

REFRESH | REGROW | RECREATE

# NEW ROUTES

Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Communications.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Rail Trail.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Infrastructure & Maintenance.....	5
Signs.....	5
Interpretive Features/Education.....	5
Permitted/Prohibited Uses.....	6
<b>County Forest.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Infrastructure & Maintenance.....	6
Signs.....	6
Interpretive Features/Education.....	7
Permitted/Prohibited Uses.....	7
<b>Appendix A: Main Permitted and Restricted Activities by Dufferin County Forest Land Use Class.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix B: County Forest Event Permit Application .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix C: Terms of Reference – Dufferin Outdoor Recreation Advisory Team .....</b>	<b>19</b>

## **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.

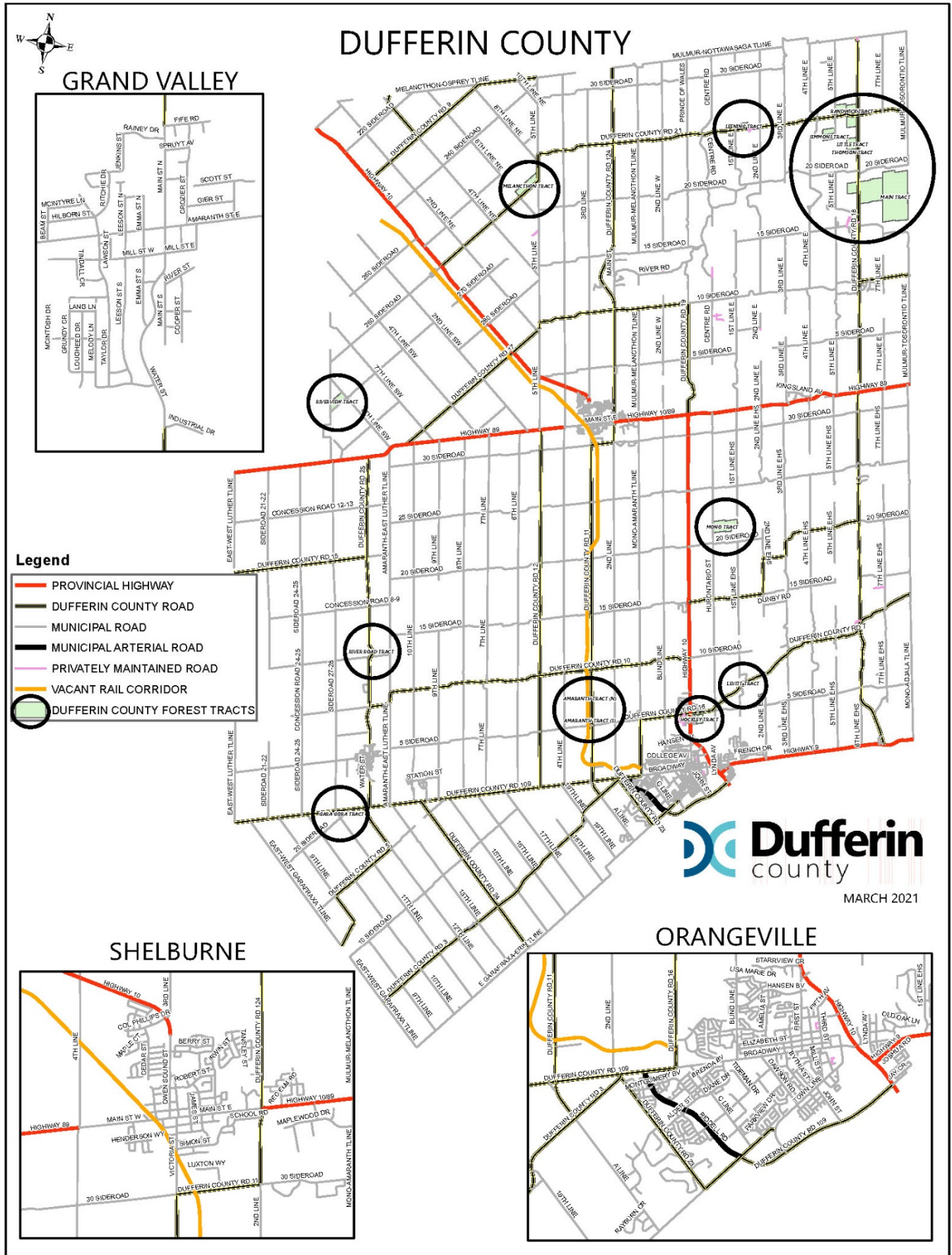
While considering the limits of available natural and human resources, and putting environmental sustainability at the forefront, the County is committed to making both the Rail Trail and the County Forest available to as diverse a group of users as possible. In consultation with the County's Tourism 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](http://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.
- Motor vehicle operators must be members of an appropriate Club that has entered into a use agreement with the County. **[Amended by By-law 2023-31, June 8, 2023]**

### 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 Outdoor Recreation Advisory Team**

- The County will establish an advisory team to provide a forum for discussion of issues related to recreational use of County assets, provide community input and advice to County staff regarding recreational use of the Dufferin County Forest and the Dufferin Rail Trail and implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan, and to assist County staff in communicating information about the Outdoor Recreation Plan and related by-law (2017-39) and any revisions. The Terms of Reference for the Dufferin

**New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan**

---

Outdoor Recreation Advisory Team are in Appendix C. **[Amended by Council Resolution #13, April 13, 2023]**

## 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

**New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan**

<b>Tract &amp; Compartments</b>	<b>Land Use Class</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Horseback Riding</b>	<b>Hunting</b>	<b>OFSC Trails</b>	<b>Other Motorized Vehicles</b>
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