

Report to/Rapport au :

**Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales**

and Council / et au Conseil

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CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE

Ref N°: ACS2013-PAI-PGM-0115

SUBJECT: WILDLIFE STRATEGY

OBJET : STRATÉGIE DE GESTION DE LA FAUNE

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recommend Council approve the Wildlife Strategy attached as Document 1 and the implementation Plan outlined in this report.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales recommande au Conseil d'approuver la Stratégie de gestion de la faune jointe dans le document 1 et le plan de mise en œuvre décrit dans le présent rapport.

Executive Summary **Assumptions and Analysis**

The Wildlife Strategy (Document 1) has been prepared in response to a Council directive to staff on February 24, 2010 to develop, “comprehensive and integrated wildlife strategy centred on wildlife-sensitive planning, with a focus on public education and awareness programs.”

This report summarizes the approach and content of the proposed Wildlife Strategy, the possible need and business case for a Wildlife Resource Officer at the City, the public consultation process, the Strategy’s nine recommendations, and how the recommendations will be implemented.

In many cases, staff recommends continuation of the City’s current policies and practices. However, the report includes recommendations for implementation of a City Wildlife Strategy that emphasizes co-existence, public education and outreach, prevention, and non-lethal management as the preferred approaches to human – wildlife conflicts.

The implementation plan outlined in this report proposes to move forward with Recommendations 1 through 6 immediately, and monitor the results. In the future, staff will review the business case for the creation of the Wildlife Resource Officer and propose the establishment of the position as a term of Council priority, if warranted, for the next term of Council.

Financial Implications

Implementation of the Wildlife Strategy Recommendations 1 to 6 can be done within existing resources.

The financial implications associated with the implementation of the Wildlife Strategy Recommendations 7 to 9 will be identified and brought forward for approval, if required, through the next Term of Council priorities exercise and a corresponding future budget.

Public Consultation/Input

Development of the Wildlife Strategy has been guided and facilitated by the comments of a Working Group of invited public and agency stakeholders. Additional consultations have occurred with other experts and stakeholders in wildlife biology and urban wildlife management. The final draft of the Wildlife Strategy was posted to Ottawa.ca for one month of public review and comment. These consultations are summarized in this report and in Document 3.

Résumé

Hypothèses et analyse

La Stratégie de gestion de la faune (document 1) a été préparée en réponse à une directive du Conseil faite au personnel le 24 février 2010 en vue d'élaborer « une stratégie d'ensemble pour la gestion de la faune mettant l'accent sur une planification respectueuse de la faune et centrée sur des programmes de sensibilisation et d'information de la population ».

Le présent rapport résume la démarche inhérente à la Stratégie de gestion de la faune proposée et son contenu, la possible analyse des besoins et de rentabilisation entourant le recrutement par la Ville d'un agent de ressources fauniques, le processus de consultation publique, les neuf recommandations de la Stratégie et le mode de mise en œuvre des recommandations.

Dans de nombreux cas, le personnel recommande de continuer d'appliquer les politiques et les pratiques actuelles de la Ville. Le rapport contient toutefois des recommandations pour la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie municipale de gestion de la faune qui permette de privilégier des approches de coexistence, d'éducation et de sensibilisation du public, de prévention et de gestion non mortelles dans les conflits entre les humains et la faune.

Le plan de mise en œuvre décrit dans le présent rapport propose de donner suite aux recommandations 1 à 6 immédiatement et d'en surveiller les résultats. Dans le futur, le personnel examinera l'analyse de rentabilisation entourant la création du poste d'agent de ressources fauniques, de même qu'il propose l'établissement de ce poste comme priorité pour le prochain mandat du Conseil, si sa création est justifiée.

Répercussions financières

Les recommandations n^{os} 1 à 6 de la Stratégie de gestion de la faune pourront être mises en œuvre à même les ressources financières actuelles.

Les incidences financières des recommandations n^{os} 7, 8 et 9 seront déterminées et soumises pour approbation, au besoin, dans l'exercice d'établissement des priorités du prochain mandat du Conseil et d'un budget futur correspondant.

Consultation / commentaires du public

L'élaboration de la Stratégie de gestion de la faune a été orientée et facilitée par les commentaires d'un groupe de travail formé d'intervenants du public et d'organismes. D'autres activités de consultation ont eu lieu avec des experts et des intervenants du secteur de la biologie faunique et de la gestion de la faune urbaine. La version définitive de la Stratégie de gestion de la faune a été affichée sur le site Web Ottawa.ca pendant un mois aux fins d'examen et de commentaires. Ces consultations sont résumées dans le présent rapport et dans le document 3 ci-joint.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2010, City Council directed staff to develop an integrated and comprehensive Wildlife Strategy. The specific elements of the direction, as established by Council's motion, are listed below:

- To bring the Wildlife Strategy to a joint meeting of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) and the Planning and Environment Committee (PEC) for discussion.
- To involve appropriate City departments, the National Capital Commission, the Ministry of Natural Resources, other relevant agencies and community stakeholders in the Wildlife Strategy's development and implementation.
- To centre the wildlife strategy on "wildlife-sensitive planning, with a focus on public education and awareness programs."
- To include "protocols to be required in conditions of plans of subdivision and site plans."

The Planning and Growth Management Department was assigned the lead on the development of a Wildlife Strategy with support from the Emergency and Protective Services Department and the Rural Affairs Office. An ad hoc Working Group of invited public, City and agency stakeholders was formed to provide guidance, expertise and advice on development of the Strategy. The Working Group has met nine times over the past three years.

Since February 2010, the City's standing committee structure has been revised, along with standing committee mandates and responsibilities. In the Standing Committee Terms of Reference, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee has direct responsibility for, "making recommendations to Council: ... (g.) On matters with respect to the development of a comprehensive wildlife management strategy for the conservation, management and, where necessary, control of wildlife in conjunction with the appropriate agencies."

The purpose of this report is to recommend Council-approval of the proposed Wildlife Strategy (Document 1) and implementation plan detailed below.

DISCUSSION

Human – wildlife conflicts are not unique to Ottawa. They occur in every city and town in North America. In Ottawa, they are a natural consequence of our size and growth, our tremendous biodiversity, and our outstanding network of natural areas and habitats. The Wildlife Strategy acknowledges the complexity of wildlife issues, recognizing that every management option should be assessed within its ecosystem context. The Strategy takes a balanced, evidence-based approach to reducing and resolving human – wildlife conflicts through good planning, prevention, education, co-existence and conflict resolution.

The Wildlife Strategy focuses on public education and outreach as the best means for preventing and resolving human – wildlife conflicts. It proposes:

- Making better use of the City’s web page;
- A public speaker series; and
- A Partnership with Let’s Talk Science on development and delivery of an urban wildlife education kit for primary schools.

Ottawa already does a good job of wildlife-sensitive planning. The most effective actions are those that reduce urban expansion and focus rural growth in the villages. In particular light rail and transit-oriented development, densification policies, and a moratorium on country subdivisions contribute to the containment of urban expansion and reduce the instance of human – wildlife conflicts.

Ottawa also works with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Capital Commission to protect and link core natural areas, such as:

- Mer Bleue;
- The Burnt Lands Alvar;
- The Marlborough Forest;
- Morris Island Conservation Area;
- The Carp Hills; and
- The Shirley’s Bay – Constance Creek Natural Corridor.

Nonetheless, the Strategy identifies a few areas where the City can do a better job of wildlife-sensitive planning and management. These areas include:

- Guidance to developers on minimizing impacts to wildlife;
- More cost-effective and wetland friendly management of beavers;
- A more pro-active response to community concerns for coyotes; and
- Creation of a Wildlife Resource Officer position to coordinate the City’s wildlife management activities and to guide the City’s public education and outreach.

Creation of a new position is always sensitive and must be justifiable in terms of the City’s responsibilities and objectives, service excellence, and costs. As such, the implementation plan for the strategy calls for staff to move forward immediately with the bulk of the strategy’s recommendations, monitor the results, and then determine if the creation of a new position will be proposed for the next term of Council’s priorities.

Current City Wildlife Management Activities

The scope of the City’s wildlife management responsibilities and activities would benefit from more clarity and alignment. These responsibilities and activities are shared amongst several departments, making any comprehensive re-evaluation, improvement and integration of policies and practices difficult without an overall staff person responsible for their coordination. Table 1 summarizes the direct activities of various City departments for wildlife and wildlife-related issues.

Table 1. Wildlife Management and Response Activities by the City

Department/Branch	Activities
ESD Surface Water Management Services	Management of beavers located in stormwater management facilities, municipal drains, and natural watercourses (other than road culvert and bridge locations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site and risk assessment, in conjunction with Conservation Authorities; • Management of beavers located in municipal drains and City-owned engineered stormwater management facilities • Management of beavers located in natural watercourses where they pose a hazard to public safety, infrastructure, or private property; • In 2012, Surface Water funded initiation of the beaver deceiver demonstration project; • New stormwater management facilities are being designed and constructed to deter their use by beavers, including the selection of trees and vegetation that are not suitable as food sources, and the use of outlet structure that are more resistant to blockage. Management of Canada Geese at stormwater facilities through landscaping.
ESD Drinking Water Services and Environmental Engineering	Assessment and mitigation of the impacts of the Fleet Street pumping station on the protected species American eel and lake sturgeon. Mitigation of impacts on species at risk and wildlife in engineering design.
ESD Solid Waste Services	Trail Road Waste Management Facility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bird strike hazard assessment (every three years); • Beaver and muskrat control in the stormwater management infrastructure; • Gull control (on-going) • Pest control (mice, rats, flies).
Public Works Parks, Buildings and Grounds Operations and Maintenance	Monitoring and management of beavers in watercourses within City parks. Service requests regarding wasps, bees, small mammals and dead animals (about 200/year). Geese Management Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site assessments; • Habitat modifications; • Hazing.
Public Works Roads and Traffic	Management of beavers at road culverts.

Operations and Maintenance	<p>Maintenance and replacement of infrastructure damaged by beaver activity (e.g. culverts, road beds, trails).</p> <p>Screening of road, bridge and culvert maintenance projects for species at risk and conformity with the <i>Endangered Species Act 2007</i>.</p>
Public Works Forestry Services	<p>Management of beavers at problem locations in municipal rural forests, in partnership with local trappers.</p> <p>Tree wrapping in urban and rural areas.</p> <p>Avoidance and mitigation of wildlife impacts during tree removal, including the placement of wildlife nesting boxes.</p>
Emergency and Protective Services By-law and Regulatory Services	<p>Provision of 24/7 management and coordination of the Large Wild Mammal Response protocol and service provider.</p> <p>Ad-hoc provision of advice to other departments and response to other wildlife conflicts and issues as they arise (e.g. coyotes, wild turkeys, beavers, Canada geese)</p>
Planning and Growth Management Land Use and Natural Systems	<p>Ad-hoc provision of advice to other departments on conformity with the <i>Endangered Species Act 2007</i> and urgent response to species at risk issues, including field surveys.</p> <p>Coordination of the beaver deceiver demonstration project, including site inspections and maintenance outside normal working hours.</p>
Ottawa Police Services	<p>Response to urgent wildlife-related calls, including large wild mammal incidents.</p> <p>Euthanasia of deer or moose involved in wildlife – motor vehicle collisions.</p>
Service Ottawa Client Operations	<p>Response to public inquiries and service requests regarding wildlife issues received through Ottawa 311 and Ottawa.ca.</p>

In addition to the above table, significant wildlife issues also require the involvement of senior management and Councillors' offices.

Some of these activities are not sustainable with the resources currently allocated. In particular:

- The Large Wild Mammal Response Protocol is currently coordinated and implemented by the Strategic Initiatives Project Officer in the By-law and Regulatory Services Branch (BRBS). This person has performed this service since 2010 in addition to her normal responsibilities. The job requires her to be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. She has been required to respond to calls after hours, on weekends, and on vacation.

- The beaver deceiver demonstration project is currently coordinated and implemented by the Senior Planner in the Land Use and Natural Systems (LUNS) program, in addition to his normal responsibilities. Monitoring and maintenance of the demonstration sites has required after-hours and weekend visits.
- Complicated or controversial wildlife issues have required the involvement of either/both the BRSB Strategic Initiatives Project Officer and the LUNS Senior Planner for significant periods and amounts of time. These requirements have interfered with the normal duties of both staff, resulting in delays in other tasks and projects.
- Advice on compliance with the *Endangered Species Act 2007* has been provided by Senior and Intermediate Planners in Land Use and Natural Systems to departments in the Operations Portfolio since 2010. This has included the screening of infrastructure maintenance and replacement projects, emergency coordination and facilitation of consultant services, coordination of biological consulting activities, and field surveys.

Together, these activities are estimated to have required the equivalent time of one half to one full time staff position (FTE). A more effective and efficient way to manage the City's long-term response to wildlife issues and wildlife management is clearly required.

Wildlife Strategy Summary

The Wildlife Strategy fulfills the mandate given to staff by Council in the motion of February 24, 2010 in the following ways.

- It describes the ecosystem management context of wildlife strategy.
- It reviews the City's planning practices with respect to wildlife, identifies key gaps, and suggests actions to fill those gaps.
- It reviews and recommends revision of the construction protocol approved by the Region of Ottawa – Carleton in 2000. It also reviews and recommends further study of a more detailed construction protocol recommended by the Ottawa – Carleton Wildlife Centre.
- It reviews the City's education, outreach and communication practices, and it recommends specific actions to improve and expand those practices.
- It discusses methods for preventing, reducing and addressing human conflicts with common, urban wildlife, such as squirrels, raccoons, skunks, bats and birds.
- It discusses urban species at risk, protective legislation, and the City's responsibilities.
- It reviews the City's Large Wild Animal Emergency Response protocol.
- It reviews the City's beaver management practices, and it recommends the establishment of beaver deceiver demonstration sites.
- It discusses coyotes, and it recommends a more pro-active response to human-habituated coyotes.
- It discusses the Forestry Services practices with respect to wildlife trees.
- It discusses the real risks to human health from animal transmitted diseases, using information from Ottawa Public Health and other sources.

- It discusses the need for a City Wildlife Resource Officer with responsibility for the City's existing wildlife practices, as well as implementation of the recommendations in this report.

Recommendations

The Wildlife Strategy makes the following nine recommendations.

Construction Protocol

1. That the Planning and Growth Management Department update the construction protocol of the former Region of Ottawa-Carleton to reflect the Official Plan and by-laws and development of the previously-proposed guideline for urban wildlife issues.
2. That the Planning and Growth Management Department incorporate the updated construction protocol in the review of development applications.

Education and Outreach

3. That the wildlife section on the City's website be expanded and revised to provide detailed information on common urban wildlife species, best practices for prevention of human – wildlife conflicts, and options for resolution of human – wildlife conflicts.
4. That the City's website be expanded to include more information on the city's natural areas and outdoor recreational opportunities.
5. That the City initiate a one-year trial of an Urban Wildlife Speaker Series, consisting of four evening presentations over the course of 2013 - 2014 (autumn, winter, early spring, early summer).
6. That the City approach Let's Talk Science at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University to partner on the development and delivery of an educational kit for primary schools on urban wildlife.

Beaver Management

7. That the City evaluate the potential effectiveness of beaver deceivers at road and railway culverts and suitable locations on new municipal drains, beginning with the demonstration project currently underway.

Coyotes

8. That the City's direct response to individual problem coyotes be expanded to include the assessment of animals exhibiting consistent signs of habituation before they become an immediate risk to public safety.

City Wildlife Resource Officer

9. That the City create a new position of Wildlife Resource Officer, with the following responsibilities:

- Provision of advice and information about human-wildlife conflict resolution and other wildlife-related matters to other City personnel and the public.
- Coordination of the City's contracts with wildlife service providers.
- Formal responsibility for management of the large mammal response protocol (requires that the person be on-call outside regular hours).
- Development and implementation of a pro-active response to habituated coyotes in villages, suburban and urban areas.
- Development and review of other wildlife response protocols as the need arises.
- Assessment of beaver conflict sites and recommendation of appropriate management options.
- Assessment and resolution of other wildlife issues affecting City operations.
- Development and implementation of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* in City operations and maintenance.
- Working with Land Use and Natural Systems on implementation of species at risk planning and policies.
- Provision of support for species at risk stewardship programs and projects.
- Development and maintenance of urban wildlife education materials for the city's web site and elementary schools.
- Organizing an annual Urban Wildlife Speakers Series, sponsored by the City.
- Reporting as required to Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Wildlife Resource Officer Rationale

The Wildlife Strategy recommends several initiatives that require the support of a dedicated Wildlife Resource Officer position. These initiatives would allow the City to address objectives under four of Council's strategic priorities and to improve client service. They are discussed below under Term of Council Priorities.

This position calls for an experienced professional with excellent technical skills, professional credibility, public outreach and engagement skills, diplomacy, and strong communication skills.

The City spends approximately \$280,000 per year in capital costs on direct wildlife management of which \$130,000 covers the costs of bird control at the Trail Road Waste Management Facility. Creation of a Wildlife Resource Officer position would not result in short- or mid-term capital cost savings. The Wildlife Resource Officer would not be able to replace the contractors currently in use by the City for wildlife management activities, such as the Large Wild Mammal Response Protocol, beaver trapping, and management of Canada geese. It is not possible to re-allocate the funds currently committed to those activities to the Wildlife Resource Officer without compromising infrastructure and public health and safety.

However, the creation of this position would address the sustainable nature of the City's staffing approach to wildlife issues, and it would produce long-term cost savings to the City through:

- Long-term reductions in wildlife conflicts;
- Better coordination of wildlife projects and programs;
- Better coordination of wildlife service providers and responses;
- Reductions in demand on senior staff time;
- And, especially, reduced maintenance costs for road culverts and roads through more effective beaver management.

Most of the costs of wildlife activity and wildlife management by the City are hidden costs, not reflected in wildlife management budgets, such as staff time and increased infrastructure costs to repair damage to road culverts and road beds caused by beavers.

For example, the Virginia Department of Transportation found that the annual cost of maintenance and repair at 14 chronic beaver activity sites prior to installation of beaver deceivers was \$300,000/year (including all capital and operational costs), or an average of \$21,500 per site (Boyles *et al* 2008).

The same study found that the replacement of traditional trapping and dam removal by the use of beaver deceivers – i.e. combinations of beaver fencing, pond levellers and diversion dams – resulted in a savings of \$256,000 *per year* for the 14 beaver activity sites, or \$18,300 per site (Boyles *et al* 2008).

Similarly, over a 25-year period in Gatineau Park, the National Capital Commission found that a change in practice from trapping/dam removal to the use of beaver deceivers at approximately 160 sites resulted in a 2/3 reduction in person-hours devoted to beaver management. As a consequence of this reduction, the Park was able to move from the full-time employment of two conservation officers in beaver management to the contracting of a part-time beaver management specialist.

In the long-term, additional cost savings should be realized through more effective wildlife management practices. Coordination of wildlife management activities is critical to more effective management. One of the key actions by the proposed Wildlife Resource Officer would be the establishment and maintenance of a database of wildlife conflict locations and management interventions. Such a database would serve as a learning and planning tool, essential for integrated, adaptive management. It would allow the coordination of management activities across departments, the objective evaluation of different management practices, monitoring of trends in human – wildlife conflicts, and prevention of new human – wildlife conflicts through pro-active measures.

More effective wildlife management practices should lead to reduction (but not elimination) of human – wildlife conflicts, reduced contractor costs, increased public confidence in City practices and information, and reduced demands on staff time – particularly on senior managers and Councillors.

Implementation Plan

The implementation of Recommendations 1 to 6 can begin immediately using current resources and budgets. However, implementation of Recommendations 7 to 9 require

funding and more detailed planning. Furthermore, recommendations 7 and 8 cannot be implemented without the creation of the Wildlife Resource Officer as detailed in Recommendation 9.

In the months after Recommendations 1 to 6 are implemented, staff will monitor the results and review the business case for the creation of the Wildlife Resource Officer as detailed in Recommendation 9.

If the business case shows the position is still warranted, staff will propose the creation of the position as a term of Council priority for the next term. If approved as a priority, the assessment of funding to support a Wildlife Resource Officer and the programs described in Recommendations 7 and 8 will be completed and brought forward for Council approval through a future budget processes.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed Wildlife Strategy would improve the City's response to wildlife issues and human – wildlife conflicts in urban areas, suburban areas, villages and rural areas. Two recommendations are most directly relevant to rural areas: the proposed re-evaluation of the City's beaver management practices, and the expanded coyote response initiative. Both of these recommendations are conditional upon the proposed creation of a Wildlife Resource Officer position for their coordination and implementation.

The Wildlife Resource Officer position would also provide an additional resource to rural residents for information and advice on wildlife issues. The Wildlife Resource Officer would identify, track and report to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and Council on emerging wildlife issues. The Wildlife Resource Officer would work with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Authorities, the National Capital Commission and recognized wildlife experts on new approaches to wildlife management, resolution of human – wildlife conflicts, and wildlife conservation.

CONSULTATION

Work on the Wildlife Strategy began with the formation of a working group to assist staff in its preparation. Staff assembled a working group consisting of representatives from the City and other agencies and representatives of community stakeholders. Initial membership was by invitation of the City's Project Manager, although the working group had the option of adding additional members, subject to approval by the City's Project Manager and maintenance of the approximate balance between City/agency and community representatives. The Wildlife Strategy Working Group had no formal status, but was an ad hoc advisory committee. The Working Group met nine times during the development of the Wildlife Strategy.

Details on the Working Group and their comments on the final draft Wildlife Strategy can be found in Document 3.

Consultation on the Wildlife Strategy has occurred through the Wildlife Strategy Working Group, through individual discussions with Working Group members, through individual discussions with other stakeholders, and through posting of the draft Wildlife Strategy to Ottawa.ca for public review and comment.

City staff had many informal discussions and correspondence with Working Group members, City staff and other stakeholders during the development of the Wildlife Strategy. These consultations included:

- The Emergency and Protective Services Department;
- The Environmental Services Department;
- The Public Works Department;
- Ottawa Public Health;
- Professional Wildlife Service Companies;
- The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority;
- Professional installers of beaver deceivers and beaver bafflers;
- Animal welfare and animal rights organizations;
- Representatives of the hunting and trapping communities; and
- Professional wildlife biologists.

The City received original comments through the public website from 24 people. Opinions were expressed on approximately 30 different issues.

In addition to original public submissions regarding the wildlife strategy, elected officials and staff received 1887 (as of June 3, 2013) largely identical e-mails from the web site of the Ontario Wildlife Coalition (OWC) – one of two members of the Working Group to have resigned in September 2012. Each e-mail required a member of the public to enter a name and e-mail address on the OWC web form and to click on the “Send Letter Now!” button (<http://wildlifeontario.ca/campaigns/ottawawildlifestrategy/submitpagev4.php>). The generated e-mails do not include an address, so it is not possible to determine if the respondents reside within Ottawa.

Document 3 provides details on the public consultations, including the written comments by the members of the Working Group, public submissions through Ottawa.ca, the Ontario Wildlife Coalition e-mail campaign, and staff responses.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLORS

This is a City-wide report - not applicable.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to the implementation of the recommendations in the report, inclusive of the identified recommendations of the Wildlife Strategy.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Wildlife Strategy identifies a very minor, potential risk to public health and safety from habituated coyotes: i.e. coyotes that have lost their fear of humans and human environments, usually due to the availability of human food sources or other attractants. The Wildlife Strategy proposes an expanded, more-proactive response by City staff to identify and respond to cases of habituated coyotes, with a focus on removal of food sources or other factors that may be attracting coyotes to an area.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the Wildlife Strategy Recommendations 1 to 6 can be done within existing resources.

The financial implications associated with the implementation of the Wildlife Strategy Recommendations 7 to 9 will be identified and brought forward, if required, through the next Term of Council priorities exercise and future budgets.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility implications.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Acceptance and implementation of the Wildlife Strategy recommendations are expected to result in reduced human – wildlife conflicts, reduced need for trapping and lethal management by the City and private property owners, and indirect environmental benefits, such as increased retention of wetlands. Implementation of the recommendations is also expected to facilitate compliance with the *Endangered Species Act 2007* in City operations.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

Information Technology approved this report without comment.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

As discussed above, the Wildlife Strategy addresses the following Term of Council Priorities:

Strategic Priority: Environmental Stewardship

- ES1: Improve stormwater management;
- ES2: Enhance and protect natural systems;
- ES3: Reduce environmental impacts.

A dedicated Wildlife Resource Officer would allow a corporate re-evaluation and expansion of the City's beaver management practices to include alternatives to trapping and dam removal (*i.e.* beaver deceivers/baffles) for the protection of safety, property and infrastructure on a case-by-case basis. Allowing beavers and beaver dams to remain in place, while providing necessary protections, contributes to the three strategic objectives by increasing surface water detention, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and maintaining natural ecological cycles.

Strategic Priority: Service Excellence

- SE1: Ensure a positive experience for every client interaction;
- SE2: Improve operation performance.

The public education and outreach activities proposed in the Wildlife Strategy will reduce the frustration that many residents express at the difficulty in obtaining timely and useful information on general wildlife issues and resolution of specific human – wildlife conflicts. The creation of a Wildlife Resource Officer would provide clients with the ability to consult with a knowledgeable expert on wildlife behaviour and risks, helping to allay their fears with respect to particular wildlife species, such as coyotes or beavers. A dedicated Wildlife Resource Officer will also reduce confusion within City departments and councillor offices regarding the handling of wildlife-related inquiries or issues, improving response times and reducing the need for senior management involvement.

Strategic Priority: Governance, Planning and Decision Making

- GP2: Apply management controls to achieve Council's priorities;
- GP3: Make sustainable choices.

A dedicated staff position would allow effective monitoring and reporting on wildlife management activities within the corporation and to Council. Currently, with wildlife management responsibilities dispersed across the corporation, it is not practical to implement a comprehensive re-evaluation of the City's wildlife practices or to implement systematic changes and improvements. In some cases, the lack of coordination has resulted in conflicting actions by different departments: for example, the trapping of beavers by Public Works in areas of on-going community stewardship projects. In other cases, the lack of knowledge of wildlife issues and species at risk issues has resulted in letters of warning from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources regarding possible violations of the *Endangered Species Act 2007* and delayed major infrastructure and development projects.

Strategic Priority: Financial Responsibility

- FS2: Maintain and enhance the City's financial position.

A dedicated staff position would facilitate the identification and implementation of more cost-effective wildlife management practices. The increased effectiveness of the City's wildlife management practices, and the environmental benefits, are expected to produce mid- and long-term cost savings to the City, particularly in infrastructure maintenance and replacement. In addition, increased public awareness of the City's outstanding

natural character and areas through the proposed public education and outreach activities will contribute to the promotion of Ottawa as a tourist destination.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Document 1 City of Ottawa Wildlife Strategy (attached separately on file with the City Clerk)
- Document 2 Current Planning Practices for Wildlife (attached separately on file with the City Clerk)
- Document 3 Public consultation: Submissions and Responses. (attached separately on file with the City Clerk)

DISPOSITION

The Planning and Growth Management Department will work with Emergency and Protective Services and IT to implement Recommendations 1 to 6 of the Wildlife Strategy, utilizing current resources and budgets.

Staff will monitor the impact of these initiatives and, if required, bring forward Recommendations 7, 8, and 9 for approval in the next term of Council priority setting and future budget processes.