

**August 19, 2024**

**Sent via Email**

Township of Georgian Bluffs Mayor Sue Carleton  
Township of Georgian Bluffs Clerk Carly Craig  
City of Owen Sound Mayor Ian Boddy  
City of Owen Sound Clerk Briana Bloomfield

**RE: Permitted Use Changes at West Rocks and Pottawatomi Conservation Areas**

At the July 24, 2024 Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Board of Directors Meeting the following motion (#FA-24-059) was passed:

*“WHEREAS, under Section 21(l) of the Conservation Authorities Act, GSCA may use lands that are owned or controlled by the authority for purposes, not inconsistent with its objects, as it considers proper;*

*AND WHEREAS, GSCA maintains a Permitted Uses Guideline that identifies existing permitted uses (Table 1) and will guide future decisions regarding updating, revising, or implementing new permitted uses as endorsed by the Board of Directors on March 27, 2019;*

*That, the GSCA Board of Directors endorse revising the permitted uses at the West Rocks and Pottawatomi Conservation Areas by removing hunting as a permitted use and clarifying compliance with Municipal by-laws where hunting is permitted.”*

This decision was informed by the staff report attached for your information.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,



Tim Lanthier,  
Chief Administrative Office

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**Member Municipalities**

Municipality of Arran-Elderslie, Town of the Blue Mountains, Township of Chatsworth, Township of Georgian Bluffs,  
Municipality of Grey Highlands, Municipality of Meaford, City of Owen Sound, Town of South Bruce Peninsula



## STAFF REPORT

Report To: Board of Directors  
Report From: Margaret Potter, Conservation Lands Technician  
Meeting Date: July 24, 2024  
Report Code: 024-2024  
Subject: Change to Permitted Uses – Pottawatomi & West Rocks

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### Recommendation:

**WHEREAS, under Section 21(l) of the Conservation Authorities Act, GSCA may use lands that are owned or controlled by the authority for purposes, not inconsistent with its objects, as it considers proper;**

**AND WHEREAS, GSCA maintains a Permitted Uses Guideline that identifies existing permitted uses (Table 1) and will guide future decisions regarding updating, revising, or implementing new permitted uses as endorsed by the Board of Directors on March 27, 2019;**

**That, the GSCA Board of Directors endorse revising the permitted uses at the West Rocks and Pottawatomi Conservation Areas by removing hunting as a permitted use and clarifying compliance with Municipal by-laws where hunting is permitted.**

### Strategic Initiative:

This item is related to the “Enhance GSCA Land Management” priority set out in GSCA’s Strategic Plan.

### Background:

In reviewing the Permitted Uses Map generated by GSCA for public use and identification of property location, classification, and permitted uses, staff considered the category of property (management area, conservation area, nature preserve), proximity to urban uses, intensity of use, and permitted uses.

In undertaking this review, two properties stuck out as having the hunting use potentially incompatible with their primary purpose or surrounding uses: West Rocks and Pottawatomi/Jones Falls.

## Analysis:

None of the mandatory programs or services required by the Conservation Authorities Act include hunting.

Under O.Reg. 688/21: Rules of Conduct in Conservation Areas section 5 (in summary) no person shall kill, trap or pursue a wild bird, reptile, or animal or possess, shoot, discharge or use a gun, firearm, slingshot or archery equipment except under a permit issued by an authority.

GSCA has addressed this regulation by maintaining a list of permitted uses on properties under Table 1 of the Permitted Uses Guideline. Table 1 indicates which GSCA properties permit hunting in accordance with Provincial and Federal regulations. Specific to Spirit Rock, no hunting is permitted within 500m of the Corran Ruins. Specific to Pottawatomi, only archery hunting is permitted. There is no specified restriction for the West Rocks area. No additional written permission from GSCA is currently required for hunting. Trapping is dealt with differently under the guideline. Even where identified as potentially permitted, trapping requires explicit written permission and license agreement from GSCA; no change is proposed by this report to trapping.

Report 07-2019 presented with the guidelines to the Board on March 27, 2019 anticipated that permitted uses on GSCA properties might change either as a result of GSCA revisiting the uses or a request from a user group or both. Changes to permitted uses generally require the endorsement of the Board by way of Resolution (exceptions to Board approval apply for short term uses such as events or research).

The following is an analysis of West Rocks and Pottawatomi individually as their reasons for being reconsidered differ.

### 1. West Rocks

- a. West Rocks is a Conservation Area highlighted in the GSCA Explore Guide.
- b. Currently permits hunting in accordance with Federal and Provincial regulations.
- c. West Rocks Conservation Area is entirely within the City of Owen Sound
- d. City of Owen Sound By-law 1995-119 prohibits (in summary) the discharge of guns or other firearms, crossbows, and long-bows in the City of Owen Sound. There are some exceptions (such as Peace Officer use) but none that would address hunting at the West Rocks.

Changing the permitted uses formally in GSCA policy will simply align with the Owen Sound By-law and reduce chance of misinterpretation.

Any of our member municipalities have the authority to pass by-laws under the Municipal Act to regulate discharge of weapons (Section 119) and this could occur without our knowledge. Therefore, staff also recommend a change to Table 1 of the Permitted Uses Guideline to indicate that Municipal By-laws be added as a consideration for hunting in addition to “Provincial and Federal regulations”. This would cover any additional instances like West Rocks. While municipal by-laws would apply whether or not GSCA lists them, it would remind visitors to check with local municipalities before making plans for hunting.

## 2. Pottawatomi

- a. Pottawatomi is a Conservation Area highlighted in the GSCA Explore Guide (map excerpt below).
- b. The Niagara Escarpment Plan classifies this location as Natural Environment and indicates uses to include Bruce Trail and picnicking, fishing, hiking and cross-country skiing.
- c. Trail counter data indicates over 10,000 visitors from the Jones Falls/OSTC footbridge location alone in each of 2022, 2023. As the site has three other public access locations this does not account for all visitors.
- d. Hunting was last known to have been considered for this site by the Board in 1990 at which time hunting permissions were reduced to archery only.
- e. Currently archery is the only permitted form of hunting
- f. In 1997 the Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation initiated the Memorial Forest Program. Pottawatomi is one of the three existing memorial forest locations.
- g. In addition to the residential use east of the site, the surrounding area has also continued to be developed with urban type mixed uses along Highway 6&21 as well as Thom Drive with parking lots and contractors yards adjacent to GSCA property.

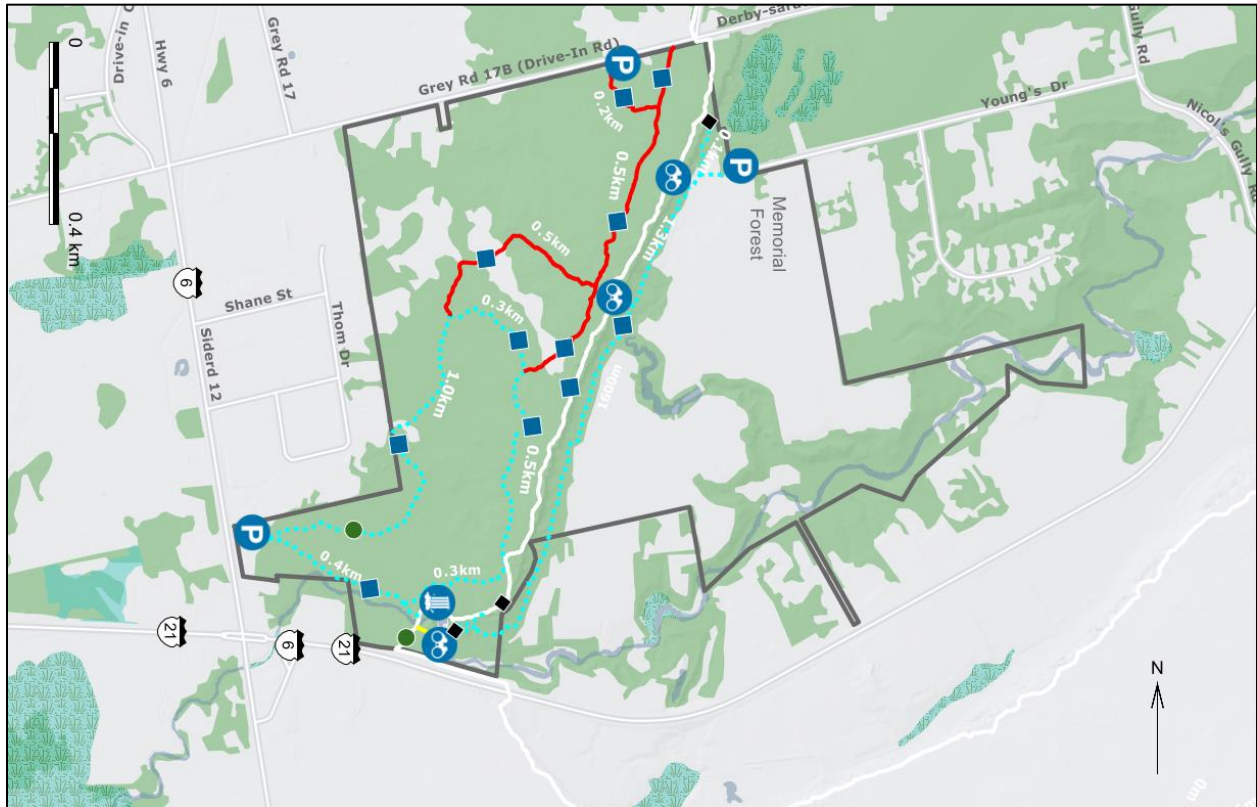


Figure 1: Map of Jones Falls & Pottawatomi from the Explore Guide 2021

The following table assess archery hunting at Pottawatomi Conservation Area against the Permitted Uses Guidelines:

Permitted Uses Guidelines 2019:		Pottawatomi
5. Permitted uses will be based on the following considerations in order of importance:		
a	GSCA's primary desired purpose(s) and rationale for the property (e.g. water management, resource management, biodiversity, recreation, etc.);	The primary human uses identified for this property are recreation, memorial forest, and agriculture.
b	GSCA's ability to manage, maintain, and inspect the property for any given use;	The 2023 Operational Review identified trail conditions, hazard trees, exposed cliffs and waterfall as identified risks to users and off-trail hikers as a compliance issue. Hunting is typically an "off-trail" use.
c	Actual or anticipated impacts of a use on the property;	Increased risk of liability compared to not allowing hunting.
d	Primary existing permitted uses occurring on property	The popularity of this site for tourism/recreation is primarily due to the falls/geology and hiking trails. The memorial forest is an additional draw for

		remembrance and nature appreciation. East of the trails and memorial forest where there are not steep slopes, the site is dedicated to agricultural use.
e	Perceived conflicts between uses;	<p>This site has high visitor use. This hardwood forest attracts visitors for beautiful foliage throughout the fall.</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">2024 Ontario Hunting Regulations Summary</a> for the Pottawatomi area the season for wild turkey is all of October. Deer season is in November. Hunting season for coyote, red fox, and skunk is all year.</p> <p>A quick internet suggests archery shooting distances for hunting be less than for target practice to ensure precision, however a modern bow can shoot quite far and fast (one <a href="#">source</a> suggested 400 yards at 200 mph).</p> <p>The areas of the site that are not dedicated to trails, memorial forest and agriculture are either closest to urban type uses or are along the steep riverbanks. Where there are trails, some run parallel and others loop. There are a number of locations where the distance between trails might be less than 40m.</p> <p>Potential conflicts exist between archery and other uses at this site.</p> <p>Off-trail hiking is a known concern at this site. With hunters usually off-trail this adds to the safety concern.</p> <p>Additionally, hunting of any kind may be perceived as contrary to the remembrance intended by the memorial forest.</p>
f	New opportunities that may be achieved through the implementation of a new use;	N/A
g	Primary existing non-permitted uses occurring on the subject property will be considered where these uses may be considered desirable by the Authority and/or the policing of these uses is beyond the resources of the Authority. It is noted that existing non-permitted uses will not be automatically accepted as new permitted uses;	N/A
	Proposed new uses for the property	N/A

6. Conflicts in uses will be scrutinized and avoided wherever possible to improve safety and user satisfaction (e.g. motorized and non-motorized uses may conflict; hunting and other recreational activities may conflict; licensed ski areas and other property uses may conflict)	See above  It is recommended that no hunting be permitted at Pottawatomi Conservation Area.
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The Vision of GSCA is a healthy watershed environment in balance with the needs of society.

GSCA considers the needs of society in permitting hunting at a number of properties. Fifty-three properties were identified by Table 1 of the Permitted Uses Guidelines in 2019. We now know that hunting is already not permitted at West Rocks by municipal by-law.

The recommendations herein are to ensure alignment with municipal by-laws regarding hunting and remove archery hunting from Pottawatomi Conservation Area.

Specific actions staff will undertake to enact the recommendations include:

1. Revise Table 1 of the Permitted Uses Guideline to:
  - a. Remove “Hunting” as a permitted use from the West Rocks and Pottawatomi Conservation Areas, and;
  - b. To the Permitted Uses Note No. 8 which reads “Where permitted, hunting must be in accordance with Provincial and Federal regulations” add at the end “and Municipal by-laws”, and;
  - c. Remove “\* Archery hunting only” from the Permitted Uses Notes for Pottawatomi;
2. Update any other GSCA information and materials to reflect the changes above as outlined by the Communication Strategy below.

### **Financial/Budget Implications:**

None anticipated.

### **Communication Strategy:**

This report and the resolution of the Board of Directors will be shared with the City of Owen Sound and Municipality of Georgian Bluffs Council and Clerks for information.

Lands and Information Services staff will meet to discuss and prioritize additional communication needs such as:

- Updated permitted use signage.
- The Permitted Uses Guideline Table 1 update.
- The Permitted Uses Map update (general updates are currently underway).

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- The Explore Guide update (general updates are currently underway).
- Social Media posts.

### **Consultation:**

Internal consultation amongst staff in various departments, by-law research in Owen Sound and Georgian Bluffs.





## **Grey Sauble Authority Board of Directors**

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### **M O T I O N**

**DATE:** July 24, 2024

**MOTION #:** FA-24-059

**MOVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SECONDED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

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