
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-02-2022 Fields & Parks Management Request – Dry Lake Saddle Club



For Consideration by Council in Committee on March 29, 2022

OBJECTIVE:

To obtain Council approval for the inclusion of the Dry Lake Saddle Club, as the management group operating Decewsville Park, into Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-02-2022 Fields & Parks Management Request – Dry Lake Saddle Club be received;
2. AND THAT the Dry Lake Saddle Club be authorized to manage the ongoing operations and maintenance of Decewsville Park;
3. AND THAT a grant, in the amount of \$4,400 for 2022, calculated in keeping with Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Policy 2019-04, be approved;
4. AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the Memorandum of Understanding, attached to Report CDP-02-2022, with the Dry Lake Saddle Club to operate and maintain Decewsville Park;
5. AND THAT a request to install a small playground in Decewsville Park be considered as a new initiative through future Capital Budget deliberations;
6. AND THAT the costs associated with changes outlined in Report CDP-02-2022 be approved and considered as a Council-approved initiative in the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget.

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Reviewed by: Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development and Partnerships

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In March 2019, as part of Haldimand County's Community Partnership Program (CPP), a new Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program was approved including Policy 2019-04, operating procedures and a grant funding model.

Staff are recommending that the Dry Lake Saddle Club (the Club), which has maintained Decewsville Park on behalf of Haldimand County since 1970, be accepted into the FPM Program as a new partner, including associated grant funding.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County partners with many volunteer groups to provide recreational and community services and build/operate/maintain municipal assets – a service delivery model recognized as a best municipal-management practice. In order to support this approach in a fair, clear, and consistent framework, the County introduced the Community Partnership Program (CPP) in 2011, incorporating the following programs: Community Beautification, Community Capital Projects, Community Halls, and Fields & Park Management.

The Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program was updated and approved by Council in 2019; it includes 9 volunteer groups operating public recreation assets throughout the County. In 2020, the Caledonia Disc Golf Association was added to the Program as the tenth group. Through Policy 2019-04 (Attachment 1), the FPM provides groups with operating and maintenance procedures which are consistent with the County's standards, as well as annual operating grant funding at a rate of 35% of the estimated cost if the County was operating the asset.

The Dry Lake Saddle Club has been caring for Decewsville Park for more than fifty years with no financial support from the County.

The current request from the Dry Lake Saddle Club is for approval to:

- (i) Become part of the FPM Program; and
- (ii) Annually receive grant funding to support ongoing management of Decewsville Park at a rate of 35% of the estimated costs if the County was operating the asset.

Staff have calculated the estimated grant for 2022 would be \$4,400.

ANALYSIS:

The Park:

Decewsville Park is located west of Cayuga (Attachment 2) and includes a swing set (replaced in 2021), open green space, a sand ring and smaller grass ring for riders with the Dry Lake Saddle Club, some bleachers, two small dry 'concession' structures and a small storage building (Attachment 3).

Residents in the hamlet and members of the Dry Lake Saddle Club have asked—through the Ward Councillor—for consideration to add a small playground structure to complement the swing set for local families/children. That particular enhancement is not being considered as part of this report and is to be assessed via a separate process.

The Proponent:

The Dry Lake Saddle Club (the Club) has been maintaining Decewsville Park, to an excellent standard, for many years. Formed in the mid 1960s, the Club gained verbal permission to use the Park in 1970 and has continuously operated and improved it since.

The Dry Lake Saddle Club—which incorporated in 1979—uses the Park for five amateur horse shows per year and adheres to strict standards of safety including management of vehicles, people, and horses as well as securing commercial general liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000, with Haldimand County named as additional insured.

The Club has maintained the entire park area, including mowing lawns and the parking area and associated trimming and park clean up since 1970. Mowers, trimmers and hand tools are brought in as needed and no equipment is stored on site. The Club has also installed and maintained fencing, bleachers, a sand horse show ring, a turf exercise ring, and two small concession-style buildings on the property, estimating it has spent at least \$30,000 of Club funds on improvements to the Park since its inception. With the exception of recent removal of damaged trees, Haldimand County has not

participated in grounds maintenance to date. Staff inspection of facilities indicate they are in good to excellent condition.

The Park is maintained by the Club for the purpose of hosting Club horse shows five times per year. The Club has indicated no desire to use the grounds as an ongoing Club facility. These shows are now managed through the Community Development & Partnerships Special Event Policy (Policy 2015-02) as the County's Public Parks and Facilities By-law does not allow animals other than cats or dogs to be in public parks unless authorized through the Special Event approval process (By-law 1554-15 Part VII-ANIMALS).

At each show, approximately 100 riders participate in various classes over the course of a single day. Parking and traffic on-site are managed closely by the Club to ensure participant and public safety. The Club maintains the Park seasonally for these shows and for the enjoyment of the general public during the remainder of the season.

In order to ensure members of the public understand use of the riding rings is only authorized as an exemption to Haldimand County's Public Parks and Facilities By-law through a Special Event application, information signage will be installed at Decewsville Park, including a request to contact the Dry Lake Saddle Club for further information or access to the riding areas.

Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Program:

In 2019, Haldimand County introduced its revised Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program following extensive consultation with existing volunteer partners operating these types of assets as well as staff from multiple Divisions (Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance, and Legal & Support Services) and Senior Management. The FPM Program includes 10 community groups operating public parks, baseball and soccer fields and a disc golf course throughout the County for the benefit of residents and visitors.

The FPM Program ensures a fair, clear, and consistent approach to identifying and evaluating partnership opportunities and addresses process related to both operating and capital matters as well as risk management and resource maximization. It is the intent of Haldimand County to encourage, support, and maximize these partnership opportunities through the implementation of the policy.

Grant Funding:

The FPM Program provides partners with operating and maintenance standards and procedures as well as grant funding based on a factor of 35% of the estimated actual cost of the County undertaking the operations/maintenance of the asset. The funding matrix – which was developed by staff from the Divisions of Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry, Finance, and Legal & Support Services – uses County rates and standards for labour, equipment and supplies.

Decewsville Park consists of 2.61 acres of parkland on Dry Lake Road in the rural community of Decewsville. Open green space, a parking area, a swing set (replaced through the Capital Budget in 2021), fenced horse riding rings and a set of bleachers occupy the space.

Using the FPM funding matrix, staff have calculated the 2022 grant for the Dry Lake Saddle Club for the maintenance of Decewsville Park at \$4,400, representing 35% of the estimated costs if the County were responsible for the maintenance and operations of the Park. Typical maintenance includes ongoing inspections, clearing of debris from the Park, grass cutting and trimming, trimming of brush and stray limbs on the Park perimeter and maintenance/replacement of the fencing, bleachers, and horse ring areas.

Staff are supportive of continuing to collaborate with and support the Dry Lake Saddle Club in its management of Decewsville Park—including entering into a Memorandum of Understanding

(Attachment 4)—as the Club has taken excellent care of it for approximately fifty years and without the agreement it would result in County Staff needing to add this work to its annual program.

Staff are also supportive of the Club continuing to apply to host seasonal horse shows through the Special Event Approvals process.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Policy 2019-04 states Haldimand County is committed to developing meaningful and strong partnership relationships with Fields & Parks Management groups. As well, report CDP-01-2019 (approval of the Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program) supports:

- The efforts of the County's current community partners operating and maintaining fields, parks, and trails on behalf of the municipality;
- The County's strategic priority of enhancing community vibrancy through the investment in high-quality, sustainable services which promote the well-being of communities;
- The engagement of volunteer groups in the development of meaningful partnerships which maximize resources and reflect unique community recreation and service requests; and
- The development of new partnerships with community groups interested in operating and/or maintaining County recreation assets.

Staff have reviewed the request from the Dry Lake Saddle Club in the context of the funding formula and have established an annual grant fund of \$4,400, which if approved, would be added to the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget as a Council-approved initiative. Due to timelines surrounding this report and the printing of the Draft 2022 Tax-Supported Operating Budget, this amount appears as a New Initiative in the budget document – but will be treated as a Council-approved initiative during budget deliberations, should the recommendations in this report be approved.

The proposed 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget includes \$228,260 for this program. Inclusion of this request would result in an increase to the levy of \$4,400.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This request was reviewed and supported by staff in Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance, and Legal & Support Services.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: Yes

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Fields & Parks Management Policy (No. 2019-04).
2. Location Map – Decewsville Park.
3. Location Photos – Decewsville Park.
4. Draft Memorandum of Understanding – Dry Lake Saddle Club.