



Meewasin Valley Authority  
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# Meewasin

May 19, 2020

## **RE: Speed Limits through the Meewasin Northeast Swale and Small Swale**

Dear His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council,

I understand that at its May 25, 2020 meeting City Council will consider increasing speed limits on roadways through the Meewasin Northeast Swale and the Small Swale. Meewasin is opposed to this increase. Although it may be technically feasible to increase the speed limit based on the design of the roadway, this assessment does not adequately consider the potential impact to this valuable natural area and its function in the region as a wildlife corridor.

Meewasin worked closely with the City and its consultant to create the Northeast Swale Development Guidelines, which were approved and adopted by Meewasin and the City in 2012. The intent was to recognize the importance of the Swale as a significant natural area with abundant biodiversity featuring numerous plant and animal species at risk within native grasslands, one of the most imperiled ecosystems on the planet. Meewasin also worked closely with the city to develop a Resource Management Plan for the site as well as a Master Plan. Both Meewasin and the City have invested significant dollars in the implementation of these plans, including \$1.5M over three years from the City for Phases 1 and 2 of the Master Plan, with Meewasin bringing an additional \$900k to that project.

The purpose of the above noted work was to ensure the long term value of the Swale as critical habitat, a wildlife corridor to the broader "green network" of the region, and the ecosystem services it provides. Planning and design of neighbourhoods around it and roadways through it was done with these objectives in mind. Again, Meewasin worked closely with the City's traffic engineers to inform the design of the roadways through the Swale, and this resulted in a custom cross-section intended to facilitate safe large and small movement along the swale corridor. The functional plan for these roadways, along with their eventual detailed design, were approved by Meewasin through our Development Review process.

Meewasin engaged consulting expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of the above policies with respect to mitigating impact on the swale and that report confirmed the validity of those policies. Subsequently Meewasin has done some anecdotal/incidental observations of animal movement through the swale and there is evidence of large and small animals crossing over and under the roadway, as intended. These observations have been conducted opportunistically, as Meewasin is in the process of developing a formal Valley-Wide Monitoring Framework and is looking for funding opportunities to implement. This level of monitoring would provide the kind of reliable data necessary to make decisions regarding management practices and development in and around the swale and other natural areas in the region.

In 2019 the City engaged Meewasin to provide a report called the “Natural Areas Inventory” and in 2020 Meewasin completed a report called “Habitat Evaluation of the Saskatoon Freeway through the Northeast and Small Swales” for the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure. Data collected for these reports confirmed that the area provides high quality habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species, including rare species, endangered species and species at risk. Meewasin, the City of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan have invested considerable money and staff time into researching, monitoring and improving with public amenities this valuable natural system, which is part of the jewel of Saskatoon, the Meewasin Valley.

Available evidence and best practice suggests that reducing speed limits on roadways through natural areas reduces vehicle/animal collisions, human and wildlife mortality, and helps to mitigate the negative impact of roadways on natural corridors. We have all worked together to ensure that the long term value of one of the Saskatoon region’s most important natural areas is maintained and enhanced. Increasing the speed limit on these roadways will harm these efforts and the investment that has been made. Maintaining biodiversity in our city is critical as climate change continues to endanger the planet. Small changes like reducing speed limits can have a big impact on these efforts. The swales in this area contain large swathes of native prairie grassland, one of the most imperiled ecosystems on the planet.

Saving a few seconds of commuting time does not outweigh the potential damage to this critical habitat. Meewasin and its partners will continue to invest in our grasslands, please continue to support this work. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Colin Tennent', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Colin Tennent  
Chair, Meewasin Board of Directors

# NCP Wildlife Fatalities

**Legend**

**Wildlife**

- Deer (14)
- Rabbit (5)
- Raccoon (1)

