

Press Release

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Ontario Trails Council
Conseil des sentiers de l'Ontario

Trail and User Activity May Holiday weekend

A response to the press release by Niagara Regional Police by both the Ontario Trails Council and the Niagara Trails Committee

The Ontario Trails Council encourages all trail users, all over Ontario, to stay safe this long holiday weekend. Expect and respect other users, ride responsibly and use trails designated for your activity, purchase passes and permits where applicable. Be careful in Niagara Region.

Over the past three months members of various trail groups have been meeting to develop a Niagara Trails Committee. The Niagara Trails Committee (NTC) sees itself as supporting responsible trail use, providing volunteer trail wardens and stewarding trails in the region – WITH – the support of the Niagara Regional Police (NRP), Niagara Region and the communities that make up this great part of Ontario.

On Tuesday May 14 the NRP released a statement regarding riding and user behaviour on the East Side Canal Trail this coming May Holiday weekend. We support the intent of the letter, its recommendations on legal riding, safe conduct and use of trails where allowed. However we wish to make some things clear to the public.



The NTC does not own or manage any trails. We remain hopeful that the NRP and the Region will at some point join the NTC as member stakeholders. At this point they have been observers only and have not attended any of the 4 NTC meetings to date – despite invitation to do so.

We are stating this because while we support the safety and legal messages of the NRP press release – the NTC is still seeking status from the region and confirmed support from the NRP so that it will be able to respond to riding, activities and safety on the East Side Canal Trail – in unison.

This is important because the NTC wants to assist the NRP and the Region in trail wardening – but this process is still being organized, and we have not worked out the “on the trail” jobs yet. The NTC also wants to get more riders into education and safety programs, as we recognize safe and responsible riding are a must to secure the trail long term.

Furthermore, while we want riding on the trail, we want safe riding. While you can ride 100 feet from the canal, not all of the riding land, is a riding trail, and this patchwork can be a dangerous place to ride. As riders we know this, one purpose of the NTC is to advise on safe useable sections, seek funds to re-build and maintain the trail to a safe standard. This has not been done – it is what we are trying to do with the NRP and the Niagara Region, and Welland.

So while we support the safe message of the NRP, we regret that their message of open riding is not one we would have issued at this time. We would issue it when the trail was ready. Just cause you can ride doesn't mean you should.

So this weekend we are encouraging all trail users, and motorized machine owners to ride responsibly. If you are not prepared to ride, have not taken a training course, have an unlicensed machine or don't know where you are going we ask you to park it for the weekend.

Learn more about this trail and learn from us – see us at our education booth at the East Side Canal Trail – before using the trail. You'll be glad you did! You'll save the trail for all of us.

Location: 0900 Saturday, May 25th at Biggar Rd and the East Side Canal Trail.

For more information on the Niagara Trails Committee see: <https://www.facebook.com/NiagaraTrailsCommittee>

For more information on Ontario's trails visit the OTC website at www.ontariotrails.on.ca