



NEWS LOCAL

Naturalists request new nature park at Cobourg council



By Cecilia Nasmith, Northumberland Today
Tuesday, January 26, 2016 4:21:24 EST PM



Seen in the summer of 2013 on Cobourg's west headland, Margaret Bain and Richard Pope display bits of broken glass left around when dredging operations dumped sand in that area. Protection from events like this is one reason both approached council with the request to create a new nature park on Cobourg's western shores. CECILIA NASMITH/NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY file photo

COBOURG - Margaret Bain, author of *Wildlife of Cobourg Harbour*, and Richard Pope, author and naturalist, both won applause from the gallery as they urged council to create a new nature park on Cobourg's western shores.

The request was made at Monday's committee-of-the-whole meeting.

Bain said she was moved to create her book after plans to expand the marina into the west harbour were put on hold, just to show some of the hundreds of species of birds and plants that call the area home.

"It's not a naturalist's guide, but a sampling of what's out there to entice you to explore for more," the author said.

Indeed, she added, the variety is so wonderful that the area was the site for the 2012 Ontario Field Ornithologists convention.

Pope fleshed out the request, explaining that the affected area would be the west harbour (the part west of the centre pier), the west headland, the Ecology Garden and the west beach, with the goal of offering these areas some protection.

"The whole area has great cultural value to this community," Pope said. "It is where people go for reflective walks and to just sit and view nature. It is a place for unstructured activity where people who do not belong to formal groups can just sit, relax and contemplate nature.

"Because of this natural and heritage value, and because Cobourgers care passionately about the area, it deserves protection."

Citing the Parks Master Plan of 2013, Pope said one of the six different types of park it lists is the nature park — which this one would be.

These are predominantly natural in character, focusing on conservation, as well as nature appreciation and interpretation. They require little or no maintenance and are compatible with such passive recreational activities as hiking, bird watching, dog walking, canoeing and kayaking.

No buildings or concession stands, Pope added.

"A nature boardwalk on the west headland, bird blinds and even shoreline habitat creation could be approached frugally," he said.

Pope pointed out that the master plan already recommends that the west beach lands and boardwalk and the Ecology Garden be reclassified as nature parks.

"I am simply proposing adding the west headland and the west harbour, which are contiguous properties and would make one unified park."

Councillor Theresa Rickerby made a motion recommending both presentations be referred to the parks-and-recreation advisory committee, heritage advisory committee and planning-and-sustainability advisory committee for comment.

While the process should not be rushed, Mayor Gil Brocanier advised, it should be recognized as a priority.

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