

Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative Year-in-Review 2021

Partnership Overview and Focus for 2021

A Message from Dr. Garrett Hutson:

The Trail Assets and Tourism Initiative (TATI) team was busy completing some exciting work in 2021. This past year, the focus of the partnership was on how to best deal with the exponential increases in trail usage, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership spent significant time planning for trail alignment to make popular trails at the Niagara Glen Nature Reserve easier to navigate and protect. A highlight of this year is the trail alignment planning being put into action through a TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant secured by the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC). Other partnership initiatives to improve park management and the visitor use experience are detailed throughout this document. The partnership plans to maintain its current momentum heading into 2022, with focus areas on management plan creation, expanding visitor use data collection, and trail user education.

Partnership Planning

Niagara Parks Commission Presentations

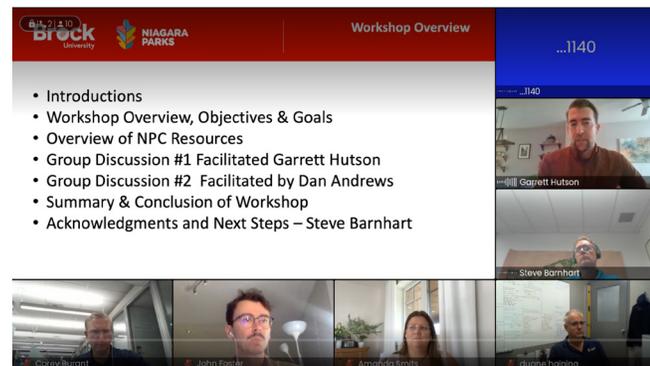
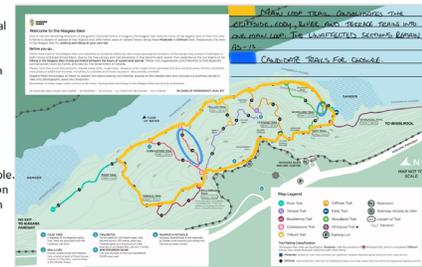
TATI partnership members have hosted several meetings and workshops, and made presentations to NPC staff throughout the year. In the winter of 2021, the partnership concluded preliminary discussions and research on mobile trails applications to help address way finding issues at the Niagara Glen. NPC continued with this priority through a contract with Olio Digital Labs to build and launch an app specifically for visitors. In early spring 2021, Research Assistant, John Foster, provided a map reform presentation focused on the Niagara Glen trails system to the partnership committee. In the summer, a workshop was facilitated by the Ontario Trails Council (OTC) director, Dan Andrews, and Dr. Garrett Hutson to guide future plans for the partnership. From this workshop, it was determined that the following projects be prioritized through the partnership:

- Niagara Glen Management Plan
- Whirlpool Area Management Plan
- Education Programming and the User Experience Readiness Plan
- Activation of the Bruce Trail at Queenston Heights
- Trail User Data Collection
- Trail Route Gap Analysis

In addition to these priority projects, a draft Trail Master Plan Charter has been developed by the Niagara Parks Commission and reviewed by partnership members. Both of these exercises have provided us with a starting point for future partnership strategic directions. The year concluded with a presentation by OTC Executive Director, Patrick Connor, on how QR codes can be utilized to collect trail user data.

Proposed Main Loop Trail

- Yellow loop starts and ends at the metal staircase.
- Consolidates multiple sections of trail into one loop for visitors to follow from entrance to exit.
- Features a significant portion of the points of interest (POIs) of the Glen.
- Unaffected trails will remain as-is, with no necessary changes to current trail markers or routing. Updating trail markers to include trail name is desirable.
- Requires replacing the existing blazes on trails that are consolidated by the Main Loop trail.



Trail Counters

- Static - on or in ground beam breaking by the user allows for a specific click count
 - Require calibration
 - New versions allow real time data transfer by wifi
 - Camera options
- Dynamic - involves the completion of a survey by the user to provide more information:
 - Trip purpose
 - Preferred Trail
 - Trail Condition
 - Return to trail
 - Home Location of Tripper



Research Activities

Master of Applied Health Sciences Thesis Research

An Exploration of the Experiences of Park Visitors and Park Managers on the use of Social Media for Visitor Behaviour Management in Ontario's Parks and Protected Areas

John Foster, Master of Applied Health Sciences Candidate

Master's student and TATI Research Assistant, John Foster, successfully defended his thesis project proposal on exploring the effectiveness of social media communications issued by park agencies for visitor behaviour management in Ontario's parks and protected areas. This research will include representatives from the NPC and is expected to provide insights into how park agencies can most effectively use social media to communicate with their visitors.



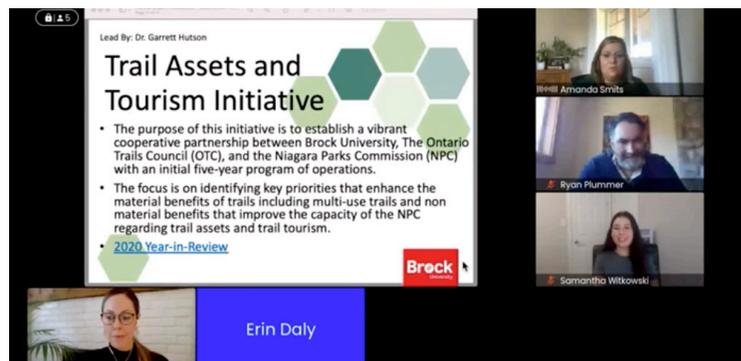
Knowledge Mobilization Activities

Lessons Learned in the Last Year



In July, John Foster wrote a [blog post](#) reflecting on lessons learned and new projects undertaken by the Trail Assets and Tourism partnership since launching last year. Among these lessons was the examination of best practices for communicating trail safety and use policies to the public and the launch of an infographic detailing these practices to the general public.

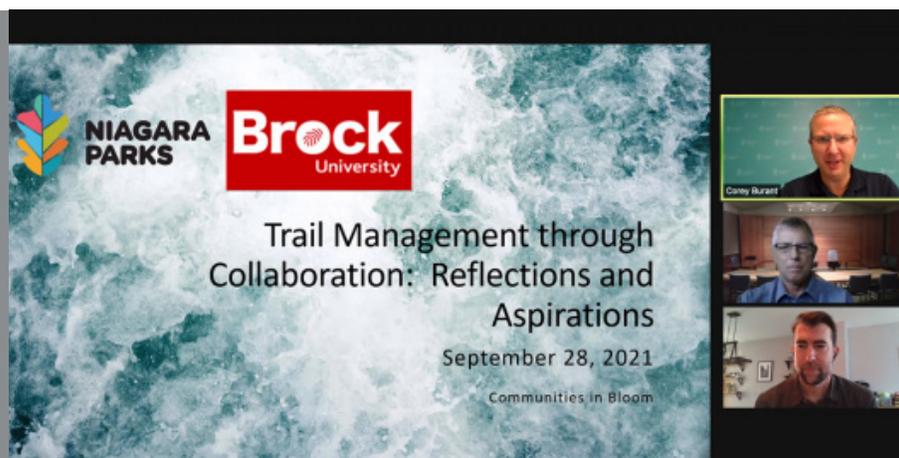
Sustainability Seminar Series



In November 2021, members from the ESRC provided a presentation entitled "Community Partnerships for Sustainability at Brock University" through the [Sustainability Seminar Series](#). The presentation focused on partnership impact and how to go about measuring the performance of partnerships and included a focus on the Trail Assets and Tourism Partnership.

Communities in Bloom

In September, Garrett Hutson and Corey Burant were invited to speak to Communities in Bloom, a Canadian non-profit dedicated to the improvement of civic spaces, about their experiences in the TATI partnership. TATI research assistant and Master's student John Foster summarized the experience in a [blog post](#).



Check out the partnership blogs and news stories that were posted in 2021!