



Hanson Ranch Wetland Improvements

Report Back: What We Heard

October 2023

Project overview

The Hanson Ranch storm pond was built in 1999 to retain stormwater runoff in the Hanson Ranch/Hidden Valley community near West Nose Creek. Since it was initially constructed, the structure has deteriorated through natural processes. The storm pond is no longer compliant with environmental regulations. In consultation with municipal, provincial, and federal regulators, The City is undertaking a redesign to improve the facility and meet regulatory requirements. Community concerns about the future of the Hanson Ranch Wetland have been growing since 2016, when it was identified that the facility was not functioning as designed.

Engagement overview

Three information pop-up sessions were organized in the area to educate participants on the regulatory reasons for improvement work, to explain the delay in initiating construction and to hear the concerns and questions from participants directly impacted by the project's plans.

63 people visited the pop-ups over the course of the following three dates:

September 21st: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

September 26th: 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM

September 28th: 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM

The pop-up sessions were an opportunity for the project team to 'Listen and Learn', as well as an opportunity for participants to engage in conversation about the upcoming wetland improvements.

At the sessions, the project team outlined the current state of the facility and ways to improve the functionality of the wetland. The project team assured participants that they will inform and update them about future construction work and any possible opportunities to provide their input on public realm improvement features, such as lookout points, seating, and other small fixtures once regulatory requirements are met. The sessions also helped the project team collect additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to add and respond to on the project website.

Furthermore, these sessions provided an opportunity for participants to tell the project team how valued the storm pond is in their community, to learn how to subscribe to the project's e-newsletter, and to share their ideas and thoughts on what they feel needs to be considered for improvement of the Hanson Ranch Wetland and adjoining community area.



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What we heard

Concerns about wildlife disruption were the most common theme voiced by participants. Other prominent themes included pathway improvements required, maintaining a natural setting, maintenance commitment concerns and requests for improved pathway connectivity and accessibility.

Additionally, questions and ideas about educational signage for wildlife and garbage pick-up, recreational uses of the storm pond like skating and fishing, and issues people have with the previous project name of a “redesign” vs the updated name using “improvement” were raised.

137 individual comments were collected on post-it notes from the pop-up sessions. This feedback was coded and themed for this report. Below are sample comments of the top themes identified. All comments, suggestions, feedback, and ideas can be viewed at the end of this report.

Summary of Input

1: Wildlife protection Concerns about the impact construction and improvement work will have on the wildlife of the area was the most common theme. Wildlife mentioned in comments included: Snakes, salamanders, coyotes, beavers, deer, blue heron, owls, and muskrats.	Sample comments: <i>“Recognize the need but am concerned about the effect on wildlife.”</i> <i>“Concerned that construction will negatively affect an established place for wildlife.”</i> <i>“How invasive is this going to be for the wildlife?”</i>
2: Pathway improvements We heard about concerns regarding the poor condition of the pathway around the storm pond. Tree roots have broken through the pathway, and it is uneven and considered dangerous in places. We also heard safety concerns around steep drop-offs near the existing bridges/gates.	Sample comments: <i>“For our family, one thing is to keep the pathway and improve it.”</i> <i>“Safety for seniors. Pathway not safe.”</i> <i>“Will there be pathway improvements? Tree roots - how will you make sure they don't come back?”</i>
3: Natural setting preferred We heard a desire that the storm pond is returned to a similar natural setting as before when construction work is completed.	Sample comments: <i>“I want to ensure this wetland stays natural. I enjoy it as it is.”</i> <i>“Concerned that the natural area will be reduced.”</i> <i>“Leave the area as natural as possible because it brings a lot of pleasure to the people who use it.”</i>

<p>4: Maintenance concerns</p> <p>We heard concerns regarding the future maintenance of the facility in terms of weed control, vegetation, benches being inaccessible because of high grass, snow, and ice removal.</p>	<p>Sample comments:</p> <p><i>"The forward thinking of the developer was not continued. No maintenance of an award-winning wetland".</i></p> <p><i>"Maintain the pathway in the winter. Improve the drainage on the pathways. Deal with the weeds."</i></p> <p><i>"Don't think the beavers caused the issue - they just added to the issue of lack of maintenance."</i></p>
<p>5: Improved connectivity and accessibility</p> <p>We heard a desire for The City to consider improving pathway connectivity in the area.</p>	<p>Sample comments:</p> <p><i>"Opportunity to increase the number of connecting pathways?"</i></p> <p><i>"Tie the pond pathway into regional pathway."</i></p> <p><i>"Build a pathway that connects Hidden Creek area to the existing pathway system. Would provide better walk access to Creek side."</i></p>

Next steps

The input received has been coded and themed to compile this report for the project team as they continue working on the detailed design phase through 2023-2024. It is anticipated that the regulatory permitting period for the project will be from 2023-2025, with the anticipated construction start date to be determined after that, with the earliest potential timing being late summer 2024. Timelines are dependent on several factors such as regulatory permitting, complexity, available budget, supply chain, inclement weather and/or other unexpected circumstances.

The project team will use the information gathered during the pop-up sessions and this report to build a more extensive FAQ's section on the project's website at [Calgary.ca/HansonRanchWetland](https://calgary.ca/HansonRanchWetland). Furthermore, this feedback will provide the team with a clearer indication of participant's concerns and the need to communicate the ways The City will minimize and/or mitigate impacts to wildlife and the community during construction work.

Once the project team has more clarity on any opportunities to gather input and engage participants for their feedback on possible public realm improvements, the project team will plan further engagement, if possible. Prior to the start of construction, the project team will facilitate information session(s) to share construction timelines, impacts, and design elements as needed.

Suggestions:

Based on the feedback gathered from the pop-up sessions, the following additions to the FAQ's section of the project website may include:

- What measure(s) will be taken to minimize/mitigate wildlife disruption?
- Why can the storm pond not be used for recreation activities such as skating?
- Is fishing permitted in the storm pond?
- What measures will be taken to minimize parking and traffic congestion during construction?
- How long will it take to complete the project once construction begins?
- Does this work include any improvements to the sidewalks on Hidden Creek Drive?
- Can the pathway immediately adjacent to the constructed wetland be maintained in the winter?
- Can this constructed wetland be grandfathered?

Verbatim Comments

Verbatim comments presented here include all feedback, suggestions, comments, and messages collected in-person through the engagement described in this report. All input has been reviewed and provided to project team to be considered in decision making for the project.

- *Upgrade is a good thing.*
- *Beavers.*
- *Skating and recreation.*
- *Benches.*
- *Alignment between City's website and ward office.*
- *Clarify the areas that storm ponds collect. Indicate that the other wetland (provincial) is separate.*
- *Leader of the local scout group (tours). Fear taking the pond out. Can you fish in storm ponds in Alberta?*
- *I don't want to see parts of it chunked away - will it shrink? One of the only natural habitats in the city for deer, coyotes.*
- *Want it to work, want the wildlife protected, the pathway improved so that it's safe. Cracks in the pathway.*
- *Would like it to happen sooner.*
- *Better connectivity - make it more accessible.*
- *Garbage bins at every entrance and compost bins.*
- *Lovely if walkway goes / follows Beddington and goes to Creek Side Coop. Better connectivity and accessibility improvements.*
- *Benches can't be used. Grass is too high.*

- *How will it look? Birds and wildlife effects.*
- *Animals coming back after construction. Cut off animal migration when the bike path was built.*
- *Wildlife.*
- *Beavers will be trapped and removed.*
- *Grandfathered? What happens if we do nothing or make smaller changes / tweaks?*
- *Is the storm pond poisoning the creek or vice-versa? Why does this have to be a whole redesign?*
- *Like to see it natural but better maintenance.*
- *I want to ensure this wetland stay natural. I enjoy it as it is.*
- *I would like to see the wetland even more focused on natural habitat.*
- *Why do we have to call it a full redesign - why can't it just be alterations to what already exists? Tweak it.*
- *The proposed solution is not a good fit - fix what's there, no redesign.*
- *Will there be pathway improvements? Will beavers be relocated? Tree roots - how will you make sure they don't come back?*
- *Connection of pathway to provincial pathway. Snow removal on city path - next to Hanson Ranch Wetland.*
- *You're not building condos but keeping a constructed wetland.*
- *Not removing it.*
- *Opportunity to work together on it - City and participants .*
- *Need signage about cleaning up poop, garbage. Education / Outreach.*
- *Volunteer / Outreach opportunities.*
- *Safety for seniors. Pathway not safe.*
- *Don't feel like we can trust the City to do a good job.*
- *Odors get bad when the water levels are low. No ground water impacts. 1999 homeowner (pond was there) They were told would be a green space. More trees. Gravel trails. Doggy clean-up stations.*
- *Basic maintenance. Pathway. Looking forward to improvements*
- *No odor issues since the bull rush program. Resident program 5-6 years ago.*
- *We want transparency and to be willing to work with us.*
- *Imagine if this was your backyard.*
- *City needs to care more about community.*
- *Trout spawning and everything that happens here affects it.*
- *Are we taking land away for other uses (development).*
- *Concerned that the natural area will be reduced.*
- *Can't we just tell the province to leave it as it is?*
- *Bridges are in poor condition.*
- *Concerns that the improvements don't work and there are unintended consequences.*
- *Fears that the wetland features aren't preserved, and it turns into a rock bed or a dry pond.*
- *It was working fine up until a few years ago. The City deliberately let it deteriorate so they'd have to address it. Don't want to complicate something simple.*
- *Participants have never felt heard.*

- *Pathway is super appreciated. Connection from the end of pond to upper path.*
- *Can path system extend to south cell? Not necessarily asphalt, but gravel.*
- *The wetland is a wonderful neighbourhood asset.*
- *Opportunity to work with CRVA for planting etc.*
- *Pollution in the nearby ponds - pumping into Nose Creek. What are we going to do with the sediment? Displacement of wildlife.*
- *Concerned about the effect on fauna.*
- *Maintenance.*
- *What is the construction duration?*
- *Construction traffic and parking impacts?*
- *Beavers?*
- *Needs to be safer for seniors.*
- *Wildlife.*
- *Pathway repair.*
- *Really enjoy the wildlife and want to see that especially considered - snakes, salamanders, beavers and coyotes.*
- *A couple of interpretive signs; plants, waterfowl, and history.*
- *Little things and features make a difference.*
- *Will there be a chance to add a bridge across the creek to tie into the path.*
- *Improvement will be good. Love having this in my neighbourhood.*
- *Will this improve the weed and thistle situation?*
- *Disappointed the wetland isn't allowed to be used for recreation opportunities. 16" measured of ice. 2001 - no evidence of flash flood.*
- *Don't think the beavers caused the issue - they just added to the issue of lack of maintenance.*
- *A pond leveler for the beavers?*
- *Opportunity to increase the number of connecting pathways?*
- *Blue herons no longer come to the wetland.*
- *History and interpretive signage. There is a great story here.*
- *Tiger salamanders, owls, birds of prey, coyotes, beavers, muskrats, deer, garter snake habitats. Leave it wild. Widen the pathway at what cost to this.*
- *The forward thinking of the developer was not continued. No maintenance of an award-winning wetland.*
- *Will the improvements affect security and privacy?*
- *I would like to see the dollars spent in better places like homes for the less fortunate.*
- *We don't have enough information.*
- *Inquire why the fence is on top of the hill from Stoney Tr. What is the purpose? It prevents wildlife from moving freely. Tree swallow boxes on the fence posts?*
- *Build a pathway that connects Hidden Creek area to the existing pathway system. Would provide better walk access to Creek side.*
- *Propose to increase size of culvert crossing under Hidden Creek Drive to allow for a wildlife crossing and greater capacity.*

- *Improve the pathways.*
- *Keep the natural aspect.*
- *Be careful not to overdevelop.*
- *So overgrown and neglected. The city sprays after they've all flowered and seeded. It is just wasting dollars. We've submitted many times to 311.*
- *Heard so many different rumors about how it will look or will it even be there. Lots of different stories. It used to be award winning. Will water need to be drained from the cells and where will that water go?*
- *Brown trout protection. Fish not to have restricted access.*
- *Maintain the pathway in the winter. Improve the drainage on the pathways. Deal with the weeds.*
- *We enjoy the look of things right now. As much as possible, we'd like to see the area keep its natural landscape, including the body of water.*
- *My biggest fear was draining the pond.*
- *Can the beavers fit in the ecosystem?*
- *Safety of the path. Adjoining pathway at the northside.*
- *Will the height of the vegetation be controlled?*
- *Tie the pond pathway into regional pathway.*
- *Leave the area as natural as possible because it brings a lot of pleasure to the people who use it.*
- *Odor issues sometimes. No ducks in the last few years - is the water contaminated? It is a nice spot for wildlife.*
- *Can we connect the pathway on the north side?*
- *Recognize the need but am concerned about the effect on wildlife.*
- *Weed / Invasive pest control measures.*
- *Would like more benches.*
- *I am worried about disruptions - noise, traffic, dust.*
- *Nesting season to be considered.*
- *Looking forward to it.*
- *Water smells and is cloudy. Would they consider a fountain or anything? Happy to hear about the measures to outsmart the beavers? How long will it all take?*
- *Connections paved between pathways (the little hills where people walk.*
- *Show a map / model of west nose creek watershed / stormwater.*
- *Try to not dig up existing vegetation.*
- *I want a bench where the creek rushes make sound - in between two bridges. Please!*
- *Overgrown and scary - don't know what is lurking in there. Protect the wildlife.*
- *Concerned about the pathways and bridges.*
- *It does need work.*
- *I want to know more about construction and how long it will take?*
- *Olds college wetland learning system.*
- *What does the digging up situation look like? What parts will you be digging up, if any?*
- *Please preserve the wetland and habitat as much as possible.*
- *What are we releasing into the environment that we don't want to release?*

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- *Pathway is a big thing and beautification.*
- *Concerned that construction will negatively affect an established place for wildlife.*
- *Are the bull rushes healthy now?*
- *How invasive is this going to be for the wildlife?*
- *Will the bridges be gone and then West Nose Creek will run right through? I'm happy and all for protecting the stream longevity wise. I'm hoping that the water doesn't get worse. Odor issues.*
- *What was / is done through the geotechnical drilling / investigation? My biggest concern / worry as the wildlife is that it's now healthy, so we don't want that to go away, and I am worried about the impact it will have on wildlife.*
- *Worried about losing the natural habitat. We have lived here for 10 years, and it has never been functional. The path is high and steep.*
- *It stinks. There are eagles. Improvements to the pathway would be good.*
- *Thanks for doing this.*
- *Will we be able to skate on the pond again once the improvements are completed?*
- *Pathway improvements are needed.*
- *My concern is the wildlife including the beaver, bird, coyotes, deer. This is their home, and they should be protected.*
- *For our family, one thing is to keep the pathway and improve it.*
- *Hoping the project is happening but concerned that wildlife will be forced out.*
- *This is good if the improvements help with the stagnant water down at the creek.*
- *We would like to see the project outcomes achieved less intrusively.*

ENDS