

November 12, 2013

Craig Douglas, P. Eng.
District Municipality of Muskoka
Manager of Engineering Services
70 Pine Street
Bracebridge, Ontario
P1L 1N3

Dear Mr. Douglas:

Please consider the following concerns of the Muskoka Field Naturalists regarding the proposed transportation corridor north of the Town of Bracebridge urban area between Highway 11 and Muskoka Road 118. The Muskoka Field Naturalists is a local not-for-profit organization representing over 100 active members dedicated to the study, conservation, and enjoyment of nature.

In particular, we are concerned with the portion of the preferred and alternate routes that will extend south along South Monck Drive. This is a relatively quiet corner of Muskoka with a diverse variety of habitats and an abundance of wildlife, as noted in the Public Open House Summary Report.

Significant wildlife habitat is present in the forested northern portion of the study area (adjacent to South Monck Drive, north of Crawford Road), including wetlands and an active Great Blue Heron colony. Increased traffic and noise levels in this area would impact the continued success of this colony.

A thicket swamp, identified as Wetland 2 (W2) on the Terrestrial Conditions map included in the Public Open House Summary Report, which lies immediately south of where the preferred route would join with South Monck Drive, is an important habitat for a number of sensitive species. Canada Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler, both of which are designated Threatened under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), have been observed during breeding season in this wetland. Road development in Canada Warbler breeding habitat, and wetland conversion have been cited as threats to Canada Warbler breeding success. This wetland is also an important habitat for American Bittern, Green Heron, and Virginia Rail.

Eastern Whip-poor-will, which is also designated Threatened under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), has been observed for a number of years during breeding season in the areas surrounding the intersections of South Monck Drive, Crawford Road, and Partridge Lane. These observations have been contributed to the Eastern Whip-poor-will Project currently being conducted by Bird Studies Canada. According to the SARA Registry, collisions with vehicles have been identified as a significant threat to Whip-poor-wills, which commonly sit on roads or road shoulders at night. The development of a major transportation corridor through this area would increase the likelihood of vehicle collisions with Whip-poor-wills.

Bobolink, which is a Threatened species under the Ontario Species at Risk Act (SARA), as identified in the Public Open House Summary Report, has been observed in hay fields adjacent to South Monck Drive. Again, the development of a major transportation corridor that further fragments and disturbs important Bobolink habitat in this area could have a detrimental effect on local populations.

We hope you will consider our concerns with the proposed transportation corridor north of the Bracebridge urban area and that they will form part of the official Environmental Assessment Public Review.

Yours sincerely,



David Goodyear
President
Muskoka Field Naturalists