



The Corporation of the Town of Blind River **REPORT**

RE: Shirvon Park Engineering Letter

Date of Creation: February 22, 2024

Author: Director of Facilities & Community Services, K. Bittner

OBJECTIVE

To share opportunities for Shirvon Park that will permit public pedestrian use as well as naturalize the space.

BACKGROUND

A comprehensive report is attached, however a short-list of notes are:

- 1- Remaining play equipment can be removed before the end of May and holes smoothed over
- 2- Sand is to remain in place as this is preferred by turtles for nesting
- 3- The permanently fixed picnic table may remain in place as it is near the southern most portion of the property
- 4- It is suggested that the bench located at the north-west portion of the property be removed as it encourages foot traffic over sandy areas (not mandatory)
- 5- As grass grows on the property, Parks Staff can whipper snip a grassy trail that can assist users to travel between Shirvon subdivision to Longview/West Street. The rest of the property will not be cut. This will create a visual path that reduces human disturbance.
- 6- The whipper snipped path can be lined with decorative trees in the future (could be a community-driven activity with a school/Tree Canada)

Although the study in full has been abandoned:

If Blanding's Turtle is present, then the whole park is regulated habitat. The Town of Blind River would then be forced to go down the re-naturalizing road, or seek Endangered Species Act permissions. Permitting would require approximately 2 years. Even if Blanding's turtle is not present, the Committee should refer to section 4.17 of Blind River's OP:

Natural Heritage Features and Areas within the Planning Area form a natural heritage system. Council recognizes the importance of the natural heritage system, the natural heritage features and areas which make up the system, their functions and the linkages between them. Natural Heritage Features and Areas include:

1. Provincially Significant coastal wetlands, provincially significant wetlands and unevaluated wetlands or wetlands which have been evaluated and determined not to be significant;
2. Significant habitat of endangered and threatened species;
3. Significant wildlife habitat;
4. Significant areas of scientific and natural interest (life science and

Significant Wildlife Habitat Criteria Schedules put out by the MNR for Blind River

<p>Turtle and Lizard Nesting Areas</p> <p>Rationale: These habitats are rare and when identified will often be the only breeding site for local populations of turtles.</p>	<p>Midland Painted Turtle Special Concern Species Northern Map Turtle Snapping Turtle Five-lined Skink</p>	<p>Turtle Nesting areas may be adjacent to these ELC Ecosites: G138 G140-149</p> <p>For Five-lined Skink: Central Ontario Forest Ecosites: ES14.2, ES17 – ES20, ES23 – ES30 Or, ELC Ecosites: G056-G059</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best nesting habitat for turtles are close to water and away from roads and sites less prone to loss of eggs by predation from skunks, raccoons or other animals. • For an area to function as a turtle-nesting area, it must provide sand and gravel that turtles are able to dig in and are located in open, sunny areas. Nesting areas on the sides of municipal or provincial road embankments and shoulders are not SWH. • Sand and gravel beaches adjacent to undisturbed shallow weedy areas of 	<p>Studies confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of 5 or more nesting Midland Painted Turtles[®] • One or more Northern Map Turtle or Snapping Turtle nesting is a SWH[®] • The area or collection of sites within an area of exposed mineral soils where the turtles nest, plus a radius of 30-100m around the nesting area dependant on slope, riparian vegetation and adjacent land use is the SWH.^{edvia} • Travel routes from wetland to
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Please note that Blind River's OP requires considerations for most turtle nesting areas (as Significant Wildlife Habitat), independent of presence/absence of Endangered Species Act restrictions.

Next Steps/Public Education and Promotion:

- 1- Staff can redesign the Shirvon Park sign to a turtle theme
- 2- Interpretive Panels can be installed at both "entrances" to highlight the significance of the space
- 3- Blind River can promote its natural values and use as a future example that it does take flora and fauna into land use planning exercises
- 4- Although public by way of this report, TULLOCH's attachment can be posted on blindriver.ca for easy reference

BUDGET IMPLICATION

At this time, Staff can whipper snip as well as remove play equipment as part of the approved operating budget. None of the above-mentioned enhancements (signage, trees, interpretive panels) are a *must*. Funding applications can be submitted for these components.

RECOMMENDATION

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Community Services Committee recommends to Council that TULLOCH'S Letter of Professional Opinion titled Shirvon Park Reclamation – Professional Opinion on the best practices for park naturalization and turtle nest protection be accepted;
AND THAT Parks and Recreation Staff establish a grassy trail that will allow pedestrians to travel through the naturalized environment, thus reducing human disturbances in turtle nesting areas;
AND THAT Staff are permitted to explore grant funding opportunities that will produce interpretive panels that teach the general public about habitats.