

PHASE 2

DOGS IN THE YORK REGIONAL FOREST

INFORMATION SESSION

June 23, 2021 • 7 p.m.




York Region

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on today is the traditional territory of many First Nations, including the Chippewas of Georgina Island and the Mississaugas of the Credit. These lands are now home to many diverse Indigenous peoples.

We also acknowledge that York Region falls under Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties with several Mississauga and Chippewas First Nations.

INTRODUCTIONS

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Facilitator



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Moderator



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CONSULTING

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Project Manager




York Region

Margot Ursic
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 **BEACON**
ENVIRONMENTAL


York Region

QUICK POLL

What community do you live in?

OBJECTIVES

Why is York Region hosting this information session?

- To share information about the proposed rule and options for dogs in the York Regional Forest
- To encourage residents and Forest visitors to complete a survey to share thoughts about options for dogs in the Forest

york.ca/dogsurvey

AGENDA

How will we spend our time together tonight?

- Overview and introductions (10 minutes)
- Welcome from York Region (5 minutes)
- Presentation of the proposed rule and options (20 minutes)
- Moderated question and answer session (20 minutes)
- Wrap-up (5 minutes)

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

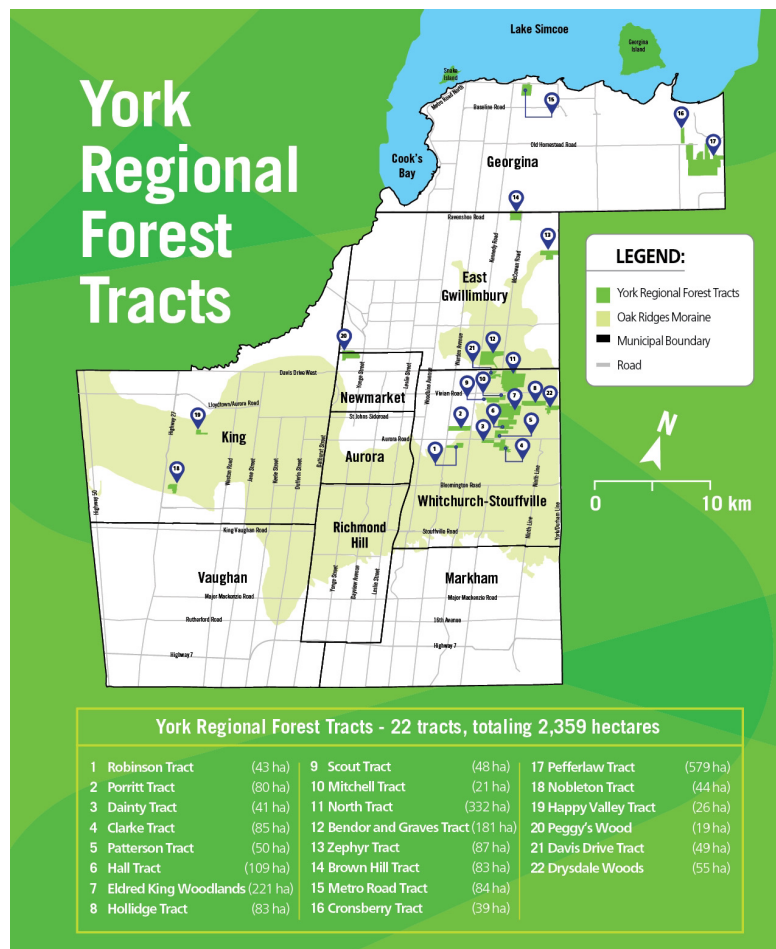
- Tonight: Listen and ask questions
- Any time up until July 9: Share your thoughts on the options by completing the survey at york.ca/dogsurvey



Welcome and Overview



ABOUT THE REGIONAL FOREST



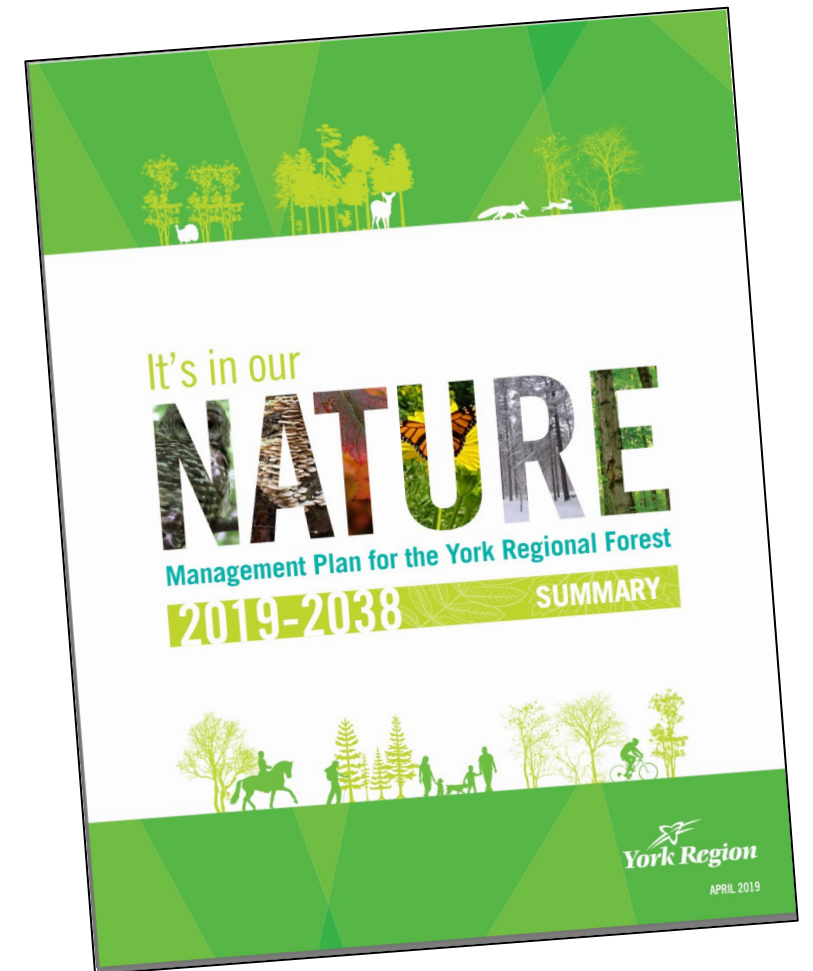
- 22 tracts, totaling approximately 2,400 hectares
- 150+ kilometres of trails for public use
- 1 tract with a fenced dog off-leash area (Bendor and Graves Tract)
- Tracts in five of nine cities and towns in York Region

Approved uses include

- Walking / hiking (with and without dogs)
- Cycling, skiing, horseback riding

What is this project all about?

- York Region is exploring options for dogs in York Regional Forest
- This project was identified as a follow-up action in “*It’s In Our Nature*” in 2019
- Dog walking is a popular activity that can sometimes create issues and conflicts with other visitors and activities



What is this project all about?

- York Region is committed to ensuring the Forest remains a safe and enjoyable place for all visitors while balancing ecological considerations
- Use of the Forest was increasing before COVID-19 and this trend has continued, including new visitors (with and without dogs), resulting in a greater number of complaints and reported incidents

WHAT IS THE PROJECT PURPOSE?

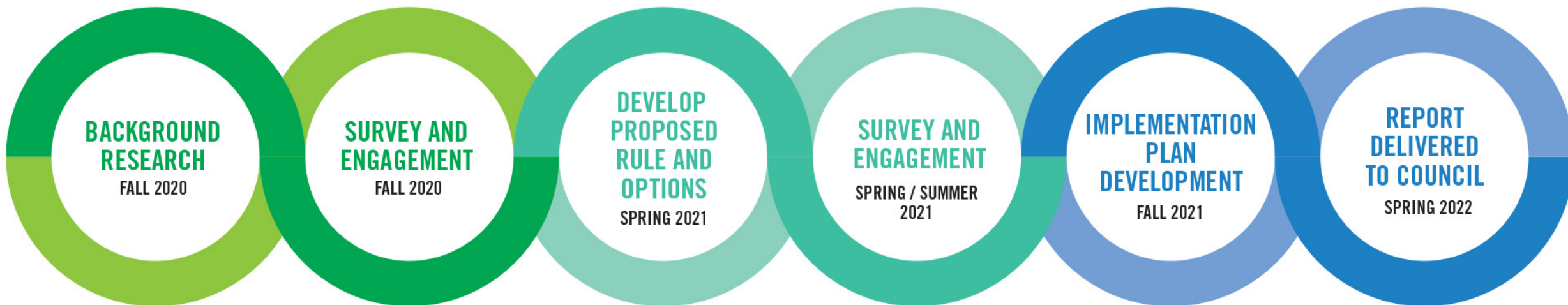
- To identify an approach to managing dogs in the Forest that respects the diversity of visitors, is compatible with the ecological objectives of the Forest, and supports a safe and inviting outdoor space for nature-based education
- The approach must also be enforceable, implementable and supported by local cities and towns

WHAT ARE THE TIMELINES?

PHASE ONE

PHASE TWO

PHASE THREE




WE ARE HERE

Why is York Region asking for input?

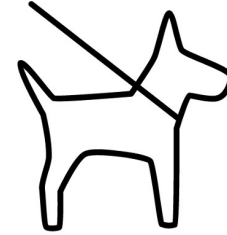
- Your ideas count!
- York Region wants to understand preferences of all Forest visitors, whether they are dog owners or not, to enable a positive visitor experience
- Results from the public survey will be combined, alongside research findings and input from stakeholders and partners, into a report to York Regional Council

About the Process

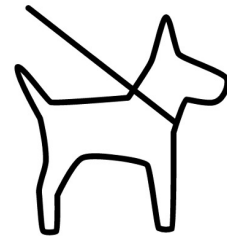


WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR DOGS?

Current rule: Dogs must be on-leash at all times



Rule before COVID-19: Dogs must be on-leash or under control at all times



or



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE ALREADY?

Phase 1: Background Review (Fall 2020, Winter 2021)

- Background research on the York Regional Forest
- Review of legislative and regulatory context
- Review of technical and scientific literature
- Stakeholder engagement
- Phase 1 survey and “What You Said” report

Phase 2: Option Selection (Spring 2021)

- Establish criteria for evaluating options
- Proposed rule and options
- Stakeholder engagement
- Phase 2 survey – Available now for you to complete

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

Phase 2 continued: (Spring and Summer 2021)

- Phase 2 Survey closes July 9
- Continued stakeholder engagement
- Selection of proposed rule and/or option(s)

Phase 3: Implementation Plan (Fall 2021 to Winter 2022)

- Publish “What You Said” report about Phase 2 Survey
- Implementation plan
- Report to Council
- Implement new rules



WHAT DID YOU SAY?

Phase 1 survey recap

- Nearly 2,000 residents and Forest visitors shared their thoughts – 76% were dog owners or caregivers
- People (and their dogs!) visit at all times of the year, all times of the day
- Roughly a third of respondents reported having no concerns about dogs in either fenced or unfenced areas in the Forest
- About two-thirds of respondents identified a range of concerns.
 - The top concern (41%) was ‘dogs not under control’
 - Other concerns: dog waste not being picked up and fear of being approached by an unfamiliar dog

Full report available online at york.ca/dogsurvey

QUICK POLL

Did you complete the Phase 1 survey?

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Any rule and/or options that are chosen should...

- ✓ Consider the needs of visitors of various ages, backgrounds and abilities
- ✓ Limit risk of conflict with other permitted uses and ongoing management activities in the Forest
- ✓ Support a safe and inviting outdoor space for nature-based education
- ✓ Be consistent with the York Regional Forest's ecological objectives
- ✓ Be closely aligned with existing city and town animal control by-laws
- ✓ Have education and enforcement tactics that can be implemented with local city, town, and/or Region resources

WHAT OPTIONS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED?

York Region reviewed and considered a full range of options including:

1. Dogs on-leash at all times in all tracts
2. Dogs permitted off-leash in all tracts
3. No dogs permitted in all tracts
4. Different rules for different tracts
5. Different rules for different trails in the same tract

Add-on: Fenced off-leash areas

HOW WERE THE OPTIONS CHOSEN?

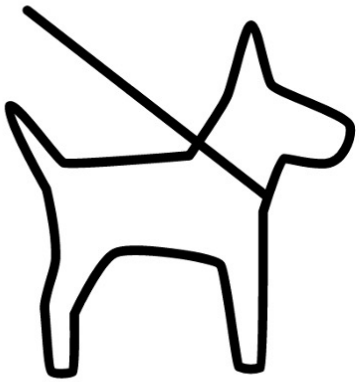
We developed a set of criteria based on the engagement and research:

1. Potential to reduce conflict with other Forest uses
2. Supportive of positive visitor experience
3. Aligned with Forest programming
4. Compatible with ecological considerations
5. Easy to understand
6. Easy to enforce
7. Minimizes safety risks
8. Compatible with Forest management activities
9. Cost effective

Review of the Proposed Rule and Options



WHAT IS THE PROPOSED RULE?



Dogs remain on-leash at all times,
in all York Regional Forest tracts, except in
designated areas

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?



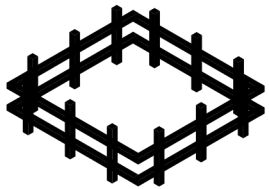
Option A: One to three tracts where dogs are permitted to be off-leash

and/or



Option B: One to three tracts where dogs would not be permitted

and/or



Option C: One to two additional fenced dog off-leash area(s)

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- All, some or none of the options may be selected for implementation
- Other current rules will remain
(*e.g. stay on the trails, pick-up your pet's waste*)
- The current fenced dog off-leash area at the Bendor and Graves Tract will remain
- Service dogs will continue to be permitted



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS (continued)

- York Region is committed to ongoing education and enforcement for the proposed rule and all options
- Sites, if any, for the options, will be chosen based on various considerations such as location, tract size, and ecological sensitivity
- We'd like to hear from you about what we should be considering in tract selection for the different options

WHY CHANGE THE RULES?

This project is helping the Region better understand issues around dogs in the Forest to meet the objectives in the 'It's In Our Nature' plan.

The proposed rule of dogs-on leash everywhere would:

- Balance different visitor preferences to ensure the Forest is enjoyable for everyone
- Help protect sensitive ecological areas in the Forest
- Help make the Forest safer for all visitors and dogs
- Reduce potential conflicts with educational programming

The potential 'add-on' options recognize the history of off-leash activity and the desire to accommodate this preference in a manageable way.

RECAP: PROPOSED RULE AND OPTIONS



Dogs remain on-leash at all times in all York Regional Forest tracts except in designated areas.

PLUS all, some, or none of **Options A, B, and C**

Option A: One to three tracts where dogs are **permitted to be off-leash**



Option B: One to three tracts where dogs would **not be permitted**



Option C: One or two additional **fenced dog off-leash area(s)**



WHAT'S NEXT?

- Public survey open until July 9 at york.ca/dogsurvey
- Continued engagement with cities, towns and local stakeholders
- “What You Said” – Phase 2 Report
- Synthesis of findings
- Report to York Regional Council in Spring 2022
- Implementation plan with education and enforcement

HOW CAN I SHARE MY THOUGHTS?

Please visit
york.ca/dogsurvey to
complete the survey

THE SURVEY WILL ASK...

- Your level of support for each of the three options
- How frequently you would use each of the three options
- Considerations for tract selection, including travel distance
- A few demographic questions



PANEL

Question and Answer Session

OPEN UNTIL JULY 9

Please visit
york.ca/dogsurvey to
complete the survey

Thank you for being with us tonight!



