attached.

Attachments

[cpaws-sk - letter to council re speed limits - 23 may 2020.pdf](#)

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/node/398/submission/389486>



Suite 202, 220 20th Street West, Saskatoon S7M 0W9
www.cpaws-sask.org

May 23, 2020

RE: Speed Limits through the Northeast Swale

Dear His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council,

CPAWS-Saskatchewan (CPAWS-SK), an advocate for wild spaces in Canada, writes in respect of the planned motion, at Monday's Council meeting on May 25th 2020, to increase speed limits along Central Avenue and McOrmond Drive – notably through the Northeast Swale.

CPAWS-SK opposes this motion and provides a perspective here to the necessity of these speed limits and the broader protection of this critical habitat – a perspective that seems to be missing from a motion based primarily on an engineering standpoint. We do not argue against what this road is – in engineering terms – able to accommodate speed-wise but we most certainly oppose the need to maximise the use of this capacity through ecologically sensitive areas. We seek the Council to better appreciate the justification for the adopted guidelines within this ecosystem but also the invested time, expertise and best practice that created the key guidance and subsequently approved documents covering this critical habitat.

Broadly speaking, if we are to minimise the impacts research, science and best practice tells us regarding highway construction and design through sensitive habitats i.e. wetlands, rare native grasslands etc., then the highest standards of infrastructure will be necessary, for example, Banff National Park overpasses etc., to ensure key species can continue to navigate these rich habitats even after new road networks have fragmented them. Where these road networks do not conform to these higher design standards for various reasons, Central Ave and McOrmond Drive the case in point, then additional mitigation measures will become a required and essential tool for approving such designs within and around critical habitat with the necessary intention of minimising the impact on the ecological stability and function of these natural systems. This includes ensuring the needs of species that are especially susceptible to habitat fragmentation are addressed.

In the process of designing the required mitigation the *NE Swale design guidelines* were developed and approved by both the City and the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) Board in 2012. This document agreed on the need to minimise the impact on wildlife crossing road networks. With lower speeds through these ecological zones, as is achieved where speeds are reduced in other parts of municipalities, we see a significant reduction in vehicle and, in this case, wildlife interactions. For the NE Swale, these speed limits have resulted in near zero known recorded wildlife fatalities, compared to those recorded outside of this ecological zone. This evidence alone shows why these limits are a critical component of the mitigation package required to maintain a resilient and functioning ecosystem.

What these various pieces of approved documents show is the clear importance and intent the City has already placed on the ecological integrity of this broad ecosystem, both as an important piece of natural infrastructure i.e. flood management benefits etc., but also crucially as a critical habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna, including rare, endangered and at risk species. The City itself states of the

Northeast Swale, *“Maintaining biodiversity within the Swale is crucial to maintaining resilience in this ecosystem which faces human induced and natural stresses. Biodiversity provides social, cultural and economic value through biological resources as well as a host of key ecological processes such as nutrient cycling, soil building, and management of water and air purification.”*

With this motion, we see a desire to undermine this view and the years of hard work that has gone into developing effective management and protection protocols for this important area. This direction is creating significant uncertainty for the future conservation of this critical habitat. It is essential we see consistent conservation policy and action from the city. With so much work to be commended, including work of local advocates and on the ground resource management and education by the MVA, we are still in a position where we must again encourage City Council to continue to stand up for the environment and to avoid the undoing of what has already been achieved in the area.

We further encourage the City to stand by its proposed commitment to environmental leadership, as stated in their most recent e-update (#2, April 24, 2020) on the Official Community Plan (OCP), suggesting *“the City will commit to protecting, enhancing, and managing our impact on the environment.”* As an organisation we have had and continue to have constructive conversations with City and MVA staff around the value of the Swales and how we can work towards a better framework for long term protection – including the ongoing development of a Municipal Fund for Biodiversity. With such leadership, the City can uniquely place itself at the forefront of urban environmental conservation in Canada. With the added major infrastructure proposed for this sensitive ecological region of the city, **we seek strong and consistent environmental leadership now.**

In conclusion, through all that has been incorporated into approved Council documents on the subject we have not seen any clear or fundamental changes in evidence, research or best practice that would require a reassessment of the guidelines or the limits through the NE Swale. What has changed is the greater clarity on the need for this speed limit to remain now and into the future. This motion has shown there is still a lack of appreciation and understanding of the value and critical role nature plays in society and the broader actions we must take associated with addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. CPAWS-SK hopes the City Council is minded to reject this motion and show the necessary leadership for nature conservation.

Stewart Coles

Manager of Operations and Programs (southern region)

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Saskatchewan Chapter (CPAWS-SK)