

# MNR looking at concepts to manage public lands near Kimberley

Courier-Express – December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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With recreational use of public lands continuing to grow, the provincial government is working to develop a strategy to better manage land it owns near Kimberley.

Craig Todd, a Ministry of Natural Resources Partnership Specialist in the Owen Sound office, met with Grey Highlands council at its regular meeting on Monday December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Todd explained the recreational use of public forestlands in the Kimberley area continues to grow. That usage is multi-faceted and the MNR has decided a strategy to manage the land and usage of it is important.

Todd spoke to council about the Kimberley Forest that extends north from the Beaver Valley Ski Club to the Talisman lands. He said the province owns some of the land, some is owned by the Conservation Authority, and some is owned by the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Todd said until this point the land in question has been considered “free use” property – meaning the government doesn’t actively monitor and manage the properties.

“A lot of trails are showing up. Some were cut years ago, but we’re getting more and more complaints and people are called our office with concerns,” Todd Explained.

He said virtually all major recreation usages are happening on the trails including: hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling and ATVing.

The MNR recently held a public meeting in Kimberley about the matter and has formed a public steering committee to look at the various issues and come up with a strategy.

“There was outstanding interest. It was standing room only at the Kimberley Hall,” Todd said.

The steering committee meets once a month to go over various matters.

“We’re going through the issue of how to do we use these trails and stop the conflicts that are going on between [the various users],” he said.

“How do we use this property together and maintain it for the future and – most importantly – preserve it ecologically and environmentally,” he said.

Some of the issues the group is looking at include:

- Designating trails for specific usage
- Parking concerns
- Signage concerns
- Trail Mapping

A second public meeting will be held in the spring to report back on the steering committee’s progress.

“We’re going to come up with some options,” he said.

Members of council were pleased to see the MNR consulting and public about the matter.

“It’s very exciting. It’s something we should all help with or get involved with,” commented councilor Lynn Silverton.

For more information, go to <http://www.thekimberleyforest.org>.