

Expanded Adopt-a-Road program set to begin

Lanark County Council has passed a by-law to extend eligible activities of its popular Adopt-a-Road program this year, adding new activities related to its invasive species and noxious weed control.

“The county has adopted a new Vegetation Management Plan that uses various methods to control invasive species,” said CAO Kurt Greaves. “The goal is to maintain safe roadsides, and we’re taking a long-term, multi-faceted and holistic approach. Enhancing eligible activities in the Adopt-a-Road program will provide an alternative to roadside herbicide spraying while helping us to meet our legislative requirements under the Weed Control Act to control noxious weeds, such as wild parsnip.”

Adopt-a-Road was established as a public service program for volunteers in 1999 to enhance local litter collection along roadsides. The expanded program will include certain invasive plant and noxious weed management activities.

“Our Vegetation Management Plan was developed by Dr. Nancy Cain of CVI IPM Services (Cain Vegetation Inc.) and we have met with the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN) and Pollinator Partnership Canada to ask them to review and give input on our program,” explained Mr. Greaves. “I thank the public for their input as it was a catalyst for us to learn more and do better. It has pushed us to adopt best practices and become a leader in roadside management including the adoption of our comprehensive Vegetation Management Plan.”

“Adopt-a-Road supports the activities of the Lanark County Public Works Department with approved activities within certain sections of county road right-of-ways,” explained Terry McCann, public works director. “We currently have 28 groups doing 63 kilometres of roadways. It is a way for environmentally conscious citizens to make a personal contribution to a better environment.”

In addition to litter pick-up, the program has been extended to include spotting and reporting invasive plants and noxious weeds. Other activities can include hand pulling/spading of those plants, and conducting accelerated mowing and landscape planting. Participants are recognized with Adopt-a-Road signage.

Staff will be uploading data into mapping system at eddmaps.org/ontario/about/ and encourage volunteers to use the system to report invasive plants and noxious weeds. Alternate forms of documentation will also be available.

“Although the no-spraying signs will no longer be available, if appropriate invasive plant/weed control is conducted by a group, the county would ensure there is no spraying in those adopted road sections,” Mr. McCann said.

Council approved the spraying program for 2016 and 2017 and contracts are in place. The majority of this year’s contract is targeted spot spraying. This enhancement greatly reduces the volume of herbicide required.

“Without full participation to control the invasive plants, the integrity of the Vegetation Management Program collapses,” Mr. Greaves said. “If the volunteers adopt the road section and look after the invasive weeds it will not be sprayed.”

Last spring, the Little Silver and Rainbow Lake Property Owners Association undertook a trial project to conduct invasive plant/weed control on a section of roadway. The extended Adopt-a-Road program builds on this success.

Volunteers wishing to participate must submit a program agreement, which outlines a range of safety precautions. The county helps to select an adoptable stretch of road, usually at least 2 kilometres long, and two years is the standard length of the agreement.

Once an adoption is approved, the county will provide contact information for applicable partners who can help with such things as invasive plant and noxious weed training. “Our partners, such as the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, can assist with education related to the identification of plants, proper control techniques and safety,” Mr. McCann said.

“As part of the Vegetation Management Plan, the county has an exit strategy to annually reduce our reliance on spraying and focus on seeding native flowers and shrubs to reduce long-term road maintenance costs and make our roadside pollinator friendly,” said Warden Bill Dobson (Montague Reeve).

For more information, see <http://www.county.lanark.on.ca/Page1873.aspx> or call 613-267-1353

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