

MEEWASIN EXPLORER

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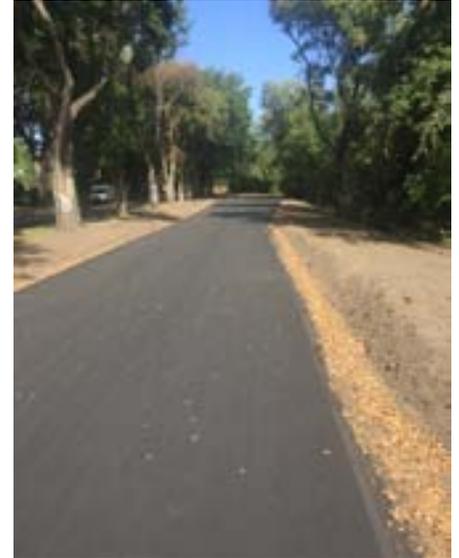
Meewasin Trail Upgrade Continues in 2018

The Meewasin Trail has come a long way since the first 10 kilometres were built back in 1981. Since then it has grown to more than 80 kilometres that run throughout our river valley in the Saskatoon area. Usage in some areas has grown by more than 5% in the last three years, making the Meewasin one of the most used urban trail networks in North America.

This is all good news, but our trail system is showing its age, with many sections in disrepair and not meeting current standards for accessibility or capacity. A recent trail assessment recommended priorities for upgrades.

Trail upgrades began in 2016 with a short section completed at the Spadina Lift Station in conjunction with a city project. In 2017 the work continued with a much-needed upgrade from Duke Street to Queen Street. The new 4-metre-wide trail opened in fall 2017. This is a significant improvement, doubling the width to better accommodate all types of users and adding two seating nodes.

Our goal in 2018 is to finish this phase, continuing from the Queen Street intersection and heading 224 metres down the hill to the Children's Discovery Museum (Mendel) parking lot. This project will improve the pedestrian crossing at Queen and Spadina, reduce the slope to meet accessibility standards, eliminate a blind spot and widen the trail.



Although this section is relatively open, some trees and shrubs must be removed to complete site grading and trail widening. Meewasin will replant the site with native trees and shrubs where possible. It will be an opportunity to increase the overall site biodiversity while replanting more material than was removed.

Along the previously completed section from Duke to Queen Street, the goal will again be to replant with native species and increase biodiversity. Given the mature tree canopy in this section, native shrubs will be planted to enhance the understory between the new trail and the river. Part of the work in both sections includes a new retaining wall, which can also accommodate plant material – so once established it will blend seamlessly into the restored landscape. Replanting will begin in 2019.

Trail users can expect closures and detours around this area when construction begins this spring and summer.

Generous financial support has been provided for this work by the City of Saskatoon and Western Economic Diversification Canada.

For more information about this project, check the Meewasin website at meewasin.com.



MEEWASIN TRAIL MAP – ONLINE (AND IN YOUR POCKET)!

Exploring the Meewasin Trail is easy! Chart your adventure and access information along the way. Find out what events are happening along the Meewasin Trail, where the nearest dog parks, water fountains and washrooms are. Simply go to www.meewasin.com, click the map and the fun begins!

Prefer your map in your pocket? A special thanks to the Saskatoon Road Runners for sponsoring the new print edition of the compact Meewasin Trail Guide, coming to you this spring!

MEEWASIN VALLEY AUTHORITY - 402 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH, SASKATOON, SK S7K 3G5

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

"Rescue the Fescue" - The Now Rare Prairie Wool



Plains Rough Fescue, the "prairie wool" that once covered the northern Saskatchewan prairies, has been declared a rare species in Saskatchewan. Plains Rough Fescue is the dominant grass of the Fescue Prairie grasslands, creating thick mats of grass that look and feel like "wool" on the prairie. It was important winter forage for Plains Bison because it retained valuable protein and other nutrients over the winter months.

In the 1980s estimates indicated there was less than 5% of this grassland type left in Saskatchewan, with remaining patches becoming isolated. Plains Rough Fescue, known to botanists as *Festuca hallii*, has seen a further dramatic decrease over the last 20 years. Threats include tree and shrub encroachment, invasive grasses, lack of natural disturbances (grazing and fire) and continued habitat fragmentation through urban and agricultural expansion.

Meewasin's Saskatoon Natural Grasslands was created to protect Plains Rough Fescue. An active campaign by local volunteers created T-shirts and bumper stickers with the slogan "Rescue the Fescue." The site has been owned and stewarded by Meewasin since 1993. However, since then Plains Rough Fescue has drastically declined at the site. Plains Rough Fescue also occurs in other Meewasin Conservation Areas including Meewasin Northeast Swale, Crocus Prairie, Beaver Creek Conservation Area and Cranberry Flats Conservation Area.

Meewasin's active Resource Management program is "rescuing the fescue" through its integrated approaches, including prescribed fires and targeted conservation grazing to remove invasive grasses and knock back encroaching shrubs. Meewasin also grows Plains Rough Fescue plants that are used in its restoration programs. Meewasin is mapping this rare species on its Conservation Areas and will provide this valuable data to the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre. If you would like to help "Rescue the Fescue", please watch for volunteer activities to help out.

Explorer eNewsletter

Help us reduce our paper consumption and sign up for our Explorer eNewsletter today! Receive the same great newsletter in a more eco-friendly format.

Phone 306-665-6887 or email meewasin@meewasin.com and provide us with your name and email address.

You can help **Green the Meewasin Valley** with:

- a monthly or annual gift to Meewasin's Green Circle or 500 Club;
- a gift to honour a special person or event in your life, which sponsors a tree, a bench, or the Memorial Forest;
- a conservation easement on your land;
- a planned gift in your will; or
- a gift to Meewasin's endowment



***Deadline for Plant-A-Tree dedications is March 31, 2018!**

For more information, visit our website www.meewasin.com or call/email our office @ 306-665-6887 or donations@meewasin.com.



Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, Meewasin Valley Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the City of Saskatoon would like to thank everyone who took part in Yellow Fish Road™ in 2017. This program reminds us that what goes down our storm drains directly impacts our river and wetlands.

Please join us again in Spring 2018 to spread the word that "Rain Only" should be going down storm drains. We are now taking bookings for May and June. Contact sbouchard@saskriverbasin.ca for more information on how your class or group can get involved. There is no cost to participate.

Learn more about safe disposal of household hazardous waste: saskwastereduction.ca or saskatoon.ca/hazardouswaste or call 306-975-2487.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN



Are you in Grades 7 to 12? Compete to win \$1,000 cash! Submit a proposal that answers the question: "What can YOU do to improve your watershed?"

- Work in a group of up to 4 students
- Research your local watershed and come up with a realistic solution to an environmental concern
- Finalists present their idea to win cash rewards
- \$11,000 will be awarded to students and schools or non-profit clubs who participate
- Additional funding is also available to help implement student ideas
- Contest deadline is in March, with the Top Ten presentation taking place in May
- Community judges select 10 finalists

Teachers, Group Leaders, and Administrators: In addition to fulfilling water curriculum objectives, the Nutrien™ Caring For Our Watersheds program develops many other valuable student skills such as environmental awareness, community engagement, innovation, budgeting, and proposal writing. In addition, Top Ten finalists earn substantial cash prizes, with matching money going to their school or non-profit club.

Free watershed presentations and mentorship are available. We are currently scheduling for the 2018-19 school year. Contact the Saskatchewan Program Coordinator Sue Bouchard at sbouchard@saskriverbasin.ca or 306-665-6887 for more information, or visit CaringForOurWatersheds.com for details on how to enter in your region.

Brought to you by:



Earth Day 2018



April 22nd, 2018 is Earth Day and every year Meewasin celebrates by promoting a healthy and vibrant river ecosystem within our city. For the past 38 years Meewasin has taken on initiatives such as partnering with community-minded volunteers to rehabilitate green spaces, working with local businesses to enhance our river valley, and educating thousands of students about the importance of natural habitats within and around the City of Saskatoon. Our conservation practices, such as our invasive species removal and conservation grazing programs, are aimed at maintaining the ecological integrity of the natural areas in and around Saskatoon. So, on Earth day we celebrate the concept of partners, stakeholders and the community working together to conserve our river valley and the many benefits it provides.

This year's theme for Earth Day is to help end plastic pollution. Plastic objects, whether single-use plastics, or plastic microbeads, are a growing concern for the global population and our surrounding natural ecosystems. Environmental researchers have found plastics almost everywhere on our planet including our natural landscapes, within bird nesting materials, in our wetlands habitats, in the stomachs of marine animals, and congregating to form garbage islands in our oceans. This global issue needs the support of everyone working together in order to make a positive change for our planet.

In order to combat plastic pollution and litter within our river valley, Meewasin created the annual Clean Up Campaign which helps to create awareness and appreciation for the environment we live in. Since 1981 Meewasin, with the help of tens of thousands of volunteers and sponsors, has removed tonnes of waste and plastic materials from the parks, riverbanks, and neighborhoods of Saskatoon. Meewasin also works directly with schools through on-site educational programming that teaches students about where their garbage goes, the lifetime of plastics, and what we can do to promote a greener and cleaner lifestyle. The removal of these materials has helped to minimize the amount of garbage carried into the South Saskatchewan River, create cleaner storm sewers to reduce residential flooding, and improve living conditions for the many species that call our river valley home.

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HOURS: 9 A.M. - 5 P.M. WEEKDAYS, CLOSED WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

INTERPRETING SASKATOON'S NATURAL HISTORY

Beaver Creek Conservation Area (BCCA)

Winter Environmental Education Programs

For January, February, and March 2018 BCCA is presenting winter ecology based programs to grade 5 classrooms from Saskatoon Public and Saskatoon Catholic Schools. As part of our annual environmental education program presented September through June, students spend a winter's day at BCCA exploring the site discovering animal activities and learning about winter wildlife adaptations.

Thanks to the support from The Nasser Family and the Community Initiatives Fund through its Community Grant Program, the Meewasin-Beaver Creek Conservation Area is providing an Interpretive Cross Country Ski Program and Nature Study to classes Grade 5-8. This interpretive ski-based nature study program will have participants experience cross-country skiing fundamentals on the prairie uplands landscape while identifying signs of winter wildlife and discussing flora and fauna adaptations.

Until March 31, 2018, BCCA is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and closed on weekends and holidays. When visiting BCCA please ask for some sunflower seed to hand feed the black capped chickadees.



A Creek Forming A Valley; A Valley Forming Habitats

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA - FOLLOW LORNE AVENUE SOUTH 13 KM ON HIGHWAY #219

CHIP'S HOT LINE: 306-374-2474 FAX: 306-665-6117 E-MAIL: MEEWASIN@MEEWASIN.COM MEEWASIN.COM

UPCOMING EVENTS



Prairie Speakers Webinar Series- Enhancing Bird Habitat in a Semi-Urban Setting- March 28, 2018

Meewasin's Resource Management Officer, Renny Grilz, will be part of the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan's Prairie Speakers Webinar Series on March 28, 2018 at 12 noon. The title of the webinar is "Enhancing Bird Habitat in a Semi-Urban Setting". Renny will discuss how Meewasin uses tools of targeted conservation grazing, prescribed burning, and other methods to create and enhance habitat for grassland birds, species at risk and overall biodiversity on its grassland conservation sites including Meewasin Northeast Swale, Beaver Creek Conservation Area, and Cranberry Flats Conservation Area. Grassland birds have seen a dramatic decline in population across the prairies over the last 30 years, with an overall decrease in 55% and some species with over a 70% decline.



For more information on all Meewasin events, visit our website at meewasin.com/events.

