

Inquiry on Swale Education, Communications and Partnerships

ISSUE

This report responds to an inquiry about swale education, communications and partnerships made at City Council's Regular Business Meeting held on May 25, 2020. Management planning, including education and interpretation, have been prepared for the Northeast Swale and this report outlines education partners and activities currently underway.

BACKGROUND

On May 25, 2020, City Council received the report, Chief Mistawasis Bridge Traffic Impact Assessment – May 2020 Update, and resolved in part:

“That the Administration report back about current and planned communications and education efforts, including external partnerships, regarding the Swale(s).”

On May 4, 2020, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment Utilities and Corporate Services received The Natural Capital Asset Valuation – Pilot Project Update report as information. A natural area asset valuation was carried out for the Small Swale. With 162 ha of wetlands, grasslands and forest, the Small Swale was estimated to sequester approximately 83,000 tonnes CO₂e and valued at \$731,000 per year. The report recommends further work to formalize natural asset management processes for the study areas.

The [Meewasin Northeast Swale Master Plan \(2015\)](#) is a strategy to conserve biodiversity, accommodate educational programming, interpret cultural and natural history, and support passive recreation activities.

The [Northeast Swale Resource Management Plan \(2013\)](#) is a description of management techniques appropriate to a natural area, aiming to protect and restore biodiversity and provide opportunities for education. In 2012, City Council approved the [Northeast Swale Development Guidelines](#), underscoring that the Northeast Swale is an important prairie remnant.

CURRENT STATUS

The City of Saskatoon (City) has partnerships that involve education and communications for the Northeast Swale and/or the Small Swale (Appendix 1 - Swale Education & Communications Activities and Partnerships). Partners include: Meewasin Valley Authority, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Wildlife Federation and Wild About Saskatoon. In addition, the Planning and Development Department chairs the Northeast Swale Working Group, which was established to assess, prioritize, and direct discussions regarding issues that have been raised relating to the Northeast Swale.

Working Group representatives include the Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin), the University of Saskatchewan, City Council, and the Northeast Swale Watchers.

A table of education and communication activities carried out by Meewasin and the City is provided in Appendix 1. Meewasin has led the majority of education and communications activities and has largely focused on the Northeast Swale, which is in their jurisdiction. Education includes resident information, tours, communication, and roadway signage. Both the City and Meewasin have web information on the Northeast Swale.

The general educational materials and programming developed for the Northeast Swale is relevant to the Small Swale given their similar habitats, species, and local value. Currently there is no specific education or interpretation material which focuses on habitat, connections or cultural significance unique to the Small Swale.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

As reported to City Council at their February 24, 2020 Regular Business Meeting, planned 2020 and 2021 work includes development of the Green Infrastructure Program, and includes education and awareness activities related to the Green Network, defined as Saskatoon's collection of green spaces, natural areas, and green infrastructure.

Education materials coming out of the Green Infrastructure Program will include identifying and prioritizing educational opportunities that showcase the Green Network, as well as more broadly raising awareness on biodiversity, conservation, urban agriculture, natural and naturalized areas, traditional and local ecological knowledge, and the intersection of local cultures and ecology. Work includes identifying and pursuing collaboration opportunities with Meewasin's educational and public outreach programming to increase conservation, ecology, and natural and cultural resource awareness.

The February 2020 report (The Green Infrastructure Strategy: Towards an Interconnected Green Network) also describes work to prioritize significant natural sites, assess risk, and develop management plans or restoration work, which is particularly relevant to the Small Swale. Management plans for natural areas may contain multiple components including:

- An asset management plan: defines both the services provided by the natural area as well as an agreed upon level of service; and
- A resource management plan: defines site specific management techniques which may include land protection, conservation, restoration, interpretation, and education.

Phase 1 of the Green Infrastructure Program includes completion of the site inventory and prioritization of natural areas requiring management plans. Phase 2 would include preparation and implementation of a management plan for the Small Swale. Targeted

education and interpretation for the Small Swale would be created as part of the plan, using the *Northeast Swale Master Plan, 2015* for guidance.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no direct financial implications. Capital funding for 2020 and 2021 for the Green Infrastructure Strategy implementation, including education and awareness, was approved in the 2020-2021 multi-year budget deliberations.

Requests for funding to continue with education and communication programs, and to establish additional programs and management plans, will be brought forward in the 2022-2023 multi-year budget deliberations.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no communications, Triple Bottom Line, policy, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations at this time.

NEXT STEPS

Further work to progress collaboration opportunities with Meewasin is underway. A report detailing Green Infrastructure implementation is planned for Q3 2021.

APPENDICES

1. Swale Education & Communications Activities and Partnerships

Report Approval

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