

REFRESH | REGROW | RECREATE

NEW ROUTES

Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan



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Introduction

In 2022, in concert with a review of the recreational use policy for the Dufferin County Forest, the County expanded the public input and review process and subsequent documents to include the County-owned vacant rail corridor, the Dufferin Rail Trail. In addition, besides addressing permitted and restricted uses, the outdoor recreation plan addresses other aspects of public use, including infrastructure, signs, interpretive and educational features, and communications. With regard to the County Forest, much of this information was brought in from the recently completed five-year operating plan (2021-2026) and informed by the current public input and review process. For the Rail Trail, these sections were informed by past experience with the Rail Trail and the County Forest, as well as the current public input and review process.

The Dufferin County Forest consists of fourteen tracts that together form a 1,066 hectare (2,636 acre) forested area owned and managed by the County of Dufferin (map on next page). The Forest serves important functions in terms of erosion and water control, natural heritage protection, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and support of the rural economy through timber production and employment opportunities. A Recreational Use Policy/By-Law for the County Forest was passed in 2017. Several amendments have been made to the policy/by-law since then, most of them minor in nature. This is the first full-scale public review of the policy/by-law since its initial creation. The items other than permitted and restricted uses are discussed in the Five-Year Operating Plan and Twenty-Year Management Plan for the Forest.

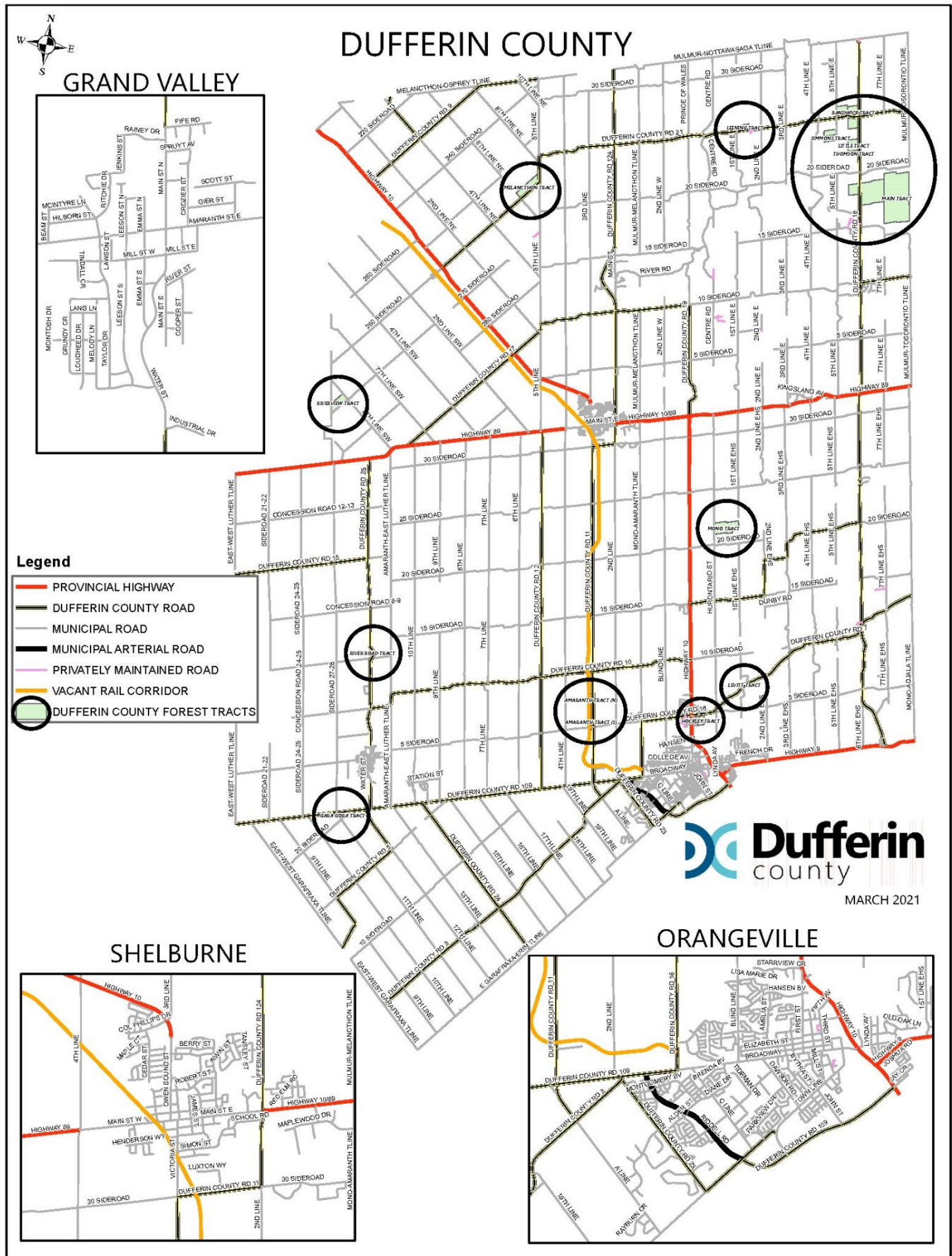
The Dufferin Rail Trail is the 38.1 km Dufferin portion of the former rail corridor running from Orangeville, through Amaranth, Shelburne and Melancthon, to Dundalk (map on next page). Historically there have been agreements in place with the local ATV and snowmobile clubs for use of the trail. There are no other documents related to use or management of the Rail Trail.

While considering the limits of available natural and human resources, and putting environmental sustainability at the forefront, the County is committed to making both the Rail Trail and the County Forest available to as diverse a group of users as possible. In consultation with the County's Tourism Division, the promotion of the Rail Trail and the County Forest will be focused on the residents of Dufferin County.

The implementation of this plan will require the participation and co-operation of the residents of Dufferin County, the users of the Rail Trail and County Forest, volunteers, and the following County Divisions: Climate Change, Transportation – Operations, Tourism, Economic Development, Museum of Dufferin, and Forestry.

A number of the actions outlined in this plan (in particular with regards to infrastructure and signs) have cost impacts beyond current budgets. Without further budgetary commitments by County Council they will not be implemented.

New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan



Communications

- Establish social media accounts for Rail Trail/County Forest.
- Add Rail Trail information to the County website.
- Distribute information about the Rail Trail/County Forest through related local businesses.
- Look into development of an app for the Rail Trail/County Forest and/or providing content to existing trail-related apps.
- Improve the Main Tract trail map to make it more user-friendly through graphic design and information about trail distances, difficulty etc.
- Improve printed information products through better graphic design.
- Communicate key information through radio ads.
- Continue to communicate key information through local newspapers.
- Continue to communicate information through County website.
- Launch information campaign such as "Slow and Say Hello" (www.safetrailsmarin.org) to increase awareness amongst various users and user groups

Rail Trail

Infrastructure & Maintenance

- The surface of the rail trail will be maintained in such a manner as to facilitate permitted uses.
- Consideration will be given to year-round parking areas at Orangeville and Shelburne.
- Portable toilets will be placed at suitable locations in Orangeville and Shelburne.

Signs

- Distance markers will be posted from both Orangeville (going north) and Dundalk (going south).
- Pictographic signs indicating permitted/prohibited trail uses.
- Signs describing historical significance of particular areas/locations with a particular focus on Indigenous history.
- Signs acknowledging Indigenous history and current presence on the land ("land acknowledgement").
- Road name and road crossing signs will be posted at road crossings.
- Speed limit signs for motorized users.
- Signs will be maintained and replaced as needed.
- Best efforts will be made to balance the need for signs without littering the environment with them.

Interpretive Features/Education

- Signs describing history and significance of the area, with a focus on Indigenous history.
- Signs describing flora and fauna.
- Guided interpretation walks.

Permitted/Prohibited Uses

1. Generally Accepted Uses

- Unless otherwise restricted in this policy and associated by-law, generally accepted outdoor recreational activities are permitted on the Dufferin Rail Trail.

2. Parking

- Parking is permitted only in designated areas.

3. Dogs

- Dogs must be under control or on-leash at all times while on the Rail Trail.

4. Safety

- The use of audio devices that impair your awareness of other users is not permitted on the Rail Trail.
- Helmets are required for anyone cycling, horseback riding, or using a motorized vehicle on the Rail Trail.

5. Respect for Property

- Discarding of garbage, including yard or garden waste, on the Rail Trail is not permitted.
- Willful damage to any structures on the Rail Trail is not permitted.

County Forest

Infrastructure & Maintenance

- The surfaces of the trails and roads will be maintained in such a manner as to facilitate permitted uses.
- Consideration will be given to a year-round parking area, information kiosk, and portable toilets at the Mono Tract.
- Portable toilets will be placed at the Main Tract.
- The main parking area at the Main Tract will be maintained year-round.
- Consideration will be given to establishing a source of non-potable water (primarily for horses and dogs) at the Main Tract.
- Consideration will be given to establishing a second information kiosk at the event field at the Main Tract.

Signs

- Red dots inside the perimeter of all of the forest properties as described in the *Trespass to Property Act*.
- Signs at all County Forest entrances prominently displaying the County Forest website address and/or a QR code to link to the website.

- Pictographic signs indicating permitted/prohibited trail uses.
- Signs describing historical significance of particular areas/locations with a particular focus on Indigenous history.
- Signs acknowledging Indigenous history and current presence on the land ("land acknowledgement").
- For the Main Tract, "you are here" style maps.
- At the Mono Tract, increase signs to increase awareness amongst various users and user groups.
- Signs will be maintained and replaced as needed.
- Best efforts will be made to balance the need for signs without littering the environment with them.

Interpretive Features/Education

- Signs describing history and significance of the area, with a focus on Indigenous history.
- Guided interpretation walks.
- Development of school programs related to forest history, local flora and fauna, importance of the natural environment etc.
- Development of wetland interpretive trail at Melancthon Tract and/or Thomson Tract.

Permitted/Prohibited Uses

1. Indigenous Peoples

- This policy does not limit or supersede any recognized rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2. Generally Accepted Uses

- Unless otherwise restricted in this policy and associated by-law, generally accepted outdoor recreational activities are permitted in the Dufferin County Forest.

3. Main Permitted and Restricted Activities by Land Use Classes

- Appendix A shows the main permitted and restricted activities divided according to the land use classes in *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Operating Plan 2021-2026* (Table 8, pg. 27).

4. Trails

- Users must stay on established trails at all times while in the Dufferin County Forest.

5. Motorized Vehicles

- Motorized vehicles, other than snowmobiles and vehicles used for game retrieval, are not permitted in the Dufferin County Forest.
- Pedal-assist electric bicycles (Class 1) are permitted where cycling is permitted.
- Wheelchairs and medical scooters are designed for people who have limited mobility because of a medical condition or injury. They are considered as pedestrians under the *Highway Traffic Act*, no matter their source of power. Therefore, there are no restrictions on their use in the Dufferin County Forest.

6. Parking

- Parking is permitted only in designated areas.

7. Hunting, Fishing, Trapping

- In general, hunting is not permitted in all tracts of the Dufferin County Forest, please refer to Appendix A for tracts where hunting is permitted.
- There is no hunting or discharge of firearms allowed in any Dufferin County Forest between June 1 and September 30.
- Patterning/sighting of firearms is not permitted in the Dufferin County Forest.
- Between October 1 and May 31, hunting and discharge of firearms are permitted only on the tracts as listed in Appendix A and within the seasons and other restrictions and requirements as determined by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.
- Only temporary portable tree stands are permitted. Tree stands may be in place in the Forest only from October 1 of a given year until the following May 31.
- Hunters are required to purchase a permit from the County for hunting in the Dufferin County Forest. The permit will be valid from October 1 of a given year until the following May 31. If deemed necessary, the County may restrict the number of permits issued.
- All hunters must be members in good standing of a recognized organization that provides a minimum of \$5 million liability insurance for its members while they are engaged in hunting activities and are required to present proof of membership prior to obtaining a permit to hunt in the Dufferin County Forest.
- Fishing is permitted only within seasons and other restrictions and requirements as determined by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. However, there are no significant fishing opportunities in the Dufferin County Forest.
- Trapping is permitted only within the seasons and other restrictions and requirements as determined by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and only at the following tracts: Melancthon, Riverview, and Amaranth South. Trapping areas will be assigned on a first come, first serve basis, renewable annually at the County's discretion. All trappers are required to present proof of membership in the Ontario Fur Managers Federation prior to being granted permission to trap.

8. Snowmobiling

- Snowmobiling in the Dufferin County Forest is permitted on designated Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) trails only. Snowmobilers must display a current OFSC trail permit and follow all OFSC rules/regulations while using the designated trails in the Dufferin County Forest.

9. Foraging

- In order to conserve the natural environment, users are not permitted to disturb, cut, kill, remove or harm any plant, tree or natural object in the Dufferin County Forest,

including for the purposes of foraging.

10. Dogs

- Dogs must be under control or on-leash at all times within the Dufferin County Forest.

11. Safety

- The use of audio devices that impair your awareness of other users is not permitted in the Dufferin County Forest.
- Helmets are required for anyone cycling, horseback riding, or snowmobiling in the Dufferin County Forest.

12. Campfires/Cooking

- Campfires are not permitted in the Dufferin County Forest. The use of portable cooking stoves may be restricted due to weather conditions.

13. Respect for Property

- Discarding of garbage, including yard or garden waste, in the Dufferin County Forest is not permitted.
- Willful damage to any structures in the Dufferin County Forest is not permitted.

14. Drones

- Use of drones in the Dufferin County Forest is not permitted without prior authorization from the County Forest Manager or his/her designate.

15. Mansfield Outdoor Centre

- The County of Dufferin has a long-standing exclusive land use agreement with the Mansfield Outdoor Centre for lease of designated trails in the south part of the Main Tract for cross-country skiing/fat biking between December 1 of a given year and March 31 of the following year. The agreement will be renewed annually at the County's discretion.
- Organized recreational events taking place at the Mansfield Outdoor Centre that wish to make use of trails in the Main Tract of the Dufferin County Forest will be subject to the same requirements as any other organized recreational event.

16. Organized Recreational Events

- Non-profit groups wishing to hold an event/tour for more than 30 people in the Dufferin County Forest will be required to obtain a County Forest Event Permit. For-profit/commercial groups of any size wishing to hold an event/tour in the Dufferin County Forest will be required to obtain a County Forest Event Permit (Appendix B) or have a use agreement in place with the County of Dufferin.

- A single event can extend over only one Friday-Monday period. Consecutive events by the same group will not be permitted.
- Groups are advised to inquire as to date availability for events as soon as possible (at least three months in advance of event date) to avoid disappointment. In order to minimize conflicts, only one event per tract per day will be granted an event permit.
- Groups participating in forest stewardship activities such as trail building, trail maintenance, and garbage removal are not required to have an event permit for such activities.
- Access to the open area at the Main Tract for overnight stays/event staging will be limited to groups holding organized recreational events having a valid County Forest Event Permit.
- There will be no camping permitted in the Dufferin County Forest other than as part of an event for which there is a valid County Forest Event Permit.
- Event dates for the following calendar year can be reserved starting on November 1 of the current year.
- Virtual events will not be subject to the requirements of organized recreational events.

17. Separation of Trail Uses

- The County Forest Manager or his/her designate will work with stakeholders to establish separate designated trails in the Main Tract for user groups. Trail maps will be distributed to users through a variety of means and signs will indicate designated trails in the Main Tract.

18. Fees

- Fees for recreational use of the Dufferin County Forest will be established in the County's fees by-law and will be available on the County website and by request.

19. Forest Management

- Forest management activities will be conducted so as to minimize impacts on designated recreational trails.

20. Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team

- The County will establish a team made up of five residents of Dufferin County and one member of the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee. The team will meet at least once annually to discuss the management of the Dufferin County Forest. The purpose of the team will be to ensure that the interests of stakeholders in the Dufferin County Forest are represented and effectively communicated to the County of Dufferin. Representation will be solicited from the general public to coincide with the new term of County Council, or as required to replace or add members. The Terms of Reference for the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team are in Appendix C.

Appendix A: Main Permitted and Restricted Activities by Dufferin County Forest Land Use Class

Tract & Compartments	Land Use Class	Area (ha)	Hiking/Running/Nature Appreciation	Skiing/Snowshoeing	Fat (Winter) Mtn Biking	Mtn Biking
Amaranth (42a), Laurel Wetland Complex	natural	12	y	y	n	n
Amaranth (43b, 43c), Farmington Swamp	natural	10	y	y	y	y
Amaranth (43a)	managed	2	y	y	y	y
Gara-Gore (44a)	managed	15	y	y	y	y
Hockley (49), Orangeville Wetland Complex	natural	20	y	y	y	y
Leening (50)	natural	8	y	y	n	n
Levitt (51)	natural	4	y	y	n	n
Little (48)	natural	47	y	y	n	n
Main (7-10, 12-19, 21a, 22, 23a, 23b, 24b, 24c, 25b, 25c)	managed	316	y	y	y	y
Main (11, 20a, 21b, 23c, 24a, 25a, 26-30, 31a, 31d), Oak Ridges South Slope Forest	natural	266	y	y	y	y
Main (31b, 31c)	natural	24	y	y	y	y
Melancthon (32a, 32b, 32c, 33a, 33b, 33d)	managed	12	y	y	y	y
Melancthon (33a, 33c, 33d, 34a, 35a), Melancthon 1	natural	48	y	y	y	y
Mono (39-40, 46)	managed	68	y	y	y	y
Randwick (1-4c, 5-6)	managed	115	y	y	y	y
Randwick (4d), Walker’s Creek Wetland	natural	2	y	y	y	y
River Road (45)	managed	3	y	n	n	n
Riverview (36, 37b, 37c, 37d, 37e, 38a, 38b)	managed	27	y	y	y	y
Riverview (37a, 38c, 38d), Melancthon 2	natural	13	y	y	y	y
Simmons (47)	managed	42	y	y	y	y
Thomson	managed	12	y	y	n	n

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Tract & Compartments	Land Use Class	Area (ha)	Horseback Riding	Hunting	OFSC Trails	Other Motorized Vehicles
Amaranth (42a), Laurel Wetland Complex	natural	12	n	n	n	n
Amaranth (43b, 43c), Farmington Swamp	natural	10	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Amaranth (43a)	managed	2	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Gara-Gore (44a)	managed	15	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Hockley (49), Orangeville Wetland Complex	natural	20	n	n	n	n
Leening (50)	natural	8	n	n	n	n
Levitt (51)	natural	4	n	n	n	n
Little (48)	natural	47	n	n	n	n
Main (7-10, 12-19, 21a, 22, 23a, 23b, 24b, 24c, 25b, 25c)	managed	316	y	n	y	n
Main (11, 20a, 21b, 23c, 24a, 25a, 26-30, 31a, 31d), Oak Ridges South Slope Forest	natural	266	y	n	n	n
Main (31b, 31c)	natural	24	y	n	n	n
Melancthon (32a, 32b, 32c, 33a, 33b, 33d)	managed	12	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Melancthon (33a, 33c, 33d, 34a, 35a), Melancthon 1	natural	48	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Mono (39-40, 46)	managed	68	y	n	y	n
Randwick (1-4c, 5-6)	managed	115	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	y	n
Randwick (4d), Walker’s Creek Wetland	natural	2	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
River Road (45)	managed	3	n	n	n	n
Riverview (36, 37b, 37c, 37d, 37e, 38a, 38b)	managed	27	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	y	n
Riverview (37a, 38c, 38d), Melancthon 2	natural	13	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Simmons (47)	managed	42	y	y (except June 1-Sept 30)	n	n
Thomson	managed	12	n	n	n	n

Appendix B: County Forest Event Permit Application

Applications must be submitted **at least 90 days prior to the event.**

Submit to: County of Dufferin
Corporate Services – Clerk's Office
55 Zina Street
Orangeville ON L9W1E5
Phone 519-941-2816
Fax 519-941-4565
info@dufferincounty.ca

Once submitted, you will receive confirmation of receipt. Applications will be reviewed by the Clerk's Office and the County Forest Manager. You will be contacted regarding your permit status within 30 days.

Once issued, the County Forest Event Permit must be available for viewing at all times during the event.

Please note that acceptance of your application is in no way approval or confirmation of your request.

The following documentation is required before the permit will be issued:

1. Completed and signed application
2. The signed Terms and Conditions page
3. The signed Hold and Save Harmless and Indemnity Agreement
4. Proof of Insurance in the minimum amount of \$5 million dollars liability showing the Corporation of the County of Dufferin as an additional insured and including a provision for cross liability for insurance against all damages or claims for damages or liability
5. An event description
6. An event route map

NOTE: Your event description must be approved by the County prior to being used to promote the event.

Fee Schedule (as per By-Law 2015-41):

Application Fee: \$50 plus 13% HST

Per Person Event Fee: \$2/Person Attending the Event plus 13% HST

Application fee is due upon permit approval. Permits will be issued following payment of fee.

Per Person Event fee is due following the event.

If several events are substantially the same, you may submit one application form listing all event dates. However, separate application and per person event fees will still be required for each event. An event can extend over only one Friday-Monday period. Consecutive events by the same group will not be permitted.

COUNTY FOREST EVENT PERMIT APPLICATION

Applicant Information

Applicant Name:

Organization/Group:

Mailing Address:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Event Information

Name of Event:

Date: From:

To:

Number of Participants:

Type of Event:

For Profit

Non Profit

Intended Use:

Camping

Cross Country Skiing

Hiking

(Check all that apply)

Horseback Riding

Mountain Biking

Snowshoeing

Other:

Forest Tract Requested:

Brief Description of Event:

Description of Route Markings:

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

For Office Use Only

Received By:

Reviewed By County Forest Manager:

Event Description Approved
of Participants Confirmed
Proof of Insurance Received
Event Route Map Received

Date Received:

Date Reviewed:

Special Permission Letter from Forest Manager
Application Fee Received
Indemnity Agreement Received
Terms & Conditions Signed
Permit Issued – Permit #:

COUNTY FOREST EVENT PERMIT APPLICATION

Terms and Conditions

- The user is responsible for complying with regulations set out in By-law 2017-39 and the Dufferin County Forest Recreational Use Policy (Policy No. 4-6-1).
- The user's event description must be approved by the County prior to being used to promote the event.
- A single event can extend over only one Friday-Monday period. Consecutive events by one group will not be permitted.
- The user is responsible for all costs relating to maintaining the property for use made of it during the event. The County has no obligation to maintain or repair the trails and/or bridges on the property for the benefit of the user. The user is responsible for ensuring that the event route is passable prior to, and following, the event.
- The user is prohibited from cutting any trees, branches or brush without prior written approval from the County Forest Manager or designate.
- The user agrees that any cutting or other damages, that in the opinion of the County Forest Manager or designate, has been caused by the users shall be rectified at the user's expense upon written notice by the County.
- The route of the event must follow the route set out in the permit application.
- No new trails may be created for the event without prior written approval from the County Forest Manager or designate.
- The user is responsible for posting signage on all trails and/or bridges or other signage as requested by the County. Any signs for the event may be posted no sooner than two weeks prior to the event date and must be removed no later than two weeks after the event. If the user is holding multiple events in a calendar year that use the same route(s), event signage may remain in place until two weeks after the final event of the calendar year.
- All trails and/or bridges on the property must remain open to the public for other permitted uses and the public shall be allowed to use them without being charged a fee by the user.

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- Upon completion of the event, the user will restore the property to a state, which in the opinion of the County Forest Manager or designate, is as good as or better than the original condition prior to the event.
- The County reserves the right to cancel an event permit in case of predicted severe weather.
- In order to reduce the chances of introduction of invasive species, no firewood is to be brought in to the camping area from outside the Main Tract.
- For events that include participants staying overnight/camping, at least one portable toilet must be provided for the use of participants.
- The user agrees to comply with all applicable municipal, provincial, federal and other laws, statutes, ordinances and requirements.
- The County may refuse to issue or revoke the permit if the user does not provide the necessary supporting documentation or fails to comply with By-law 2017-39 and the Dufferin County Forest Recreational Use Policy.
- The County of Dufferin reserves the right to add any conditions as required. If conditions are not being adhered to, the County of Dufferin may stop, suspend or cancel the event.

As the organizer and person responsible for the event, I have read, understand and agree to abide by the rules and the conditions set forth by these above terms and conditions.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

COUNTY FOREST EVENT PERMIT APPLICATION

Save and Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreement

The User, _____, agrees to indemnify, save harmless, and waive all rights against the County of Dufferin from and against all suits and claims for loss, damage, accident, death, or injury of any nature or kind whatsoever arising out of or connected with the use and maintenance of the property or any preparation or construction of or on the property by the user, its members, employees, agents, or any other person using the property.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Terms of Reference – Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team

Purpose:

The purpose of the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team (DCFAT) is to:

- provide community input and advice to County staff regarding the Dufferin County Forest Management Plan and Dufferin County Forest Recreational Use Policy and;
- assist County staff in communicating plan and policy revisions.

Dufferin County Forest Goal:

To protect the quality and integrity of ecosystems in the Dufferin County Forest, including air, water, land and biota; and, where quality and integrity have been diminished, to encourage restoration or remediation to healthy conditions; while providing a variety of social and economic benefits to the public.

Assumptions:

- recreational pursuits in the forest are a privilege, not a right;
- the Dufferin County Forest is not parkland, preserve or for single-use, however, some areas may not be suitable for all activities and;
- the Dufferin County Forest is owned and managed by the Corporation of the County of Dufferin, and is not Crown land.

Criteria for Analysis of Recreational Activities/Events:

- activity must have minimal environmental impact;
- activity must not have significant impact upon other forest users;
- activity must be compatible with forest management activities;
- activity must not pose significant liability concerns to the County and;
- activity should not require significant County staff intervention for administration or policing.

Membership:

Representation will be solicited from the general public to coincide with the new term of County Council, or as required to replace or add members. Five members will be selected according to the following criteria:

- commitment to advancing the purpose of the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team;
- interest and respect for a broad range of issues regarding the management of the Dufferin County Forest;
- respect for the procedures agreed to by the members;
- willingness to serve as a volunteer on the Advisory Team;
- aged 18 or over; and
- resident of Dufferin County.

In addition, one member of the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee will be appointed to the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team.

Structure:

The Advisory Team will meet at least once annually to discuss items relevant to its purpose. The County Forest Manager or his/her designate will attend all meetings and assist as required. The Advisory Team may choose to obtain feedback from recreational users and the broader public when deemed necessary.