



## **Administration and Operations Committee Report**

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**To:** To the Chair and Members of Administration and Operations Committee  
**From:** Cindy Stevenson, General Manager of Community & Protective Services  
**Date:** April 20, 2021  
**Subject:** RPT-21-94– River Access Parking System and Mitigation Plan, 2021 Season  
**Purpose:** For approval

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### **Recommendation**

Whereas the County of Brant's public river access points experienced a surge of visitor use during the 2020 season, exceeding existing parking infrastructure and overall capacities;

And Whereas at the March 23, 2021 Council meeting, staff was directed by Council to develop a more appropriate parking system for the 2021 season, for the areas connected to the Eric Tomlinson River Access Point, Penman's Dam River Access Point, and Bean Park River Access Point;

That commercial river access permits not be issued to any commercial outfitter for the 2021 season;

That staff be authorized to file an application to the Ministry of Attorney General to increase the penalty for unauthorized parking in a Municipal Permit Only Parking Area to \$80.00, if paid within 7 days of issuance, and \$95.00 if paid within 15 days of issuance;

That additional seasonal staff resources within the Regulatory and Enforcement Services Division be acquired for the purpose of monitoring and enforcement of parking restrictions at each of the 3 river access points, at an estimated cost of \$70,000 to be funded from the 2021 operating budget;

And that the following parking restrictions are recommended for Parking By-Law Number 004-19, to be amended by installing the following proposed parking restrictions:

### **Forbes Street River Access – In Glen Morris**

#### **1. Schedule 15 - Parking Permit Application - between May 1 to October 31**

- Forbes Street, Parking Permitted only by permit on the south side from East River Road to 45 m west of Kirk Street;
- Kirk Street – Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from Forbes Street to Pine Street;

- Princess Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from East River Road to Glen Morris Road West.
- Pine Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the south side from Kirk Street to 30 m westerly.
- Dunbar Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the south side from East River Road to Princess Street.
- East River Road - Parking Permitted only by permit on the south side from 130 m west of Princess Street to 80 m east of Princess Street.

## 2. Schedule 2 – Stopping Prohibited Anytime

- Dunbar Street - Stopping Prohibited on the north side from East River Road to Princess Street;
- Princess Street - Stopping Prohibited on the east side from East River Road (west side) to East River Road (east side).
- Princess Street - Stopping Prohibited on the west side from East River Road (west side) to East River Road (east side).
- Glen Morris Road East - Stopping Prohibited on the south side from East River Road to 100 m east of East River Road.
- Glen Morris Road East - Stopping Prohibited on the south side from 250 east of East River Road to McPherson School Road.
- Glen Morris Road East - Stopping Prohibited on the north side from East River Road to Princess Street.
- East River Road – Stopping Prohibited Anytime on the north/west side from 70 m east of Princess Street, (west entrance) to Glen Morris Road East.
- East River Road – Stopping Prohibited Anytime on the south/east side from 130 m west of Princess Street to Glen Morris Road East.

## 3. Schedule 9 - Parking Prohibited – Loading Zone

- Forbes Street – Loading/unloading of vehicles are permitted with a 15 minute time limit west end of Forbes Street, from civic address 22 Forbes Street to the entrance of the Cambridge to Paris Rail Trail parking lot.

## **Penmans Dam Park River Access - In Paris**

## 4. Schedule 15 - Parking Permit Application between May 1 to October 31

- Elm Street, Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from William Street to 160 m north of William Street;
- Willow Street – Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side and south sides from Smith Street East to Walnut Street;
- Walnut Street – Parking Permitted only by permit on the south/west side from Smith Street East to Portland Street;
- Joseph Brant Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the south side from Willow Street to Walnut Street.

5. Schedule 3 – Parking Prohibited Anytime

- Elm Street- Parking prohibited on the west side from William Street to 160 m north of William Street;
- Mick Jones Way – Parking prohibited on the east side from Willow Street to Smith Street East;
- Mick Jones Way – Parking prohibited on the west side from Willow Street to Smith Street East;
- Walnut Street – Parking prohibited on the north/east side from Smith Street East to Willow Street;
- Walnut Street – Parking prohibited on the south/west side from Portland Street to Willow Street;
- Joseph Brant Street - Parking prohibited on the north side from Willow Street to Walnut Street.
- Penmans Dam Park River Access Laneway – Parking Prohibited on the west side from Willow Street to 15 m west of Willow Street.

6. Schedule 2 – Stopping Prohibited Anytime

- Willow Street – Stopping prohibited on the west side and north sides from Smith Street East to William Street;

7. Schedule 9 - Parking Prohibited – Loading Zone

- Penmans Dam Park River Access Laneway – Loading/unloading of vehicles are permitted with a 15 minute time limit from 15 m west of Willow Street to 35 m west of Willow Street.

**Bean Park River Access - In Paris**

8. Schedule 15 - Parking Permit Application between May 1 to October 31

- Race Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from Ball Street to 120 m north of Spencer Street;
- Spencer Street – Parking Permitted only by permit on the north side from Race Street to Ball Street;
- Ball Street – Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from Race Street to Spencer Street;
- Charles Street - Parking Permitted only by permit on the east side from Spencer Street to Patterson Street.

9. Schedule 3 – Parking Prohibited Anytime

- Race Street - Parking prohibited on the west side from Ball Street to 120 m north of Spencer Street;
- Spencer Street – Parking prohibited on the south side from Race Street to Ball Street;
- Ball Street – Parking prohibited on the west side from Race Street to Ann Street;
- Charles Street - Parking prohibited on the west side from Spencer Street to Patterson Street.

- Bean Park River Access Laneway – Parking Prohibited from Spencer Street/Race Street intersection to 100 m east of Spencer Street/Race Street intersection.

#### 10. Schedule 9 - Parking Prohibited – Loading Zone

- Bean Park River Access Laneway – Loading/unloading of vehicles are permitted with a 15 minute time limit from 100 m east of Spencer Street/Race Street to 135 m east of Spencer Street/Race Street intersection.

### **Strategic Priority**

- 1 – Sustainable and Managed Growth
- 2 – Effective Communication
- 3 – Economic Resilience
- 4 – Reliable Infrastructure
- 5 – Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens
- 6 – Stable and Responsive Governance

### **Financial Considerations**

The enhanced river access mitigation strategies for the 2021 season will require increased staffing for enforcement and additional signage related to parking restrictions. The estimated cost to up-staff for by-law enforcement from May to October is \$70,000; however, it is anticipated some costs will be offset by revenue generated from enforcement. Additional signage placed at the three river access points related to parking restrictions is estimated at \$2,000 per location for a total of \$6,000, with sufficient funds available in the 2021 sign operating budget.

### **Executive Summary**

The County of Brant's stunning physical geographical features have become a significant attraction for visitors to our area, even more so through the population's endurance of the COVID-19 pandemic, as public health emphasizes the importance of maintaining exercise and mental health through lower risk outdoor activities. While visitors support our local businesses and economy, the County's river access points in particular are experiencing visitor loads which exceed parking and overall capacities, to the detriment of local residents. At Council's direction, staff have developed a short-term strategy for the 2021 season, by introducing Municipal Permit Only Parking Areas at each of the three public river access points, being Eric Thomlinson in Glen Morris, and Penman's Dam and Bean Park in Paris, limiting visitors to park within existing or nearby municipal parking lots. The staff resources to enforce these new restrictions will be a key component of the success of this strategy, in combination with communication and marketing efforts to redirect tourists down river or to commercial outfitter programs. Increased fines for parking violations in the permit only zones are recommended as a further deterrent, noting many visitors are from larger urban areas in which parking penalties are much higher. Staff will monitor the

success of the strategies introduced for the 2021 season and consider additional measures for future years as part of the 2022 budget submission.

## **Background**

The County's three river access points, Eric Thomlinson River Access in Glen Morris and Penman's Dam and Bean Park in Paris, experienced a never before seen interest from visitors during the 2020 season, which has been attributed in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, as one of the limited, lower-risk, outdoor activities for people to enjoy. As noted in RPT-20-196, River Access Mitigation Strategies, infrared counters at each location provided data which estimated a 66% year-over-year increase in visitor foot traffic. The 2021 weekday daily count average from May to August at each of the three access points was 325. The weekend daily count average was 715. During the fifteen (15) week season the following total counts were measured: Bean Park 54,858, Eric Thomlinson 55,580, and Penman's Landing (portage launch not included) 36,146. The counts include people passing by the sensor to and from a destination close to the water.

Following unprecedented increases in activity at the three County public river access points over the summer of 2020, Council approved various short-term initiatives at the November 24 2020 meeting, as part of a short-term river access mitigation strategy. This included the following:

- Consultation and collaboration with municipal partners, the GRCA and regional outfitters to develop plans and tactics to improve peak demands, physical infrastructure, site maintenance and patron safety
- Parking lot improvements at the Forbes St. Trail Head
- Installation of river access kilometer markers at key landmarks, structures and access points and launching of a communication plan to advise the public of these safety enhancement tools
- Installation of signage, where required, to direct people to appropriate parking areas and to improve wayfinding of amenities near access points
- Brant Tourism to institute RSVP Brant program
- Consultation with RTO3 to minimize marketing targets for the Grand River
- Planning and construction of a new river access point in Newport which will include consultation with Six Nations of the Grand and Mississauga's of New Credit

In addition to this, at the September 15, 2020 meeting, Council approved parking restrictions near the Eric Tomlinson launch to one side of Forbes Street, Kirk Street, Princess Street and Pine Street. The signs related to these restrictions were installed in the field prior to the end of the 2020 summer season in anticipation for the start of the 2021 summer launch.

At the March 2021 Administration and Operations Committee meeting, following a delegation from concerned residents in the Glen Morris area, staff were directed to "develop a more appropriate parking system, including potential for both a Seasonal Residential Parking Permit System and drop off/pick up facilities combined with remote parking," for the Glen Morris, Bean Park and Penman's Dan areas, to introduce they system for the 2021 season (May 1 – Oct 30, 2021). Staff were also directed "to develop a more appropriate parking system, including potential for the 2022 budget consideration and implementation of an e-booking system for the 2022 season, such a system would enable the public to research in

advance the availability of parking or be directed to other available locations for river access and parking and reserve such sights to better manage the resources of the County of Brant.”

### Recreation Master Plan Context

The County’s Recreation Master Plan (RMP) identifies that river access has become a significant tourism asset and the primary visitor attraction that has grown exponentially over the last number of years. Under the County’s Park Use By-law No.225-04, Penman’s Dam and Eric Tomlinson River Access points are designated commercial river access points, Bean Park is a designated non-commercial river access point, and Lions Park is a designated special event river access point. The By-law directs commercial outfitters to the commercial river access points.

The RMP notes that from a policy perspective, it is believed that the preferred model for the County is to continue its current support, promotion and facilitation, and regulatory role for river access activities involving County-owned access points, within its existing strategy and by-law/permitting process for both commercial and public uses of the Grand River and Nith River, continue to monitor usage and facility needs, and liaise with river access operators on a regular basis in support of the potential growth and economic impact of this growing tourism initiative. The RMP further recommends that Brant County evaluate the potential for improvements to existing river access points and/or development of additional river access points. With Council’s approval since the RMP was approved in 2017, staff have undertaken improvements to Penman’s Dam river access; parking, signage and access improvements at Eric Tomlinson, and work is underway to develop a new access point in the Newport area.

## **Report**

### Seasonal Residential Parking Permit System

Seasonal residential parking restrictions are recommended for all three sites as river access points in the County should not be viewed in isolation; limits imposed on one location have the potential to impact other locations.

Staff have reviewed the areas surrounding the three public river access points and recommend a seasonal residential parking permit system as per the area zones identified in the recommendation and in accordance with Attachment 1 - Aerial View – Glen Morris River Access, Attachment 2 - Aerial View – Penman’s Dam Park River Access, Attachment 3 - Aerial View – Bean Park River Access. These permit area zones are included in keeping with streets that have experienced parking volumes in the past as well as creating a perimeter large enough in attempt to deter visitors from parking just outside of the established zone. A 15 minute loading zone is also included at each of the 3 river access points, to permit users a safe and close drop off/loading location to the river.

These areas would be considered Municipal Permit Only Parking Areas under the municipality’s Parking By-Law Number 004-19. No person shall park a vehicle in a Municipal Permit Only Parking Area without a County parking permit, issued under the authority of the Supervisor of Enforcement and Regulatory Services. An On-Street Parking Permit carries a

fee of \$15.00 per month (or \$120 per year). Permits are only issued to applicants who reside on a street in areas designated as “Permit Parking Only”, and for vehicles that are not registered as a commercial motor vehicle. Furthermore, permits are only issued to applicants who do not, at the County’s discretion, have adequate off-street parking spaces for vehicles registered to their property, requiring the applicant to demonstrate a need for the permit. There are no reserved parking spaces, with no guarantee of availability of spaces.

Should Council approve the parking restrictions as outlined, it is recommended a lead time be provided in order to effectively communicate with affected residents regarding the new permit requirements, and time for processing resident applications if a permit is desired. The recommended target implementation date to begin enforcement of this new program is June 1, 2021, which is subject to some approvals and work required to install associated signage. Typically larger crowds begin to visit the County’s river access points at this time, weather dependent.

#### Signage for Parking Restriction Areas

All signs shall be erected in accordance with Regulation 615 of the Highway Traffic Act, as well as the Ontario Traffic Manual. The above noted work will be completed once the necessary by-laws have been approved by County Council concurrently with this report, and the regulations have been amended.

#### Shuttling/Off-site Parking Options

Staff considered shuttling/off-site parking options for the 2021 season, and have discussed potential partnerships with local commercial operators. The challenge faced is the current limitation of suitable off-site parking, noting that this system was previously implemented with commercial operators in the past at the Brant Sports Complex and it was not well received by residents near the bus route, resulting in the system being shut down. Staff are also cognizant that shifting parking to other near-by areas may result in more resident complaints from these areas. Marketing of Brant Transit for this season is an option for a niche of river/trail users, such as hikers and bird watchers.

#### Existing Municipal Parking Capacity at Each Site

With residential permits required to park on street, visitor parking for river/trail use will be limited to existing parking lots at or near by each site. At the Eric Thomlinson launch, the parking lot is owned by the GRCA. There are 40 parking spaces available at this site, noting that 9 new parking spots were created following last season, in partnership with the GRCA. At the Bean Park river access point, there are 28 parking spaces available within the park. At Penman’s Dam river access point, there are 29 parking spaces available within the park. Visitors may also be directed to park at Syl Apps parking lot, where 60 parking spaces are available, noting that parking is shared with activities that may be booked within the Community Centre.

#### Enforcement of Seasonal Parking Restrictions

To effectively enforce and monitor adherence to the proposed permit parking only zones, staff recommend additional by-law enforcement staff resources to station at each of the three

river access points for the expected peak periods of the season and times of day, including weekends. While a communications strategy is underway to inform potential visitors of the reduced parking capacity this season, many visitors will not receive the message or may ignore the message and arrive on site. The additional staffing will be needed to inform and educate visitors on the parking restrictions, ticket non-conformance, and redirect visitors to commercial outfitters in the area. An additional staff complement of 3 staff is recommended at an estimated cost of \$70,000.

Staff have reviewed the permit parking proposal with Brant OPP, noting that OPP have advised that they do not have the resources available to enforce the proposed restrictions. As conflict can be expected from some visitors, OPP staff have expressed their availability on an ad-hoc basis when needed for escalating situations. Staff have also reviewed the potential for OPP officers to utilize County marine resources for enforcement issues that may arise on the river; however, it has been determined that the County's equipment and training regime would not meet the requirements for OPP officers to use the fire boats for enforcement.

#### Parking Violations

Under the County's Parking By-Law under section 32(b) Schedule 15, the current penalty set for parking in a municipal permit only area without a permit is \$30.00, if paid within 7 days of issuance, and \$45.00 if paid within 15 days of issuance. For visitors from other areas of the province, such as the GTA, a \$30.00 fine is likely not a significant deterrent from illegally parking. Staff recommend increasing the fine to a minimum of \$80.00, if paid within 7 days of issuance, and \$95.00 if paid within 15 days of issuance. With Council's approval, an application for the fine increase will be forwarded to the Ministry of Attorney General's office, noting the increase is sought as a deterrent to mitigate congestion and safety for the upcoming season, given the excess visitor volumes experienced last summer during the pandemic and expected high volumes again this year while the pandemic continues.

#### Commercial Outfitters

Under the County's Park Use By-law No.225-04, Penman's Dam and Eric Tomlinson River Access points are designated commercial river access points. The By-law directs commercial outfitters to the commercial river access points.

Due to concerns related to potential visitor volume, congestion and safety during the pandemic leading up to the 2020 season, the County's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) made a decision not to provide permits to commercial outfitters to launch from Brant public river access locations. The EOC has recently reviewed this matter in relation to the 2021 season, and recommend that permits are once again not granted for commercial operators for public river access points. While the current river launch points were able to support both public and commercial volumes in the past, the level of interest in outdoor river experiences has exceeded the public launch capacity to continue to support commercial operators.



The local commercial operators have alternative launch points available and have their own shuttling programs set up as part of their operations. While prohibiting commercial operators from using public river access points this upcoming season, it is proposed that County marketing efforts are focused on supporting commercial operators and diverting some visitors to these businesses.

#### Tourism and R.S.V.P. Program

Following the summer of 2020, Council adopted the Responsible Safe Visitation is our Priority in Brant Plan (RSVP). As described in RPT-20-154, Visitor Impact Review, some municipalities, specifically those with strong natural recreation assets, in areas of low infection rates, easily accessed via major routes with a strong brand of supporting amenities, reported high rates of visitation through the summer months.

As part of RSVP, market engagement is a key component, to convey clear messaging to visitors of Brant's expectations, and better inform visitors before they arrive in Brant. For this season, all marketing with respect to river access will be restricted or adjusted to (a) focus on other less popular destinations away from paddling and/or (b) keep any paddling marketing pointing to the commercial outfitters and away from the public launching sites of Brant.

County Economic Development and Tourism staff have also initiated discussions with Grand River stakeholders including City of Brantford Tourism, RTO3, and Six Nations Tourism, to coordinate marketing efforts and direct the flow of paddlers beyond the County's launch capacities further down river.

#### Evaluation of 2021 Strategy and Long-Term Solutions

Staff will monitor and evaluate the success of the approved strategies implemented for the 2021 season. Further long term solutions will also be considered as directed by Council, such as paid parking systems, permit systems, and other potential improvements or broader studies, which may be submitted as part of the 2022 budget. Staff will provide Council with a review of the 2021 season in the fall.

#### Acknowledgement

The author of this report would like to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of staff from the County Operations Department, Regulatory and Enforcement Services, Strategic Initiatives, Parks and Facilities, and Brant County OPP in the development of this report.

#### **Interdepartmental Considerations**

As noted, staff from various Departments and agencies provided information for this report.

#### **Attachments**

1. Aerial View – Glen Morris River Access
2. Aerial View – Penman's Dam Park River Access
3. Aerial View – Bean Park River Access

## **Copy to**

1. SMT
2. K. Ballantyne, Director Parks and Facilities
3. R. Press, Director of Economic Development & Tourism
4. G. Demers, Director of Roads
5. J. DeMunck, Roads Operations Manager
6. R. Knap, Road Operations Technologist
7. K. McAllister, Road Superintendent
8. S. McDonald, Road Superintendent
9. B. McDonald, Road Superintendent
10. G. Bergeron, Manager of Enforcement and Regulatory Services
11. Sgt. A. Hampson, Brant County OPP

## **File**

In adopting this report, is a bylaw or agreement required?

By-law required (Yes)

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk (No)

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? (Yes)