SPIRIT ROCK CONSERVATION AREA

Management Plan 2026

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This management plan was reviewed and approved by GSCA Board of Directors on _____

For more information, or for a copy of this plan in an alternative format, contact GSCA at 519-376-3076 or explore@greysauble.on.ca

Executive Summary

Situated at the base of the Bruce Peninsula, directly north of Wiarton, in the Town of South Bruce Peninsula, the Spirit Rock Conservation Area encompasses 87.6 hectares (216.5 acres). Spirit Rock Conservation Area hosts significant natural and cultural features, and the entire property is designated as Escarpment Natural within the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

With an average of 22,000 visitors per year, balancing visitor use with the protection of natural features is a primary objective of this plan, as well as the responsibility of conserving and celebrating the site's history and cultural heritage. There are many challenges with the site, including general entrance/exit, environmental degradation, site safety, cultural heritage preservation and overall management capacity.

A management plan was developed in 1993. This new plan provides another 20-year vision for the property, with the following Actions to be implemented:

1. Improve the Visitor Experience
2. Enhance and Celebrate Cultural Heritage
3. Operations/Risk Management

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Acknowledgement

The management planning process is led by staff in GSCA's Lands Policy Department. The creation of the Spirit Rock Management Plan has taken the dedication, brainstorming and perspectives of a diverse team of partners, stakeholders, community members and the public.

Undertaking a management plan is a major endeavor that will now provide Spirit Rock Conservation Area with a new vision for the next 20 years.

Thank you to all the members of the public who participated in the process, including surveys, written comments and phone conversations. We would also like to acknowledge all the individuals who provided their support, expertise, and participation in the development of the management plan.

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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality, and culture of the Anishinabek: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomi Nation, who have inhabited this land from time immemorial. And further give thanks to the Chippewa of Saugeen, and the Chippewa of Nawash, now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, as the traditional keepers of this land. We also recognize, the Metis whose ancestors shared this land and these waters. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its diverse peoples.

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List of Acronyms

ANSI – Area of Natural and Scientific Interest
BT – Bruce Trail
BTC – Bruce Trail Conservancy
ELC – Ecological Land Classification
NEC – Niagara Escarpment Commission
NEP – Niagara Escarpment Plan
NEPOSS – Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System
PWQMN – Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network
SAR – Species at Risk
SARA – Species at Risk Act
SRCA – Spirit Rock Conservation Area
TOSBP – Town of South Bruce Peninsula

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1.0 Introduction

Spirit Rock Conservation Area (SRCA) is one of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's (GSCA) flagship properties and holds high value within GSCA and the surrounding community for its natural beauty and rich history. With over 20,000 visitors each year, SRCA is one of the more popular properties in GSCA's ownership.

A management plan is a document that sets out the management approach and objectives for a property and describes the framework that will be used for ongoing decision-making. The management planning process often involves an extensive review to understand the site, followed by visioning exercises to imagine its future state and what the property could and should become.

The SRCA is part of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS). The NEPOSS is a network of more than 160 publicly owned parks and open spaces located along the Niagara Escarpment that together serve to protect significant escarpment resources and provide opportunities for public access and recreation. The development of a management plan is a requirement for NEPOSS properties under Section 3.1.5.1 of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP). The Management Plan study approach for the Spirit Rock Conservation Area generally follows the NEPOSS Planning Manual, which is referenced in Part 3 of the Niagara Escarpment Plan. This site contributes to the NEPOSS due to its designations as shown in Section 5.1, presence of the Bruce Trail, cultural history, and its significance within the community.

The original management plan for SRCA was completed in 1981, with an updated master plan in 1993. The current management planning process for SRCA commenced in 2022 with a survey available online for the public. GSCA has been collecting visitor data using a car counter since 2018. Survey data shows that visitors generally enjoyed their visit to the conservation area. The state of the property was ok/good, the trails were excellent, and the signage was good. Parking availability and cost could be improved.

A management plan is needed to ensure future sustainability of the site in terms of environmental protection, historical/cultural preservation, and visitor amenities and experiences. The purpose of this plan is to provide an evaluation of the property and work with the local community to determine direction for future use of the site, as well as a strategy to implement proposed projects. The plan also identifies specific management zones, following the 2021 NEPOSS manual, within which a certain type of activity may be undertaken. The plan will be reviewed biennially by GSCA Lands staff to assess the plan progress and track changes in direction for the site. The plan will be reviewed and updated every 10 years or may exceed this if updates are deemed unnecessary.

This document, the Spirit Rock Management Plan, is the result of public feedback and input from staff, stakeholders, and neighbours. This plan aims to address the variety of threats and challenges identified, while maintaining the property's existing strengths. This plan provides a vision for the property over the next 20 years.

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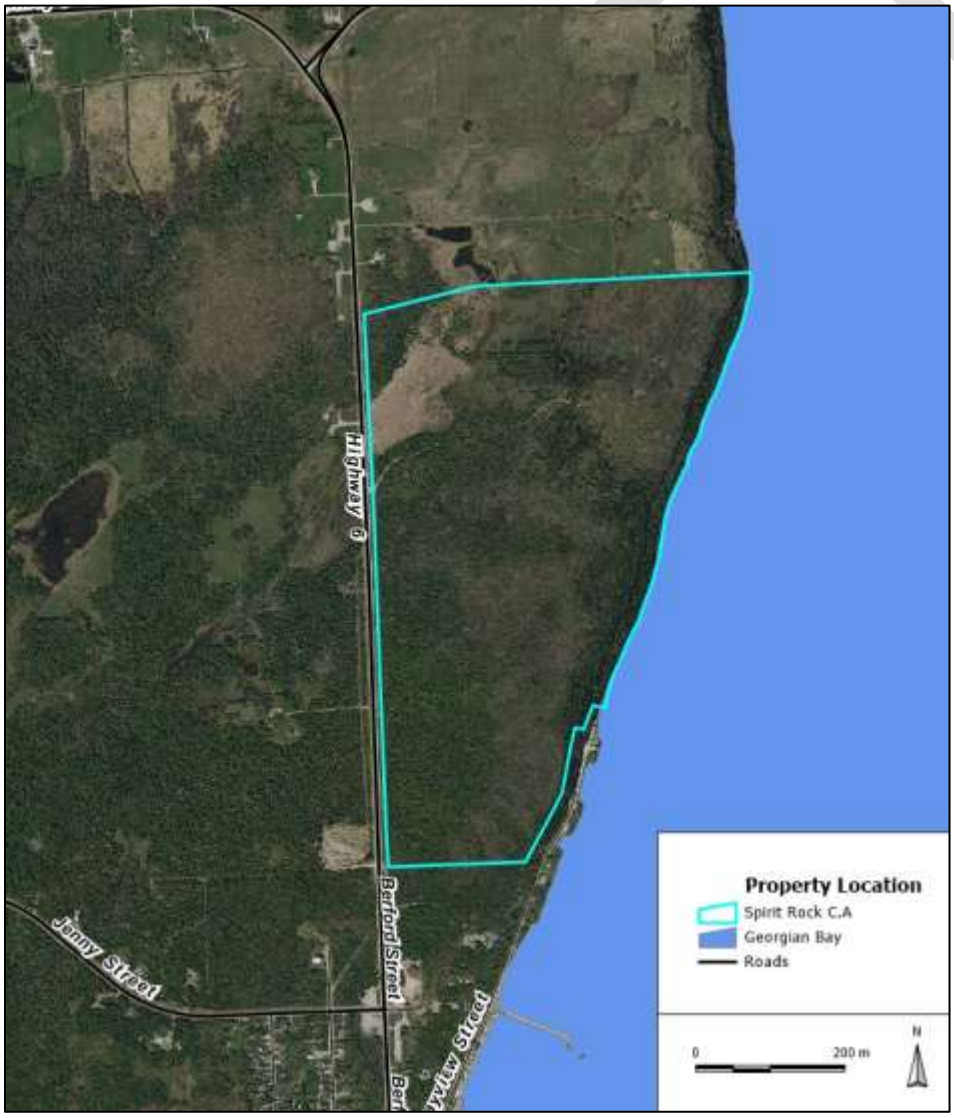
2.0 Context

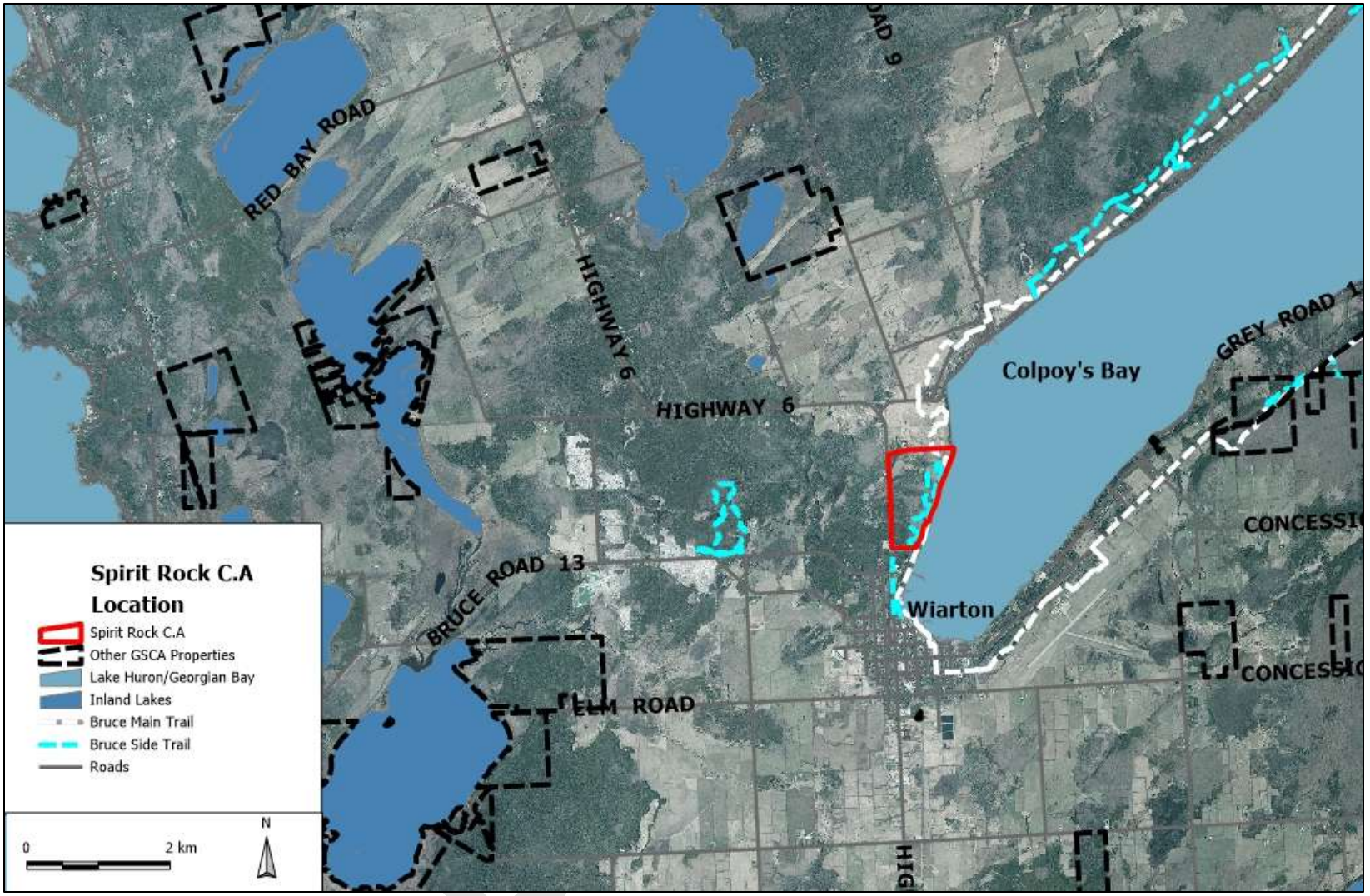
Spirit Rock Conservation Area is located on the Niagara Escarpment, a landform recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Biosphere Reserve. Situated north of Wiarton, on the base of the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula, within the Town of South Bruce Peninsula, this property features a modest trail network with a direct connection to the Bruce Trail and Wiarton. It provides rich local history in the form of The Corran Estate and hosts many plant species commonly found on the Escarpment, as well as some remnants of horticultural varieties from when the Estate was in its prime.

2.1 Location

Spirit Rock Conservation Area is located directly north of Wiarton, at 92 Highway 6, within the Town of South Bruce Peninsula. Also described as Part Lot A, Concession 24 and 25 in the former Township of Amabel (Maps 1 and 2).



Map 1. Location of SRCA



Map 2. SRCA location within greater landscape

2.2 Land Acquisition

4.5 hectares (11 acres) located at Lot A, Concession 24 was purchased for $1,000 in 1971 from William Cheshire. The University of Waterloo and Pollution Probe donated towards this acquisition. In 1974, 82 hectares (203 acres) described as Lot A, Concession 25 was purchased from Cecil Franklin for $101,400. Nature Conservancy of Canada donated $27,290 towards this acquisition. At the time of these acquisitions, GSCA was Sauble Valley Conservation Authority.

2.3 Tax Status

The entire property is enrolled in the Conservation Lands Tax Incentive Program, which provides for property tax exemptions. Therefore, there are currently no taxes paid on this property.

3.0 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives outlined below meet the Part 3 NEPOSS objectives of the NEP as well as the goal “Enhance GSCA Land Management” as set out in GSCA’s 2025-2035 Strategic Plan.

Goal: To protect, conserve and manage the property within an ecosystem framework and, in consultation with the community, to ensure watershed health, public enjoyment and environmental sustainability.

Objectives:

- *Natural Heritage* - To protect, restore and regenerate the natural ecosystem of SRCA by ensuring the health and diversity of native species, habitats, landscapes, and ecological processes. To maximize the linkages and connectivity of the natural heritage features to one another and to adjacent areas and to provide professional resource management as appropriate.

- *Cultural Heritage* - To identify, protect and conserve the cultural heritage features of SRCA for their inherent value and depiction of the long-term human use and occupancy of the area, including any identified traditional uses of Indigenous peoples.

- *Land Use* - To ensure protection of the ecological integrity and cultural values of the property through innovative planning and management, and appropriate conservation, recreation, and other land uses.

- *Recreation* - To provide opportunities for appropriate outdoor recreation at SRCA, that is sustainable in environmental, physical, and economic terms, and which is consistent with all other objectives.

- *Education* - To promote knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural values of the site, the watershed area, and the Niagara Escarpment, including their protection and management requirements, as well as their significance, sensitivities, and interrelationships.

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- *Stewardship* - To promote and facilitate the ongoing public involvement at SRCA that will foster sustainable recreational tourism and will accomplish watershed management objectives.

- *Fiscal Sustainability* – To ensure that GSCA undertakes upgrades, alterations, and management of SRCA in a manner that considers fiscal requirements and responsibilities and strives to ensure financial balance and sustainability over the long-term.

- *Management* - To manage SRCA in a manner that will ensure the achievement of all objectives.

4.0 Purpose and Vision

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of Spirit Rock Conservation Area is to preserve the former cultural heritage features of the McNeil Estate, promote access as the gateway to the Peninsula through the Bruce Trail, and continue to protect sensitive ecological features.

4.2 Vision

As the gateway to the Bruce Peninsula, Spirit Rock Conservation Area provides a unique opportunity to immerse in local history, participate in recreational activities, and appreciate the Niagara Escarpment ecosystem.

1. Cultural/historical vision: Well-maintained historical structures, where visitors can immerse themselves in the history of the property by exploring the ruins and reading interpretive signage that tells the story of the Corran from the arrival of Alexander McNeill to its destruction in 1976, as well as the present-day maintenance of the ruins. Trailhead and interpretive signage beyond the Corran will provide visitors with a more fulsome perspective on the culture and history of the property, braiding both Western and Indigenous knowledges to share ecological history, traditional knowledges, and storytelling associated with the area.

2. Recreational vision: A rugged trail system, where visitors have the unique opportunity to see the Niagara Escarpment from new perspectives, including the ability to access the entire vertical extent of the escarpment via the historic spiral staircase. Trail markers will guide users through the property, clearly indicating directions and the difficult level of each trail.

3. Ecological vision: The ecosystem remains largely intact and reflects the unique ecology of the region. Well-maintained trails and signage will ensure that visitors stay on-trail, thereby protecting the remaining ecosystem from human disturbance, which is the most significant direct ecological pressure/threat. Interpretive signage throughout the trail system will educates visitors on the

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ecology of the property, including the ecological significance of the Niagara Escarpment.

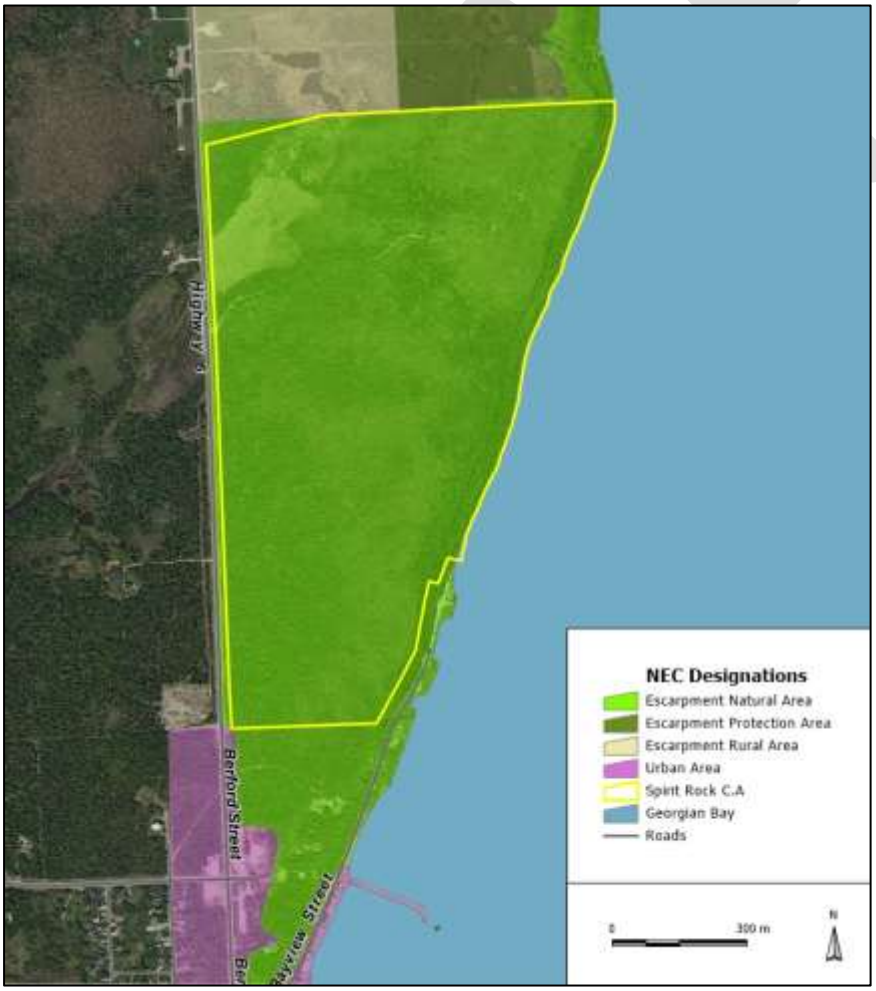
5.0 Site Analysis: The Natural Environment

Spirit Rock Conservation Area boasts an array of ecological features, including the Niagara Escarpment, sensitive species, a wetland feature, and roughly 2 km of cobble shoreline.

5.1 Site Designations

In 1990, the Niagara Escarpment was designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Biosphere Reserve. This designation recognizes the Niagara Escarpment and the land in its vicinity as a nationally and internationally significant landform that includes scientifically valuable examples of sustainable relationships between human activities and ecosystems.

The SRCA lies within the jurisdiction of the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) and consists entirely of the designation Escarpment Natural Area under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) as shown in Map 3.



Map 3. NEC Designation at SRCA

The Escarpment Natural Areas contain escarpment features that are in a relatively natural state, as well as its associated valleys, wetlands, and woodlands that are also relatively undisturbed. These areas tend to be the most sensitive and scenic natural resources, and the policies aim to protect and enhance these natural areas.

5.2 Physiography and Soils

The physiography of the Spirit Rock Conservation Area varies from fairly level topography to very steep rocky cliffs along the brow of the Escarpment, which runs along the northwest shoreline of Colpoy's Bay (Georgian Bay). Above the escarpment, there are areas of low-lying wetland pockets as well as shallow soils and areas of exposed bedrock.

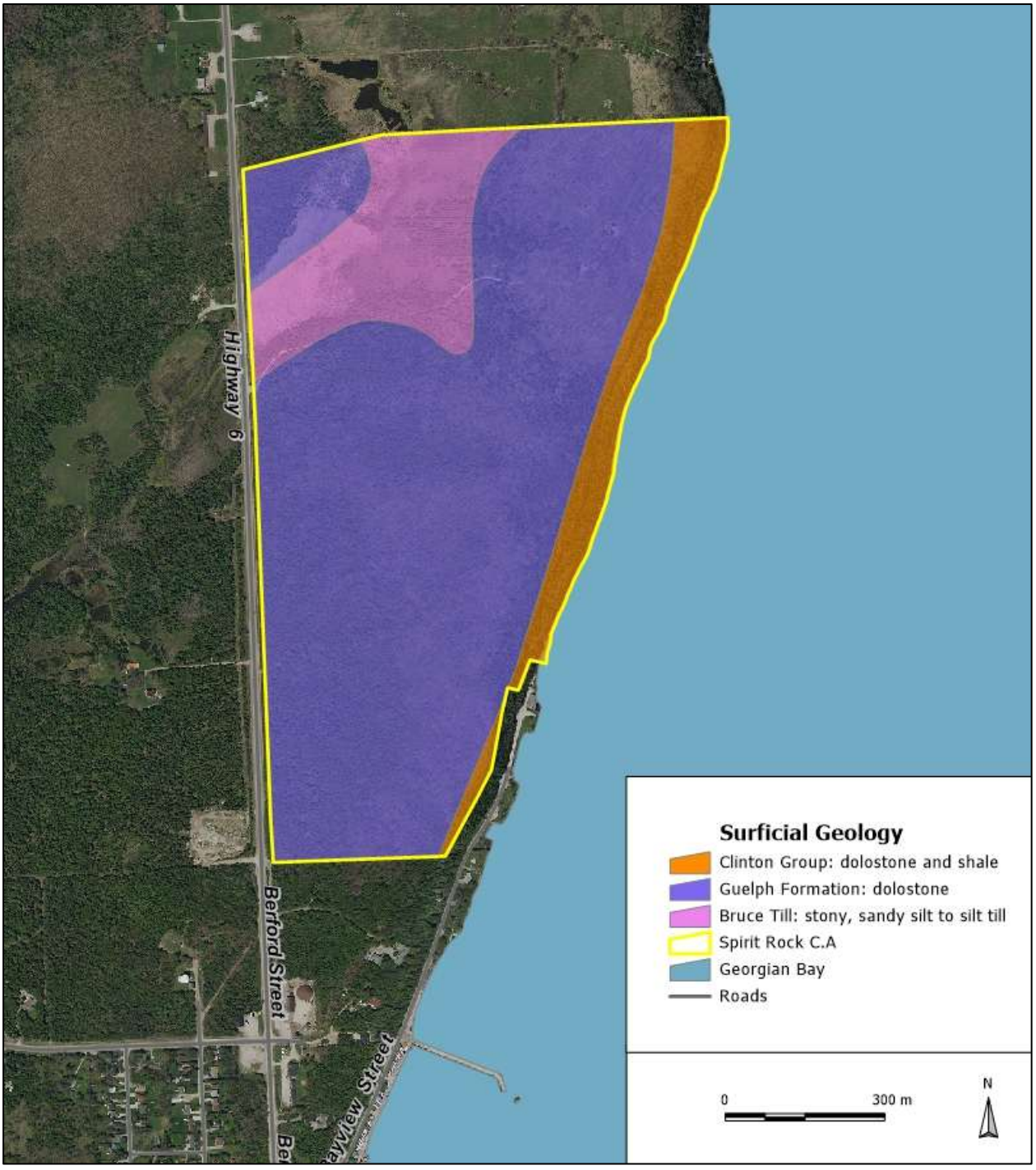
The bedrock exposed along the Niagara Escarpment and underlying this conservation area is of sedimentary origin, having been deposited in epicontinental seas during the Silurian and Ordovician Periods more than 400 million years ago. These formations are well stratified dolostones, limestones, and shales, some of which contain fossilized saltwater corals and serve as reminders of the ancient marine environment that once covered this area (Tovell, 1992).

The caprock of the Niagara Escarpment is visible at Spirit Rock and consists of harder dolostones of the Guelph Formation, as shown in Map 4. Although generally soft and water soluble compared to other rock types, the varying hardness of the different dolostone bedrock layers have contributed greatly to the diverse topography of this site and have also contributed to the formation of karst features. The forces of erosion on these materials over an extensive period of time created the Niagara Escarpment – a dominant and significant scarp that stretches from Niagara Falls to Tobermory and loops through the site (Surficial Geology Bruce Peninsula OFR6211, Ontario Geological Survey, 2007).

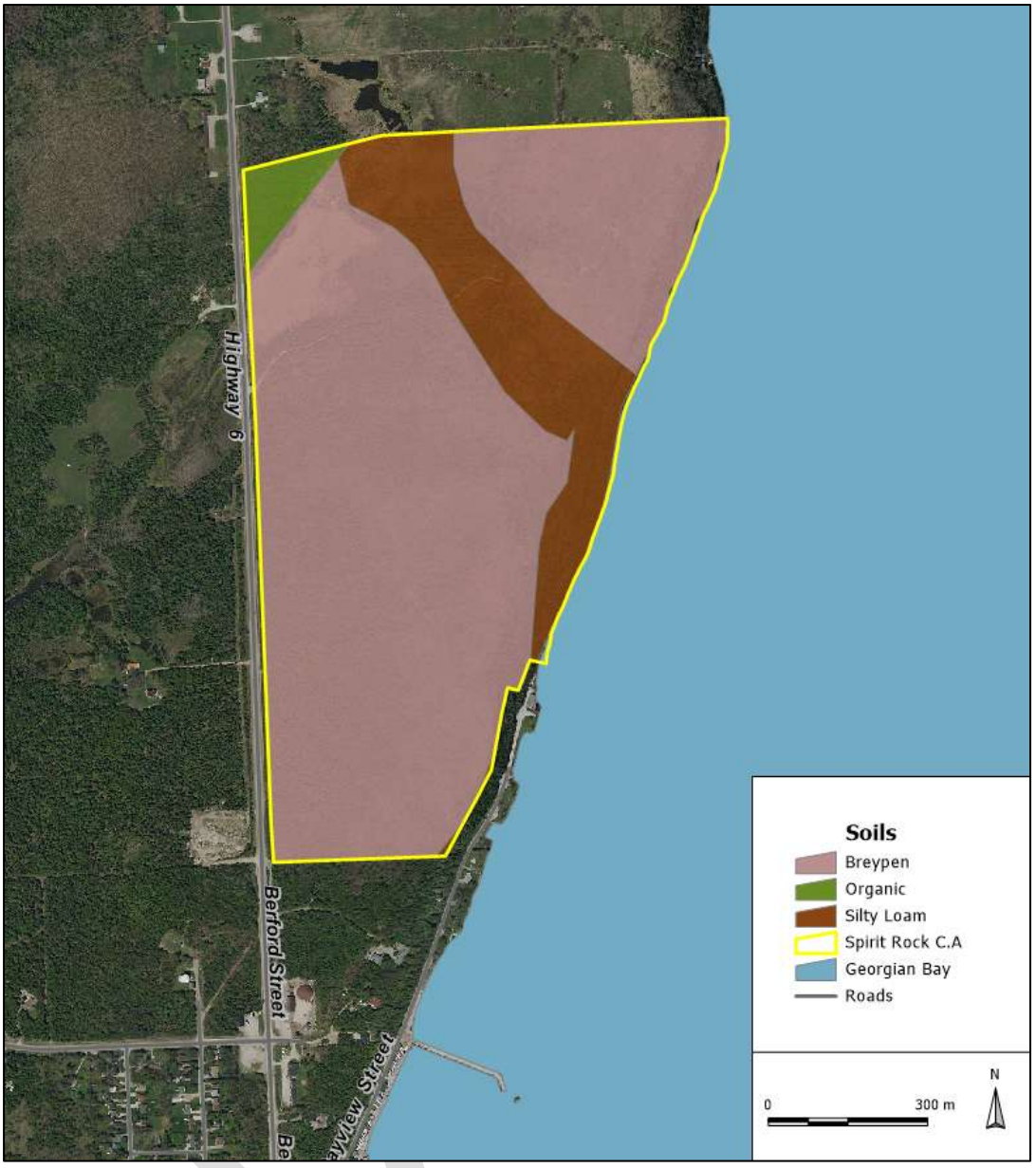
The forces of erosion have continued to act on the escarpment to present day in the form of chemical and mechanical weathering. The freeze-thaw action of water on the exposed dolomite caprock at the cliff has resulted in the formation of deep crags and crevices, and results in the separation of large blocks of dolomite from the escarpment brow. These large blocks of limestone eventually break off completely and tumble over to form a bouldery talus slope along the base of the Escarpment.

The most recent glacial period (Wisconsin), which lasted for about 40,000 years and ended 10,000 years ago, also had a tremendous influence on the physical features of this property. Glacial ice scoured the landscape, exposing areas of dolostone bedrock, particularly above the escarpment, while at the same time depositing massive quantities of granular material both above and below the escarpment. Large dolostone boulders called erratics were dragged by the glacier from the escarpment edge and dropped above the escarpment. The shallow soils that presently exist on the site are largely the result of glacial activity and the subsequent high postglacial lake levels and flooding activity (Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecological Survey of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve, Volume 1 - Significant Natural Areas, 1996).

Surficial soils are shallow to absent across this site. As shown in Map 5, the majority of the property is Breypen soils, which is primarily composed of mineral particles and drains rapidly. The nature of underlying bedrock, the impact of glacial and post-glacial activities, erosion, and the influence of topography are the prime factors in the formation of the soil types found on the site (Physiography of Southern Ontario, MNMD, OGS, 1984).



Map 4. Surficial geology at SRCA



Map 5. Soil type at SRCA

5.3 Colpoy's Bay

SRCA is located on the northwest shore of Colpoy's Bay, which is an inlet of Georgian Bay. The shoreline here below the Niagara Escarpment is cobble, with a tree line that stretches right to the water's edge, leaving a narrow band of gravel substrate visible. Shorelines like the one along Colpoy's Bay have been known to house numerous species at risk including: bald eagles, bank swallows, and barn swallows. The deeper waters of Colpoy's Bay represent a good habitat for Lake Sturgeon and the tributaries for Northern Brooke Lamprey, both of which are species at risk (Georgian Bay Biosphere, 2022). Prey fish like deepwater ciscoes and lake herring were once abundant and supported large fisheries for species such as lake trout and lake whitefish; however, factors like overfishing and the introduction of invasive species like sea lamprey, alewife, and rainbow smelt have significantly altered the fish community (Hendersen and Payne, 1988).

5.4 Site Ecology

The SRCA is located in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Forest Region of Ontario, Ecoregion 6E, Lake Simcoe-Rideau and the Meaford Ecodistrict (6E/4) (Wester et al., 2018), an area containing a mixture of coniferous and deciduous species. The forest species at this property include White and Green Ash, Trembling and Large-tooth Aspen, American Beech, White Birch, Eastern White Cedar, Sugar Maple, Eastern Hemlock, and Eastern White Pine.

Due to the history of human activity on the site in the form of a large, developed estate and small-scale agriculture, there is a range of maturity present in the forested areas of the conservation area where the development occurred. The historical presence of ornamental estate gardens and orchards has also left a remaining population of various fruit trees and roses that are present at a higher density than would be found naturally in this region.

5.4.1 Ecological Lands Classification (ELC)

Ecological Land Classification (ELC) is a system that enables the classification of vegetation systems throughout southern Ontario. ELC is used to identify recurring ecological patterns on the landscape and reduce complex natural variation to a reasonable number of meaningful ecosystem units. It is a useful tool for landscape planning and sustainable management of natural resources.

Based on the results from the ELC surveys, there are 11 different ELC communities on this property. The most common vegetation type is Coniferous Forest (FOC), totaling almost 29 hectares, or 28% of the property, followed by Mixed Forest (FOM) making up 23.56 hectares, or 27%. A full list of the communities and percent cover is shown in Table 1 and Map 6. A more detailed breakdown of the ecosites and vegetation type can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1. ELC Communities at SRCA

ELC Code	Community	Total Hectares	Percentage of Total Area
CLT	Treed Cliff	1.48	1.69
COI	Foundations of Buildings	0.03	0.03
COP	Road and Parking Lot	0.34	0.39
CUM	Mineral Cultural Meadow	3.68	4.21
CUP	Cultural Plantation	4.12	4.72
FOC	Coniferous Forest	24.84	28.44
FOD	Deciduous Forest	19.76	22.62
FOM	Mixed Forest	23.56	26.98
MAS	Organic Shallow Marsh	5.20	5.95
SWC	Coniferous Swamp	1.45	1.65
TAT	Carbonate Treed Talus	2.9	3.32
Total:		87.36	100

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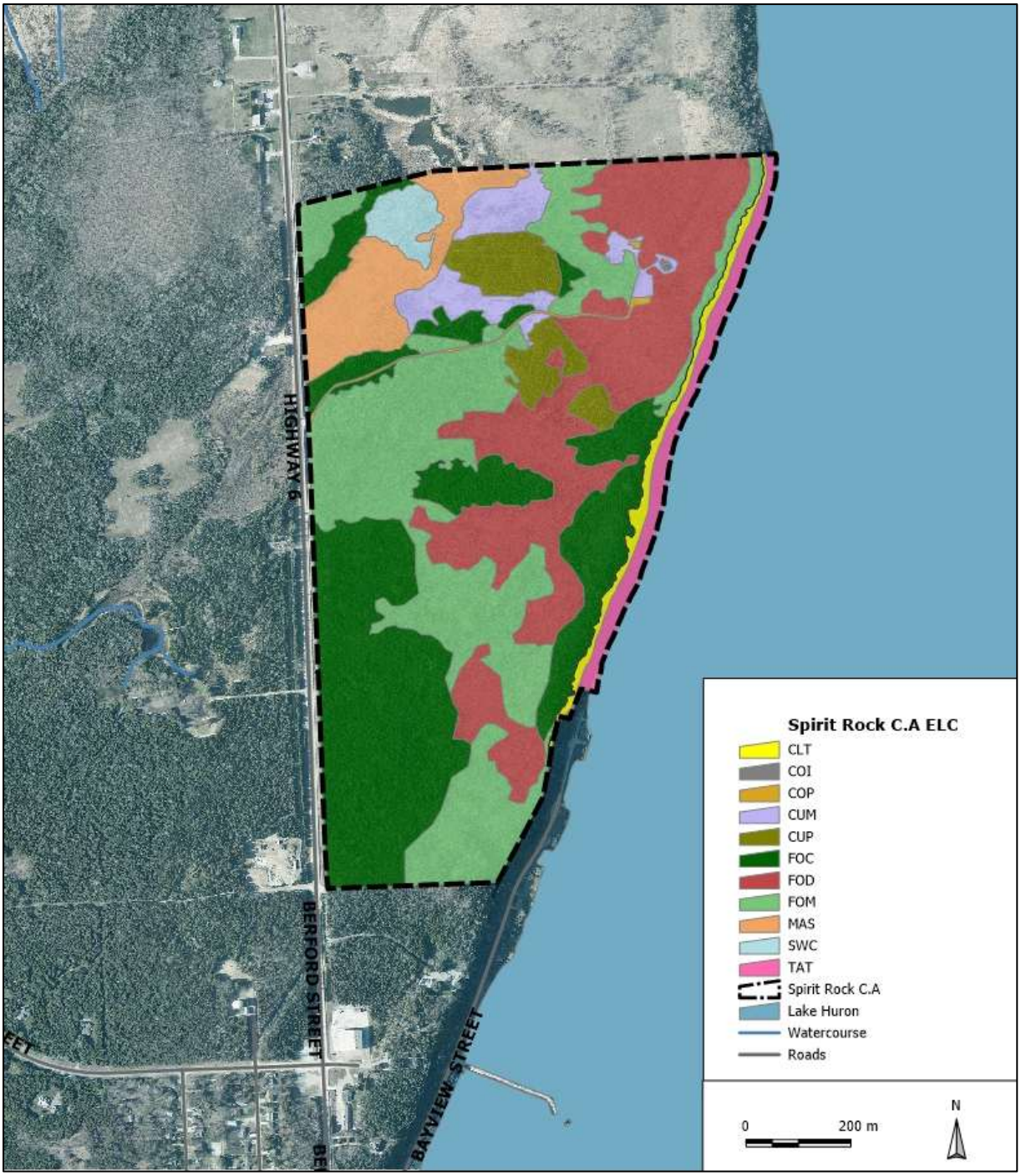

Map 6. ELC Communities at SRCA

5.4.2 Species at Risk (SAR) and Invasive Species

For the purposes of this report, Species at Risk (SAR) are defined as those designated by Federal and Provincial legislation shown in Table 2. Rare species include species designated as provincially rare (S1-S3) by the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC), or locally rare by local Field Naturalists (i.e., Joe Johnson – MNR - Vascular Flora report, 1990).

Table 2. SAR Categories

SARO & SARA Categories	Definitions of Categories
Special Concern (SC)	refers to the species living in the wild in Ontario that may become threatened due to a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
Threatened (THR)	refers to the species living in the wild in Ontario that are likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it.
Endangered (END)	refers to the species still living in the wild in Ontario that are facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
Extirpated	refers to the species having lived in the wild in Ontario at one time, but that no longer does. However, they do exist somewhere else in the world.
Extinct	refers to a species that no longer exists anywhere on the earth.
Note: SARA has the same categories and descriptions, but it is a Federal Regulation that pertains to all of Canada.	

The only SAR plant encountered in the Spirit Rock Conservation Area was a butternut tree sapling (*Juglans cinerea*) that was observed in the hardwood forest (FOD). This species is listed on SARO and SARA as endangered and is declining due to a disease known as Butternut canker. This sapling did not have the canker at the time of observation.

Four auditory observations of a SAR bird, the eastern wood pewee, were heard within the upland hardwood forest and mixed forest (FOD and FOM). This species is listed as Special Concern on SARO registry, meaning that they are at risk of becoming threatened by a combination of identified threats. This species has had significant declines in population abundance in recent years due to habitat loss.

The Species at Risk that were observed during the field surveys are presented below in Table 3:

Table 3. SAR at SRCA

Species at Risk located in Spirit Rock Conservation Area Compartment # 156				
Common Name	Scientific Name	SARO Status	SARA Status	Taxa
Butternut (canker free)	*Juglans cinerea*	END	END	Plants
Eastern Wood Pewee	*Contopus virens*	SC	SC	Birds

Vegetation species confirmation surveys have been conducted over a large portion of SRCA in which some invasive species were identified (Table 4).

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Table 4. Invasive species at SRCA

Invasive Species located in Spirit Rock Compartment # 156				
Common Name	Scientific Name	Taxa	Number of Occurrences	Average Pop Radius (m)
Beech Bark Disease	*Nectria coccinea var, faginata*	Fungi	1	1
Beech Scale Insect	*Cryptococcus fagisuga*	Insect	1	1
Bells Honeysuckle	*Lonicera x bella*	Plants	3	10
Oriental Bittersweet	*Celastrus orbiculatus*	Plants	1	3

6.0 Site History

This tract of land at the base of the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula is connected to the Saugeen and Nawash First Nations communities, as well as the establishment of the colonial community of Wiarton, through the early days of Canadian confederacy and into the modern era where it took on its current role as a conservation area. There is a lack of historical information on the specific location that is now Spirit Rock Conservation Area prior to the construction of the Corran estate in the 1880's. Though it is known that the region has longstanding importance to the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, a broader regional history has been included to supplement the lack of specifics available for the property itself.

6.1 Indigenous History

The history of Indigenous peoples along the shores of Lake Huron stretches back to the earliest records of human activity in the Great Lakes region. The early eras of human activity in the region during the Paleo & Archaic periods leave little evidence of human life beyond stone tools and the remnants of settlements to reveal the migration of people across the land. With further development of technologies and more permanent settlements, the emergence of the Woodland Period provides much of the historical information we have on the pre-colonial era of Indigenous societies in North America (Gagne, 2015).

Although there are few records of culture and peoples in the Paleo and Archaic Periods, life along the Great Lakes region is documented as being nomadic, due to the lifestyle that comes with hunting and gathering (Gagné, 2015). Semi-permanent settlements along rivers and bodies of water began to become more frequent and grew as the climate and environment shifted towards what the Europeans would find when they arrived in North America thousands of years later. Technology improved and the climate continued to become more hospitable, which led to a slow transition towards the development of agricultural societies, which arose in the Woodland period (Gagné, 2015).

The Woodland Period saw a change in tools, including the bow and arrow, and the development of pottery. Maize was also introduced to Southern Ontario during this period, further promoting the shift from subsistence hunting and gathering to a more stationary agricultural way of living. This shift allowed for a massive population expansion and the development of permanent villages that consisted of large log houses (Gagné, 2015).

Hunting and fishing supplemented the agricultural heavy diet; with proximity to the fishing

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bounty of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, whitefish, trout, and sturgeon were the primary fish harvested (McMillian & Yellowhorn, 2004). Fishing was conducted primarily by netting off the Fishing Islands in Lake Huron.

With the arrival of European settlers in the 1600's, local Indigenous populations were met with many challenges, including disease, conflict (from Europeans as well as other First Nations), and a series of land claims made by the Government beginning in the 1800's (McMullen, 1997). The Saugeen Ojibway Nation reserve lands today are comprised of the villages of Saugeen First Nation near Saugeen Shores, Neyaashiinigmiing at Cape Croker, and the hunting grounds north on the peninsula near Tobermory.

For more information on Neyaashiinigmiing history, please visit their website here: About Chippewas of Nawash – Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation

For more information on Saugeen First Nation history, please visit their website here: Home - Saugeen First Nation

6.2 Alexander McNeill and The Corran

The Corran is the main historical feature of the SRCA. Construction of the once grand stone mansion began in 1881, under the direction of Alexander McNeill. McNeill (Figure 1) was an Irish lawman who was born into wealth and nobility in 1842 in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, and who immigrated to Canada from Dublin in 1872 with his wife Hester (Figure 2) (Bartley,1990). McNeill studied law at Trinity College in Dublin. He was a staunch imperialist who believed in the British Empire and the Crown, which led to a successful political career after becoming established in Canada. The McNeills immigrated to Elderslie Township in 1871, to the farm that had belonged to his late brother-in-law John McNeill, and in 1874 they welcomed their only son, Malcolm, to their family. In 1881, Alexander purchased the 300-acre parcel to the north of Wiarton along the Niagara Escarpment overlooking Colpoy's Bay (Figure 3), on which he would establish his family estate, the Corran (Bartley, 1990). "Corran" is a gaelic term meaning "a reaping hook," which in a geographical sense means a narrow, curved landform extending into water, often with strategic or scenic significance (Watson, 2004). The original Corran estate in Ireland overlooked the Irish Sea and the site in Wiarton was chosen due to its similarity to the landscape of the estate on which McNeill was raised (Durham, 1977).

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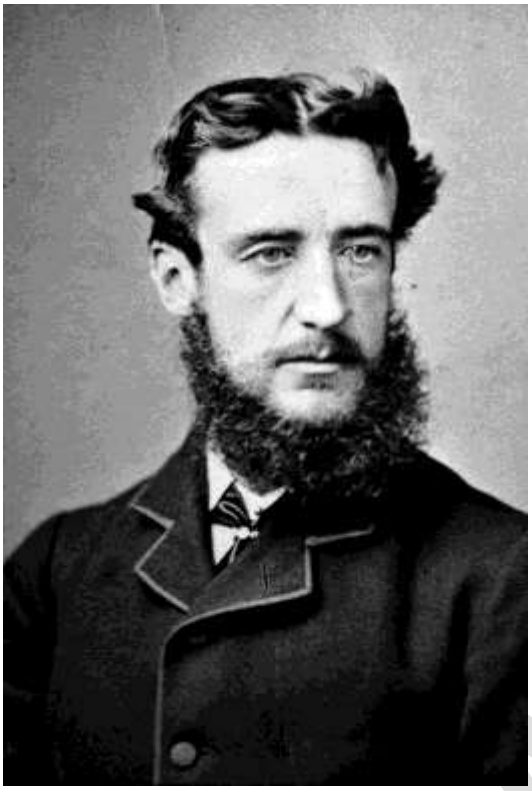

Figure 1. Alexander McNeill (Victor Last Collection, 2010)



Figure 2. Hester McNeill (Victor Last Collection, 2010)

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Figure 3. Aerial view of the Corran ruins (Victor Last Collection, 2010)

Construction on the estate began in 1882 following the extension of the Grand Trunk, Georgian Bay, & Lake Erie Railway to Wiarton in 1881. The extension of the rail line allowed for rapid movement of material for the construction of the estate (Jerome, 2017). Hester McNeil died in 1890 before the completion of the estate. Following her death, Alfred Lewis and his wife, Sophia, and their two daughters, Eva and Mary, were brought from England to stay at the manor, with Alfred to be the manager of the property (Jerome, 2017). Upon completion, the large, stone manor consisted of 17 rooms, including a conservatory, library, a spacious kitchen, multiple drawing rooms, bedrooms, and servants' quarters (Figures 4 and 5). In addition to the mansion, the grounds of the estate housed a cattle barn, ice shed, a small Delco generating plant, and two cottages that housed the estate manager, Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Escott, who was a relative of McNeill (Clout, 1990). Apparently, there was a spiral staircase that replaced a wooden zig-zag staircase down to the bottom of the escarpment for the housekeeper to bring up water from the bay for tea, as McNeill preferred the soft bay water to the hard well water (Jerome, 2017).



Figure 4. The Corran mansion in its prime (Victor Last Collection, 2010)



Figure 5. Interpretive signage showing the floor plan

In total, there were roughly 3 acres of gardens at the Corran, including 500 rose bushes laid out in geometric beds (Figure 6), which included a unique black rose from Ireland rumored to be a cutting from the rose bush that Mary, Queen of Scots slept under before her execution in 1587. Rose blossoms were frequently given to guests after their departure from the house (Clout, 1990). The grounds housed over 500 fruit trees, pear, apple and plum, all left unpruned at Alexander's request, as he believed the practice was harmful to the trees. Stone walkways led from the gardens towards the escarpment overlooking Colpoy's Bay, with arbors for grape vines lining the way; the grapes were used to make the communion wine for the Trinity Anglican

Church in Wiarton (Bartley, 1990). While the gardens and orchards have not been maintained overtime, the remains of the garden beds and orchards are still visible. The Corran additionally housed a cattle farm for which McNeil imported Durham Shorthorns from England. He became a contributor to early cattle breeding programs in Canada (Bartley, 1990).



Figure 6. Gardens around the Corran

Alexander McNeill was a loyalist member of the Conservative Party of the Canadian parliament, where he sat as the Federal Member of Parliament for North Bruce between 1882 – 1901. He was a supporter of the ideas of empire, imperialism, and the British Crown, while being against the influence of the Popery in governance. McNeill found himself as a member of the "Noble 13," also known as the "Devil's Dozen," a group of politicians who frequently pushed John A. MacDonald over political disagreements. One more notable issue was the Jesuits Estate Act. To McNeill, this act represented a violation of the separation of the church and state, the objections to this act were received well and seen as a movement towards Confederation (Armitage, 1978). McNeill also supported Canada's willingness to fight for Britain if needed but strongly opposed Canadian involvement in South Africa where the British fought the Dutch. Despite conflict between the two in their political roles McNeill and MacDonald were friends until MacDonalds death in 1891 (Bartley, 1990). During his time as a member of parliament McNeill garnered a reputation for hosting lavish parties at the Corran, drawing affluent individuals from across Ontario to enjoy a day in the gardens overlooking the bay (Bartley, 1990).

McNeill died in 1932 at age 90, having contributed significantly to the development of Wiarton and early Canadian politics over the course of his life (Bartley, 1990). Malcolm, McNeill's only son, inherited the estate and McNeill fortune following his father's death (Figure 7). Malcolm served in the First World War in the Royal Irish Rifles; following the war, he lived as a gentleman at the Corran (Durham, 1977). Malcolm did not have the same head for investment and business as his father; following a series of poor financial decisions, he was forced to sell off 20

acres of the estate at age 58. This sale was the only fracturing of the estate while under McNeill family ownership. Malcolm's financial troubles continued as he aged, and the Corran slowly dwindled in neglect until his death in 1956. Malcolm was buried with his parents in the Colpoy's Bay Cemetery (Armitage, 1978).



Figure 7. Malcolm McNeill (Victor Last Collection, 2010)

Malcolm died unmarried and passed the Corran on to Sally Simmons, his housekeeper of 20 years. Unfortunately for Sally, Malcolm owed money to many lenders, and she struggled to retain ownership of the Corran. In 1960, the estate was sold to a Mr. Franklin out of Willowdale, Toronto. The new owners tried to return the estate to its former splendor; but by 1964, the state of the Corran was poor (Armitage, 1978). The windows of the stone mansion had all been broken, doors smashed from their frames, light fixtures ripped out, the staircase and furniture destroyed, and books torn and dumped down the well. Mr. Franklin hired a Mr. Fred Hensler to try to revitalize the estate. This effort ultimately failed, and the property was sold to the Sauble Valley Conservation Authority in 1971, initially totaling an area of 4.4 ha with an additional 82 ha purchased in 1973 (Armitage, 1978). Vandalism of the site continued until 1976, when a fire nearly burned the Corran to the ground and left standing only the limestone walls and foundation. In 1978, the walls of the Corran were capped to prevent more damage, and today the shell of the mansion and barn are all that remain of the original structures (Armitage, 1978).

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6.3 The Legend of Spirit Rock

The “Legend of Spirit Rock” is perhaps less of a legend and more of a trope that was common among tourist destinations during the late 1800’s and into the 1900’s. While it may not bear much legitimacy in connection to the neighbouring Indigenous communities of Nawash or Saugeen, it does persist as a local legend and part of the Spirit Rock Conservation Area history – after all, it is how the property got its name. According to an article in The Country Connection Magazine (Winter/Spring 2013) called “Whispers of the Past” by Judy J. Thompson, there are three different versions told. All versions follow a similar theme to Romeo and Juliet, where the daughter of one First Nation band chief falls in love with a chief from a rival First Nation band. They get married and are banished by their bands. Their deaths are captured in different versions as well, but the outcome of all is that their bodies lie at the bottom of “Spirit Rock”.

The other legend is that if you stand at the bottom of Spirit Rock Lookout, or view Spirit Rock from Colpoy’s Bay, when the lighting is right, you can see the outline of an Indigenous woman and the trees look like a headdress. Figure 8 is “Spirit Rock” from below.



Figure 8. Spirit Rock cliff face

An article written by Gerald Wright for the Kitchener-Waterloo Record was shared in the Spirit Rock Express in 1986. In this article, a Mrs. Irene Akiwenzie of Cape Croker, who descended from Ojibwa chiefs, believes this legend to be true and that the girl was probably Ojibwa because of the home territory, which would make the captor Iroquois, the traditional enemy of this area. The article goes on to note that W.G Cheshire, a Wiarton historian who died in 1974 at the age of 91, spent most of his life investigating and recording the area’s history. He believed the incident did happen, prior to colonization.

Additionally, the article mentions that a local named Jim Miller and friends were skating on Colpoy’s Bay near Spirit Rock when they stopped to take a break. They noticed a cave/crevice at the rock and went inside, where they discovered two skeletons inside. They were brought to Wiarton’s coroner at the time, Dr. R.M Fisher, who examined them and pronounced them to be

of Indigenous origin and had them buried. It does not say where they were buried.

Figure 9 displays another article from the Toronto Star, detailing the legend and local opinion regarding its origin and legitimacy. The article provides context for the legend associated with SRCA, and some loose evidence used to support it. However, it also contains a counter to its legitimacy, large in part due to the tourism aspect associated with the property at the time of the legend's emergence. While it is likely that the site saw Indigenous people well before settlement, at this time GSCA is unaware of any archeological relics or sites present at SRCA or any cultural practices regarding the property.

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Spirit Rock legend honored by plaque

For hours she stood upon that rocky height,
Til night's dark curtain had shut out the light
And hid the cruel rocks from sight.
Then with a cry like a lost soul in woe,
She sprang to her death and the grave below.

From a plaque in Wiarton. Poet and date unknown

By Kathleen Kenna Toronto Star

The legend of Spirit Rock is as cold and harsh as the Georgian Bay crag that bears its name.

Sailors approaching Wiarton say the rock overlooking Colpoys Bay resembles a human face, perhaps a mournful reminder of a young Indian warrior who met his death on the rocks below.

The legend begins with the capture by another tribe of the daughter of an Ojibwa chief, whose tribe claimed the Bruce Peninsula as its hunting grounds. The young maiden was carted off to southern Ontario, where she was forced into slavery.

But the tribe's young chief was impressed by her beauty and the plaintive songs she sang while working, and he ordered the woman released so they could be married.

Rejected by kin

His fellow warriors were angry about this break with tribal tradition and on a hunting trip across the peninsula, pushed him off the cliff near Spirit Rock. The young woman was turfed out and sought

Rejected by her kin because the inter-tribal marriage was considered a disgrace, the distraught widow fled to Spirit Rock and plunged to her death.

"She decided if they could not have each other in this world, they would have each other in the next," says Irene Akiwenzie, a resident of the nearby Cape Croker reserve.

Akiwenzie, whose grandson is the current Cape Croker chief and whose father and grandfathers were also Ojibwa chiefs, has retired from a job as a teacher of Indian folklore and customs.

Akiwenzie says her people tell the legend a little differently, without the kidnapping and with two suicides. In this version, a chief's son falls in love with a young woman from a rival nation, but their tribes won't authorize marriage.

The young warrior is not allowed to even see his lover and, in despair, throws himself off the cliff. Learning of his death, she later does the same.

A plaque erected several years ago by the now-defunct Wiarton Chamber of Commerce gives the first version, along with the poem reprinted here.

Amateur historian Harry Whicher of Wiarton says both stories are bunk.

"It's a stupid legend," he says. "There are at least 50 such rocks in North America that have the same story."

Andrew Armitage, a professional historian and chief librarian for the Owen Sound public library, says the tale probably began in the late 1700s or early 1800s.

"There are Indian maidens throwing themselves off rocks all over North America," he says. "It's a white man's legend, one of those



often-repeated myths that was invented for tourists."

Still, Wiarton folklore has it that two skeletons were found in a deep crevice below Spirit Rock in the early 1890s by boys playing on the rocks. Although Coroner H.M. Fisher apparently confirmed the remains were of Indian origin and ordered them buried, there is no record of local graves.

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Figure 9. Newspaper article

7.0 Site Analysis: Visitor Numbers, Engagement and Feedback

Spirit Rock Conservation Area is a unique property, drawing several different types of users and visitors. The Bruce Trail connection allows for convenient access to Spirit Rock Conservation Area from Wiarton. It is assumed that many visitors stop here on their way to/from Tobermory.

A full overview of visitor numbers and feedback can be found in Appendix B.

7.1 Visitor Numbers

Over the last six years, there were approximately 22,000 visitors per year on average that visited SRCA during the operational months of May – October. This data was obtained by extrapolating car counter data with an estimated 2.7 guests per vehicle. Figure 10 shows the number of visitors.

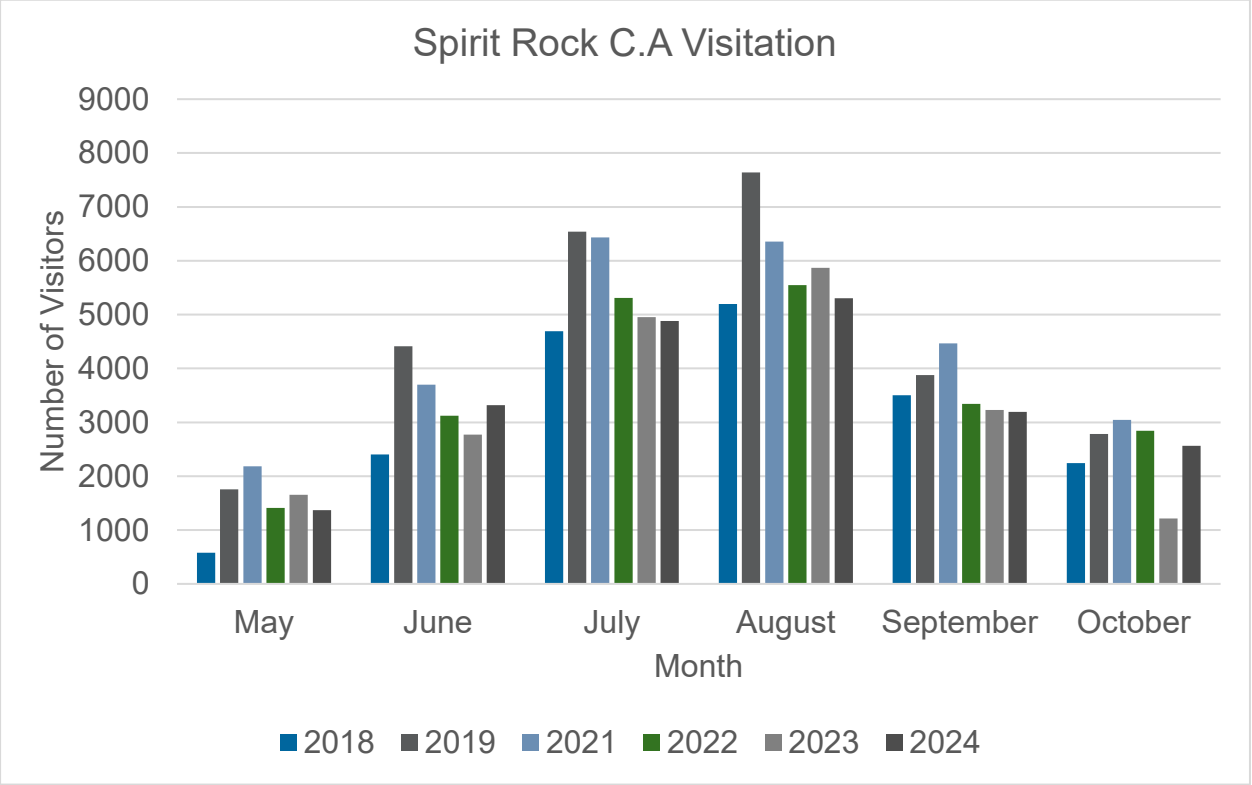

Figure 10. Visitation at SRCA

7.2 Draft Plan Feedback

Based on phone conversations with several neighbours and partner agencies, the general consensus is that the property is great the way it is but needs some sprucing up. These individuals felt that nothing needed to be added to or changed with the property, other than possibly making the entrance and driveway safer. There were also strong feelings of focusing more on the settlement history with the McNeills, which has factual data to support the timeline, rather than continuing to promote the Legend of Spirit Rock, which has very little data to support its validity.

7.3 Survey Results and Stakeholder Feedback

Participants were asked about the current state of the Conservation Area on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “poor” and 5 being “excellent”. The overall state of the Conservation Area was rated “ok/good” by 76% of respondents, and the trail network was rated “good/excellent” by 73%. 70% said the quality of signage was “good or acceptable”. The availability and cost of parking was rated as “ok”.

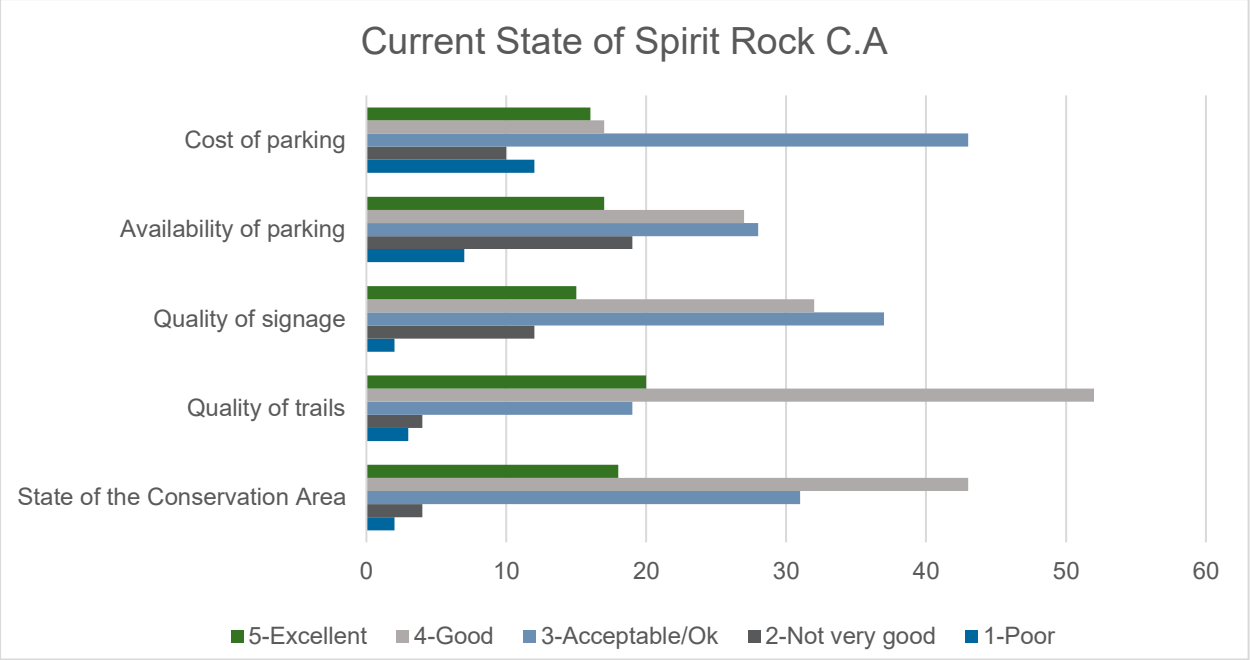

Figure 11. Current state of SRCA

Access to friendly, responsive staff was ranked very unimportant and not important by 60% of respondents. Similarly, 64% said that weekend programming was not important or very unimportant. Clear information about visitor rules and safety was ranked highly, with 66% saying it was important or very important. Access to clean washrooms was important or very important to 69% of participants. 60% said well-kept parking areas were important/very important. Outreach materials were of interest to survey participants, as 65% said a useful visitor guide was important and 61% would like to see interpretive signage. Picnicking had mixed reviews, as a new sheltered picnic area and picnic tables were split amongst all five ratings. Accessibility also varied with 54% saying it was somewhat important/important. But only 20% said it was very important, and 14% said it was very unimportant.

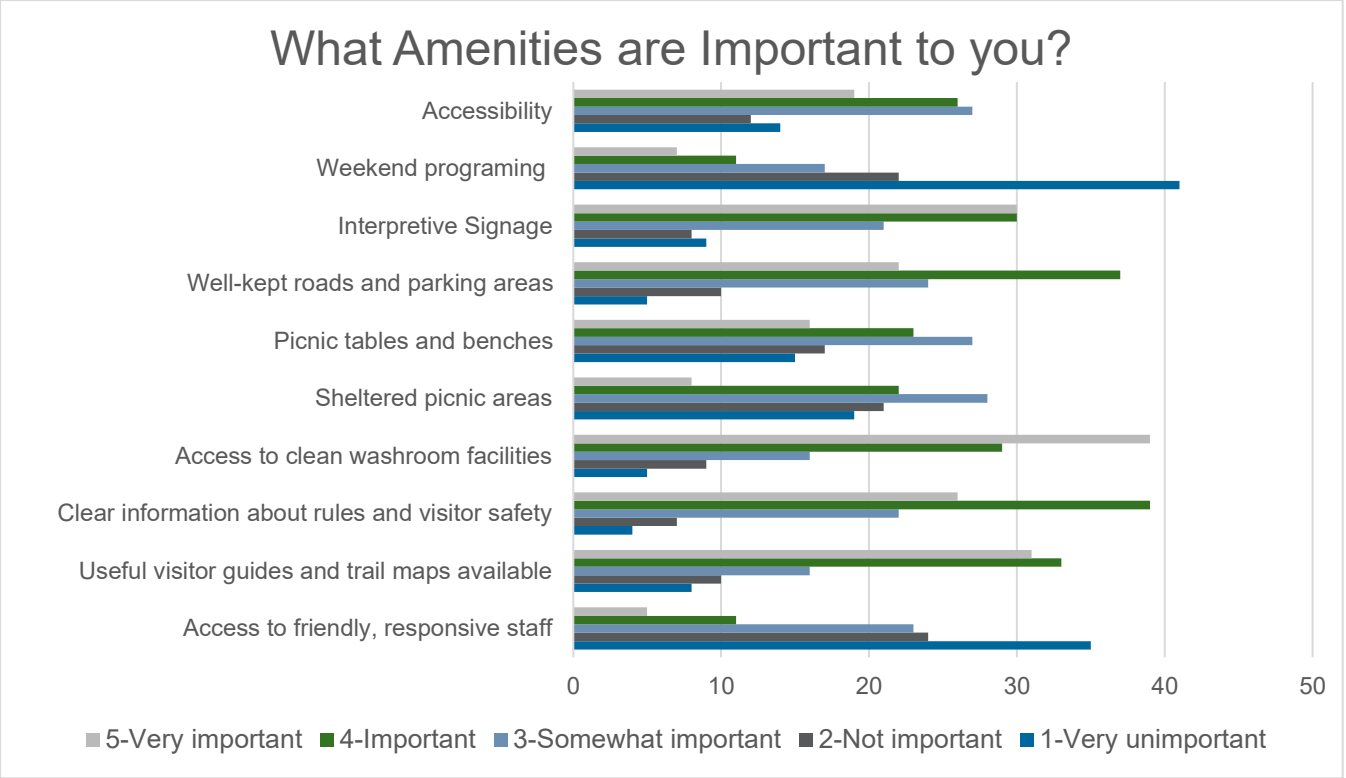

Figure 12. Amenities ranking at SRCA

8.0 Management Classification and Zones

Property classification and zoning ensure that additional development and permitted recreational activities are focused for the properties and implemented in areas that are most suited for a particular use.

8.1 Classification

Parks and open spaces in NEPOSS are assigned a classification based on the predominant characteristics of the property, which provides planning and management direction. There are six classification types: Nature Reserve, Natural Environment, Recreation, Cultural Heritage, Escarpment Access, and Resource Management Areas. Spirit Rock Conservation Area was previously classed as a Natural Environment property and will remain in this class.

Natural Environment lands are characterized by the variety and combination of outstanding natural heritage features, cultural heritage features, and breath-taking landscape. Natural Environment lands provide opportunities for the protection of these important features. Development in these areas provides the facilities and amenities required to support day use activities. Development will occur in appropriate zones within the property and be conducted in an environmentally sustainable manner. As a Natural Environment class conservation area, SRCA plays an important role in connecting people with cultural heritage and nature and allows visitors to engage in a variety of activities and develop a deep sense of appreciation for our natural spaces.

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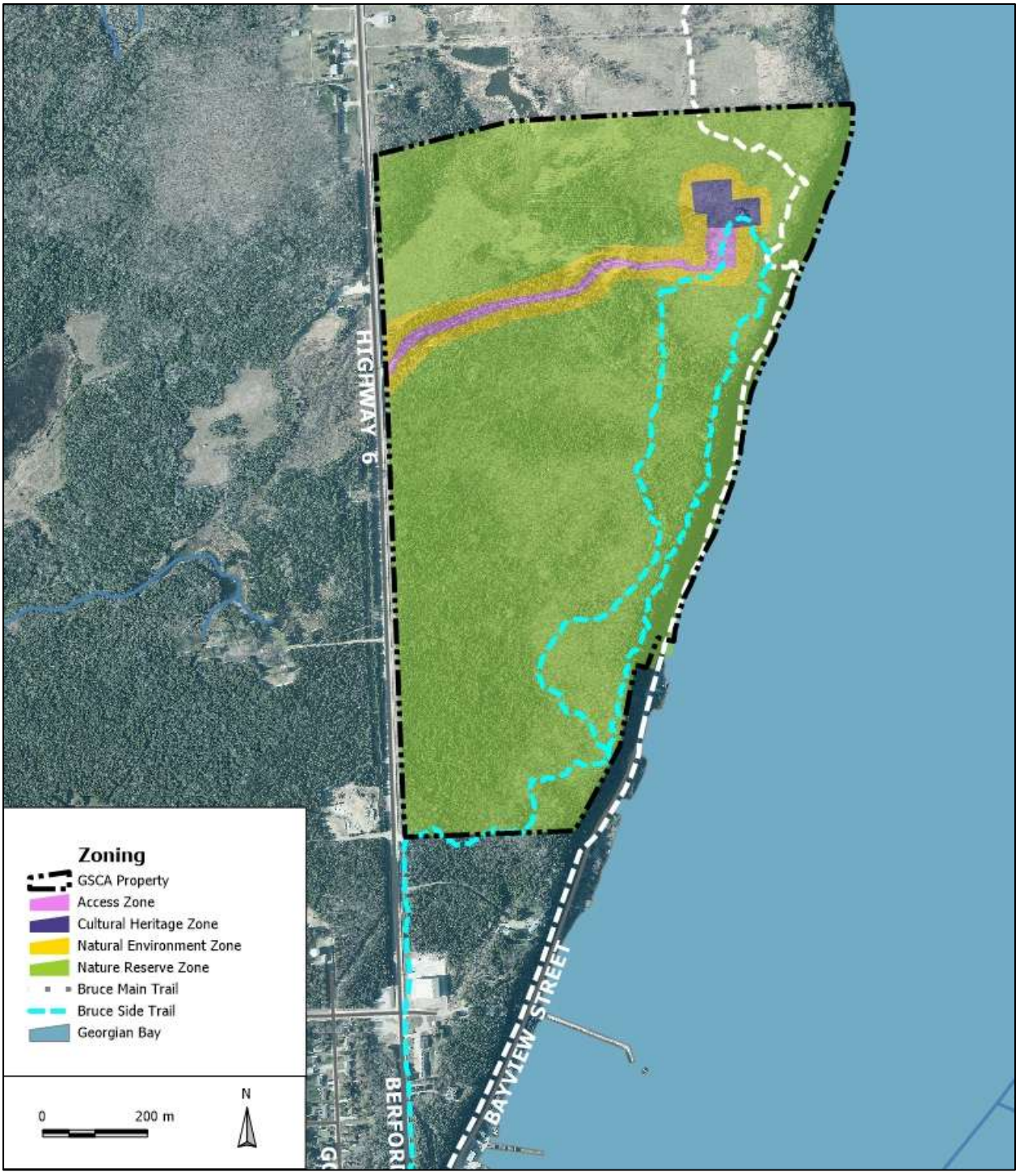
One of the main low impact activities that SRCA offers is hiking through the Bruce Trail and Bruce Side Trail, which plays an important role as a greenspace provider where people can feel close to nature and develop a deep sense of appreciation for our natural spaces.

8.2 Zoning

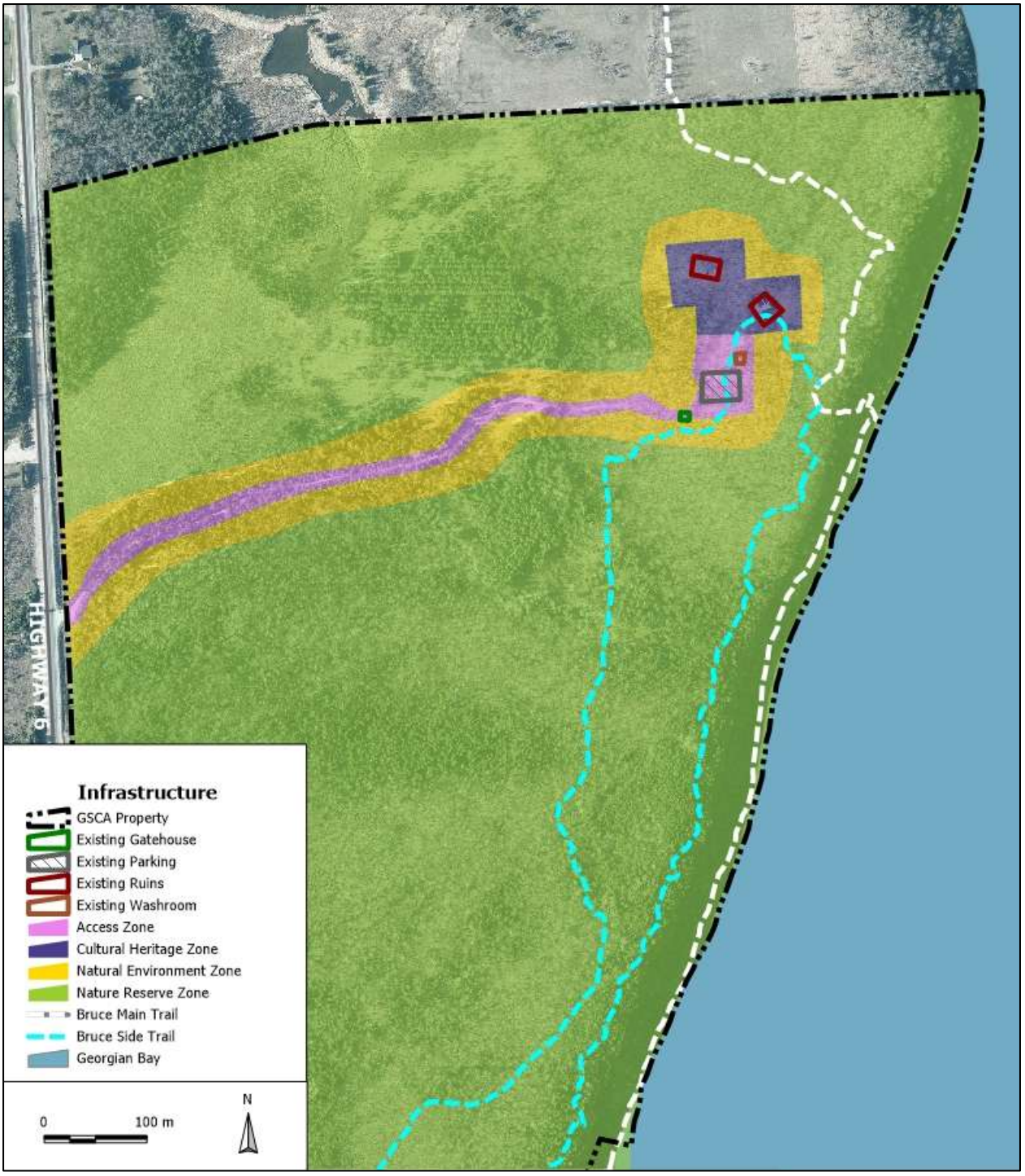
Zoning focuses on ensuring that development programming and restoration activities occur in appropriate areas. Each zone represents an area that has distinct management needs based on the existing natural heritage features, existing cultural heritage features, visitor needs and access, suitability for sustainable development, and opportunities for recreation. These zones are determined by the Ministry of Natural Resources as per the NEP and include Nature Reserve, Natural Environment, Cultural Heritage, Development, Access, and Resource Management. This plan proposes that SRCA be broken up into five zones, as shown in Table 5 and Map 7. Map 8 shows where future infrastructure is planned within each zone.

Table 5. Zone descriptions and functions in SRCA

Zone Type	Total Size Hectares (%)	Function	Summary of Permitted Uses
Nature Reserve	80.4 (92%)	Includes the most sensitive natural heritage features and areas that require careful management to ensure long-term protection.	Management activities may include protection and restoration-based activities. Visitor uses are limited or restricted. Development is generally restricted to trails, necessary signs, interpretive facilities (where warranted), temporary research facilities, and conservation practices.
Natural Environment	6 (7%)	Functions as a buffer between Development/Historical Zones and Nature Reserve Zones. These include aesthetic landscapes.	A minimum level of development is permitted to support low- to moderate-intensity recreational activities. This includes trails, necessary signs, and minimal interpretive facilities.
Cultural Heritage	0.9 (1%)	Historical Zones include significant archaeological or cultural heritage features or areas that require management that will ensure long-term protection of the significant feature.	Management activities may include the protection, restoration, and interpretation of McNeill Estate and barn ruins.
Access	0.2 (0%)	Areas designated to provide access, orientation, recreational or operational facilities (e.g., visitor centres, maintenance centres, parking lots, etc.)	At SRCA, this is limited to driveways and parking areas, as well as the vault washroom.



Map 7. Management Zones at SRCA



Map 8. Infrastructure within Zones at SRCA

9.0 Development Concepts

The plan directions describe the specific projects, such as a piece of capital infrastructure, programming or decisions, or policy approaches that together will achieve the purpose, vision, commitments, and objectives for Spirit Rock Conservation Area. The development of the directions was guided by past management plans, ecological inventories, the zoning framework,

and the broader objectives of GSCA, the NEPOSS, and regional partners, and informed through public, stakeholder, partner, and agency consultation.

Based on this input, there are four proposed Action Areas:

1. Improve the Visitor Experience
2. Enhance and Celebrate Cultural Heritage
3. Operations/Risk Management
4. Conserve and Protect

9.1 Action 1: Improve the Visitor Experience

The visitor experience and connecting people to the conservation area is a fundamental aspect of this plan and several of the directions are focused on improvements and enhancements in this area. Table 6 shows a summary table with the deliverables and associated timelines under this Action.

9.1.1 Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is dominating certain sections of the Bruce Trail. Poison ivy is a native species, and management would require extensive herbicide application, which has the potential to impact other native species. The approach used by the BTC is to educate visitors that the plant is present using signage and messaging, and to wear appropriate footwear and clothing. GSCA will work with the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club to ensure that signage is installed where needed.

Improved and well-maintained trails will also limit possible poison ivy exposures, preventing visitors from entering off-trail areas where poison ivy is more abundant.

9.1.2 Improved Entryway & Parking

The property currently has a single entrance and exit located off Highway 6. Access is provided by a one-lane road leading to the parking area, which accommodates approximately ten vehicles. Visitor traffic increases significantly during the summer months as travelers use Highway 6 to and from Tobermory. With these seasonal demands and long-term planning over the next 20 years in mind, an expansion of the parking lot and improvements to the access road are necessary. The proposed work includes widening the existing road in spots to allow vehicles to pass safely, which will require selective tree removal, grading, and the placement of gravel fill. The parking area will be expanded into the open field area to the north, to accommodate ten additional vehicles (for a total of 20 parking spots). Map 9 shows a concept map for how the expanded parking lot may be designed.

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Map 9. Potential parking lot expansion. Yellow lines are for illustrative purposes only, to show the number of allotted parking spaces (parking space lines will not be painted/marked).

The proposed parking expansion will be designed to meet the following criteria:

- Total parking area of 20 m x 30 m
- 6 m x 3 m parking spaces
- 8 m wide drive aisle between parking
- 1.5 m deep back-up space at the north end of the lot
- Gravel fill surface
- Boulders to maintain eyeline of the entrance and to prevent parking outside the lot

9.1.3 Improved Trails & Lookout

Accessibility is becoming an increasingly important topic, especially with an aging population. The rugged escarpment terrain of Spirit Rock Conservation Area does not lend itself well to accessible trails, and as these are classified as wilderness trails, they are exempt from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). However, where possible, GSCA will aim to improve select trails by evaluating trail width and surface type. For example, there may be sections where the trail may be widened or gravel could be added to smooth out barriers such as roots and rocks.

The lookout spot will also be maintained and enhanced by pruning trees to improve the view. An investigation will be made to see if there are any appropriate locations where additional lookouts could be created.

9.1.4 Signage

Visual accessibility regarding signage is also of increasing importance in outdoor areas and will be a priority for GSCA in the coming years. For many visitors, English is not their first language, and the overuse of text-based signage has made it challenging for people to understand the rules of the property. To help improve communications, future signage will use more symbols and colours rather than text.

For trails where improved accessibility is not feasible (i.e. due to steep inclines and the rugged nature of the Niagara Escarpment), increased signage will be utilized to set expectations of the trails' accessibility and difficulty.

Clear and easy to follow wayfinding signage will also be added to guide users through the trails, including directing to key features such as the Spiral Staircase.

Signage updates will be as follows:

- A new large trail map display in the parking area to show the trails and the varying levels of difficulty, time, and distance (example from Inglis Falls Conservation Area in Figure 13).
- New trail wayfinding signage throughout the network to match the one on the trailhead sign, including symbology indicating trail difficulty to better inform expectations of accessibility (Figure 14 for example).
- An update to permitted use signage to include a more visually appealing design that incorporates GSCA branding and icons (Figure 15 for example).
- Interpretive signage updates to add more historical context/information, ensure political correctness, and refresh with GSCA branding.
- New interpretive signage at certain parts of the trail network to talk about the ecology of the area, species present, and local history. Signs to feature abundant imagery and simple language (see Figure 16 for example).
- Replacement of the interpretive signage located on the property at the Bayview Street entrance, in partnership with Wiarton Rotary. The panel on the left was removed several years ago due to use of politically incorrect terminology describing Indigenous peoples (Figure 17 depicts the old signage).
- Adding a land acknowledgement to the trailhead sign, as well as Anishinaabemowin, traditional knowledge, and storytelling on interpretive signs (where applicable and appropriate).

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Figure 13. Trailhead signage example



Figure 14. Wayfinding sign example, with difficulty marker. Retrieved online from: https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/92534967316865866/



Figure 15. Permitted uses sign example (Conservation Halton, 2021)



Figure 16. Ecological interpretive signage example, with colourful and engaging graphics. Retrieved online from: https://tracydurnellconsulting.com/design/

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Figure 17. Interpretive signage located on Bayview Street at the Bruce Trail entrance to the property.

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Table 6. Action 1 Workplan.

Action 1 – Improve Visitor Experience	Potential Deliver Partners	Timeline	Cost Estimate	Management Zone/NEC Permit
Improved access road into site	BTC	Medium (3-7 years)	$15,000	Access/Yes
Parking area expansion	BTC	Medium (3-7 years)	$7,000	Access/Yes
Improved trails	BTC	Medium (3-7 years)	$8,000	Natural Environment, Nature Reserve/No
Design and install wayfinding signage	BTC	Short (1-3 years)	$400	Several/No
Design and install trailhead signage	BTC, TSBP	Short (1-3 years)	$1,600	Access/No
Update existing interpretive signage and create new signage	Wiarton Rotary, BTC, Bruce County Museum, Bruce County Historical Society, TOSBP, Local Indigenous Communities	Short (1-3 years)	$1,200	Several/No
Pruning trees to improve the view from the lookout	BTC, GSCA	Short (1-3 years)	In Kind	Several/No

9.2 Action 2: Enhance and Celebrate Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage features at this property, which are also considered capital assets, include: the Corran Ruins, the barn ruins, and the spiral staircase. These features require separate attention and planning given their historic and cultural nature. Table 7 summarizes the goals within this Action area.

9.2.1 The Corran Ruins

The Corran is a unique and historic feature on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment overlooking Colpoy's Bay (Figure 18 and 19); however, the remains of the manor continue to deteriorate each year due to natural weathering and vandalism. The manor will never return to its former splendor but letting it degrade is not an option either. GSCA has put thousands of dollars into masonry work to try to maintain the shell of the building and the plan is to continue to do so.

The Corran is a heavily visited historic site, which over the years has led the ground within the building site to become quite uneven. Exploration will be done to determine the possibility of lightly grading some of the area within the walls of the building. Even ground would be safer and more accessible for visitors, as well as open up potential for the space to be used by the surrounding community for events.

Additionally, the rose bushes that remain on the property from the original estate gardens have

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become overgrown and require maintenance. Through this plan, GSCA will seek volunteer support to prune and care for the rose bushes surrounding the Corran, to preserve some of the horticultural history of the property.



Figure 18. The Corran ruins.



Figure 19. Stone repointing on the Corran in 2023.

9.2.2 The Barn Ruins

Unfortunately, the barn ruins have been severely dismantled over the years, to the point where they may not be able to be restored (Figures 20 and 21). Through this plan, GSCA will hire a stone mason to inspect these ruins and determine what options are available.



Figure 20. Barn Ruins (2020).



Figure 21. Barn Ruins (2020).

9.2.3 The Spiral Staircase

The spiral staircase was constructed in 1986 to replace the historic wooden one. The staircase winds its way up the sheer face of the Escarpment, providing a magnified view of cliff ecology. The design and construction won the Niagara Escarpment Development Achievement Award in 1988. The spiral staircase was updated in 2018, and the plan is to maintain this structure in its current capacity. As per GSCA's Asset Management Plan, the plan is to continue to maintain this structure until it reaches true end of life. Once it is no longer able to function safely, replacement options will be explored. This is truly a unique design that may not be able to be duplicated in the future.



Figure 22. The spiral staircase.

Table 7. Action 2 Workplan

Action 2 – Enhance and Celebrate Cultural Heritage	Potential Deliver Partners	Timeline	Cost Estimate	Management Zone/NEC Permit
The Corran maintenance (repointing)	BTC, TOSBP, Bruce County Historical Society	Medium (3-7 years)	$15,000	Cultural Heritage/No
The Corran interior grading	TOSP, Bruce County Historical Society	Medium (3-7 years)	$8,000	Cultural Heritage/No
Investigate options for the Barn Ruins	BTC, Bruce County Historical Society	Short (1-3 years)	$1,000	Cultural Heritage/No
Spiral Staircase maintenance	BTC, TSBP	Long (7-20 years)	$35,000	Access/Yes
Maintenance of rose bushes	Community volunteer	Short (1-3 years)	In Kind	Cultural Heritage/No

9.3 Action 3: Operations/Risk Management

Ongoing operations and risk management at this property is very important and encompasses activities like inspections, road repairs, and hazard tree removal. Items in this Action are harder to plan for as they are often on a case-by-case basis and can come up unexpectedly. Table 8 summarizes these deliverables.

9.3.1 Risk Management

Since the release of the last Master Plan in 1981 and the Interpretive Strategy and Signage Plan in 1992, the rise of social media has greatly shaped the way individuals share their experience at properties. Unlike other GSCA properties, SRCA does not have regular trespassing issues or emergency rescues. Keeping the lookout areas trimmed back to provide a nice view will help to keep visitors from going off trail where there is potential for injury.

The walls of the Corran do pose a safety concern should they fail unexpectedly. The structure is inspected seasonally upon opening and closing, as well as weekly during the summer months by gate staff on site. The Bruce Trail Conservancy also does regular inspections of the trail and are quick to report any risk management issues on the property.

9.3.2 Ash Management

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a non-native invasive insect that was first identified near Detroit Michigan in 2002 and shortly afterwards in Essex County Ontario. EAB is known to attack all native ash species (*Fraxinus sp.*) by boring into the conductive tissues (xylem and phloem) and stopping the supply of water and nutrients. Within their native range, there are several predators that sufficiently control the population size of EAB; however, in North America, the known predators cannot sufficiently control their population or spread. EAB has been found throughout the GSCA watershed and is expected to be more widespread than in areas that have been identified.

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It is challenging to assess the health of an EAB-infected ash tree, as the decay occurs on the inside. Trees that may appear to be healthy can decline rapidly by the next season. This poses a risk to GSCA property users, especially given the number of ash trees found along trail networks. GSCA has developed an Ash Management Strategy to guide the management and removal of ash trees on GSCA properties.

9.3.3 Hunting

Hunting has historically been permitted on this property, but not within 500 meters of the Corran. As a popular Conservation Area within close proximity to the Town of Wiarton, GSCA will, through this management plan, change this permitted use to no longer permit hunting.

9.3.4 What3words

What3words is a phone application used to help find an individual who may be lost or injured on a property. They have divided the world into 3-metre squares and gave each square a unique combination of three words, making it the easiest way to find and share exact locations. Visitor safety is of high importance, and in order to assist emergency services, GSCA will promote use of what3words on GSCA properties via signage and online communications.

Table 8. Action 3 Workplan

Action 3 – Operations/Risk Management	Potential Deliver Partners	Timeline	Cost Estimate	Management Zone/NEC Permit
Ash Management	BTC, TOSBP, Bruce County Historical Society	Medium (3-7 years)	$15,000	Several/No
What3Words	BTC	Short (1-3 years)	In Kind	Several/No

9.4 Action 4: Conserve and Protect

Two of the biggest threats to the ecological integrity of SRCA are invasive species and increased visitation rates. Mitigating the impacts of invasive species and visitors is essential for protecting the natural heritage of SRCA. Table 9 shows a summary table with the deliverables and associated timelines under this Action.

9.4.1 Invasive Species

As shown in Table 4 in section 5.4.2, there is minimal presence of invasive species on the property. Removal/control of invasive species will be carried out where possible, as to prevent further spread. For invasive species where removal is not possible, monitoring will be carried out to track spread/threats to sensitive features.

There are also many non-native ornamental plant species on the property, many of which were planted as part of the Coran estate's ornamental gardens and orchards. Some of these ornamental species have invasive tendencies and may spread if not carefully monitored. Examples include Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*), Day Lily (*Hemerocallis sp.*), Siberian squills (*Scilla siberica*), and Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). These species will be

monitored and assessed to determine if their spread beyond the ruins of the Corran estate is negatively impacting the surrounding habitats. Control will be considered if it is determined that the species are spreading rapidly and/or having significant negative impacts that would justify the efforts of removal. Species that are valuable to the preservation of cultural heritage and are less at risk of becoming invasive (e.g. roses) will be identified and preserved.

9.4.2 Improved Trails & Signage

Another threat to the ecological integrity of SRCA is the pressure from increased visitor numbers. Improved trails and signage as outlined in sections 9.1.3 and 9.1.3 will help to ensure that visitors stay on trails and out of sensitive habitats, thereby minimizing the ecological impacts of visitation. The deliverables of trail and signage improvements are included in the workplan for Action 1 (Table 6).

Table 9. Action 4 Workplan

Action 4 – Conserve and Protect	Potential Deliver Partners	Timeline	Cost Estimate	Management Zone/NEC Permit
Inventory invasive species	GSCA	Ongoing	In Kind	All/No
Develop plan for control (as needed)	GSCA	Short (1-3 years)	In Kind	Several/No
Control	GSCA	Medium (3-7 years)	In Kind	Several/No
Monitor invasive and ornamental species	GSCA	Ongoing	In Kind	All/No

10.0 Effectiveness Monitoring

The SRCA Management Plan is a 20-year plan. Consistent with the timing requirements laid out for implementation (Tables 6-8 in Section 9), many works identified will occur within 15 years after Plan approval. A progress report will be completed every five years to determine which deliverables have been met. This report will also include a new public survey to gain an analysis of visitor data.

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Table 10. Effectiveness Monitoring Plan

Action Area	Deliverable	Metric
1- Improve the Visitor Experience	Improved access road	Access road now allows safe passage of two cars
	Parking area expansion	Parking area expanded to add room for an additional 10 cars
	Improved trails	Stone dust or gravel added to select trails
	Wayfinding signage	6 new wayfinding signs. Fewer incidents reported of users going off trail or getting lost.
	Trailhead signage	One new trailhead sign added near the parking area (improved signage with updated language and map).
	Interpretive signage	5 existing interpretive signs updated, 4 new interpretive signs added to enhance visitor experience.
	Tree pruning	Lookout area and top of spiral staircase have trees pruned to improve the view of Colpoy's Bay
2- Enhance and Celebrate Cultural Heritage	The Corran	Corran updated as per GSCA's Asset Management Plan
	The Barn Ruins	Restoration direction is developed for the barn ruins
	Spiral Staircase	Spiral staircase updated as per GSCA's Asset Management Plan
	Rose bushes	Rose bushes pruned and maintained.
3- Operations/Risk Management	Ash Management	All ash trees removed within striking distance of trails and access areas
	Promote What3Words	Logo incorporated on all map signage
4- Conserve and Protect	Inventory invasive/ornamental species	Updated mapping
	Control plan	Y/N
	Control	Determined by the control plan
	Monitor invasive/ornamental species	Update mapping bi-annually

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APPENDIX A

Grey Sauble CONSERVATION

SPIRIT ROCK CONSERVATION AREA



Terrestrial Vegetation Inventory and Ecological Land Classification

June 2022



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1.0 Introduction

Spirit Rock Conservation Area is located a few minutes north of Wiarton and is owned and operated by the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA). The Grey Sauble Conservation Authority was established in 1985 with the amalgamation of the former North Grey Region and Sauble Valley Conservation Authorities to undertake programs designed to further the conservation, development, and management of renewable resources within its area of jurisdiction. GSCA's vision is a healthy watershed environment in balance with the needs of society.

As part of GSCA 's Natural Heritage mapping, vegetation community surveys, Species at Risk (SAR) surveys and Invasive Species surveys are being conducted within the GSCA watershed to provide a better understanding of the ecological health of our watershed.

The most significant natural features within this region, include the Niagara Escarpment with its cliffs and associated upland forests, the scenic views of Colpoy's Bay, and connections to the Bruce Trail allowing access to the shoreline of Colpoy's Bay, are all found within the Spirit Rock Conservation Area.

2.0 Study Area Description

2.1 General Site Description and History

Spirit Rock Conservation Area (SRCA) is located along the northwestern shore of Colpoy's Bay (Within Georgian Bay) just north of Wiarton, Ontario (Figure 1). The property is approximately 87 hectares (ha) (214 acres) in size. It is located within the Town of South Bruce Peninsula in Conc. 24, Lot A & Conc. 25, Lot PT. A. This property is bounded by Colpoy's Bay (Georgian Bay) to the east, forested private property, and then the Town of Wiarton to the south, Highway 6 and private property (mostly forested) to the west, and open private property to the north.

The focal point of this conservation area is the impressive views from the Bruce Trail that runs along the top of the Niagara Escarpment and the spiral staircase that allows access down the escarpment to the water's edge. This property is also the historic location of the McNeill estate, a residential home known as The Corran, which includes the ruins of the main house, a barn and remnants of several gardens and orchards throughout the property.

The property was purchased by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority in 1976 and is now a popular tourist destination for sightseers and hikers as the property is connected to the Bruce Trail. The conservation area includes a parking lot, pit toilet facilities, picnic tables situated next to the ruins of the main house, as well as lookouts with views of Colpoy's Bay, and a spiral staircase along the Bruce Trail that allows access to the bottom of the cliff and to the Bruce Trail along the shoreline of Colpoy's Bay. This property also contains side trails for hiking with views over the bay at various locations.

The entire subject area is within the boundaries of the Niagara Escarpment Natural Area which is regulated by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC). This property is also a part of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Spaces System (NEPOSS).

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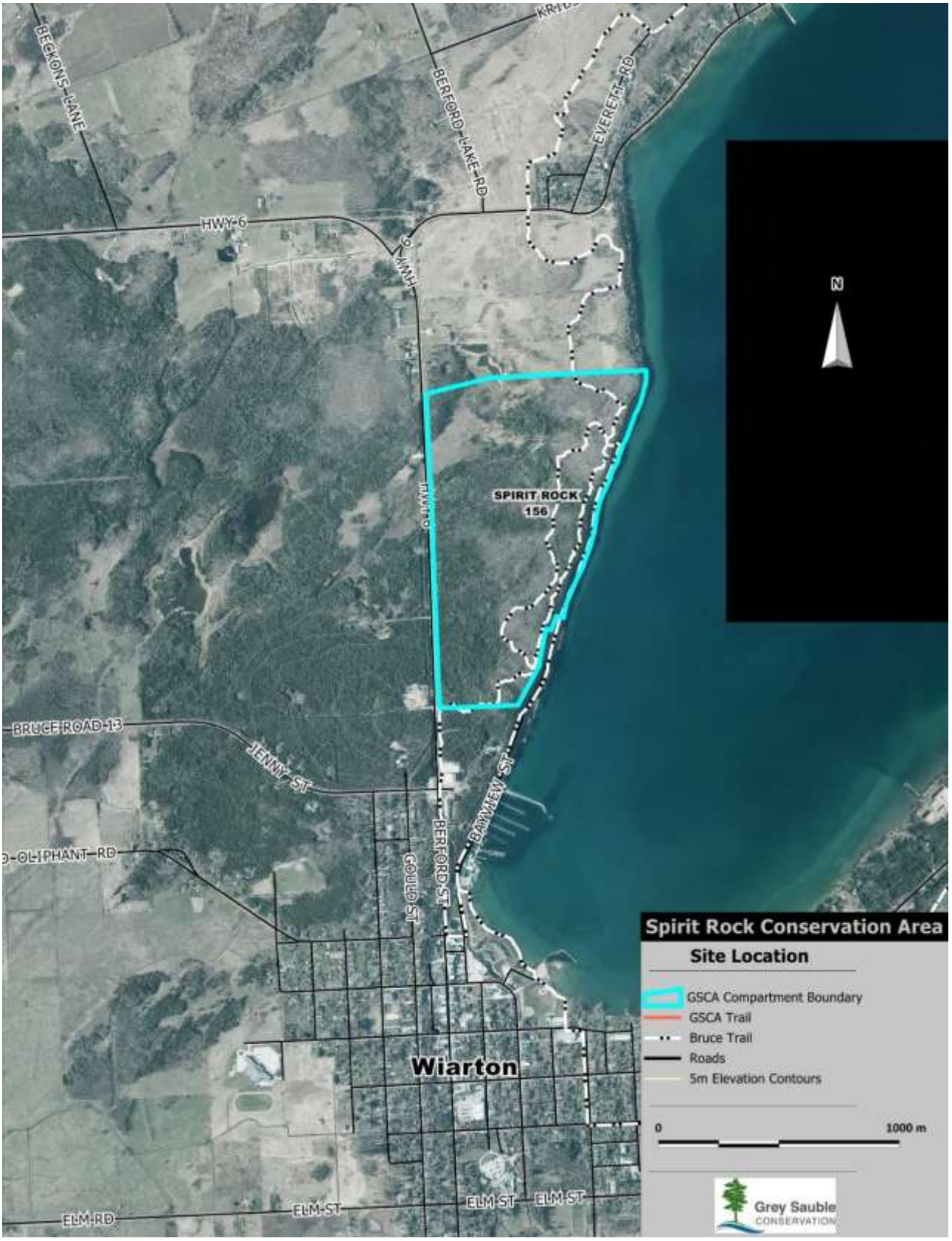

Figure 1 – Site Location Map

2.2 Geological Description

The physiography of the Spirit Rock Conservation Area varies from fairly level topography to very steep rocky cliffs along the Niagara Escarpment which runs along the northwest shoreline of Colpoy's Bay (Georgian Bay). Above the escarpment there are areas of low-lying wetland pockets as well as shallow soils and areas of exposed bedrock.

The bedrock exposed along the Niagara Escarpment and underlying this conservation area is of sedimentary origin, having been deposited in epicontinental seas during the Silurian and Ordovician Periods more than 400 million years ago. These formations are well stratified dolostones, limestones, and shales some of which contain fossilized saltwater corals, reminders of the ancient marine environment which once covered this area (Tovell, 1992).

The caprock of the Niagara Escarpment is visible at Spirit Rock and consists of harder dolostones of the Wiarton/Colpoy's Bay member of the Amabel Formation. Although generally soft and water soluble compared to other rock types, the varying hardness of the different dolostone bedrock layers have contributed greatly to the diverse topography of this site and have also contributed to the formation of karst features. The forces of erosion on these materials over an extensive period of time have created the Niagara Escarpment, a dominant and significant scarp stretching from Niagara Falls to Tobermory which loops through the site (Surficial Geology Bruce Peninsula OFR6211, Ontario Geological Survey, 2007).

The forces of erosion have continued on the escarpment to present day, in the form of chemical and mechanical weathering. The freeze-thaw action of water on the exposed dolomite caprock at the cliff has resulted in the formation of deep crags and crevices, and results in the separation of large blocks of dolomite from the escarpment brow. These large blocks of limestone eventually break off completely and tumble over to form a bouldery talus slope along the base of the escarpment.

The most recent glacial period (Wisconsin) which lasted for about 40,000 years and ended 10,000 years ago also had a tremendous influence on the physical features of this property. Glacial ice scoured the landscape exposing areas of dolostone bedrock, particularly above the escarpment, while at the same time depositing massive quantities of granular material both above and below the escarpment. Large dolostone boulders called erratics were dragged by the glacier from the escarpment edge and dropped above the escarpment. The shallow soils that presently exist on the site are largely the result of glacial activity and the subsequent high postglacial lake levels and subsequent flooding activity. (Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecological Survey of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve, Volume 1 - Significant Natural Areas. 1996).

Surficial soils are shallow to absent across this site. The nature of underlying bedrock, the impact of glacial and post-glacial activities, erosion and the influence of topography are the prime factors in the formation of the soil types found on the site. The soils above the escarpment range from imperfectly drained silty to sandy lacustrine deposits, as well as pockets of poorly drained organic deposits and vary in thickness over bedrock. In some locations there are small areas of exposed tabular bedrock. (Physiography of Southern Ontario, MNMD, OGS, 1984).

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3.0 Methodology

3.1 Ecological Land Classification Base Mapping

Initial vegetation communities, (ELC polygons), based on Ecological Land Classification for Southern Ontario (ELC) (Lee et al. 1998) were determined based on aerial photography interpretation and previous forestry stand mapping within Manifold mapping software. Due to the variable topography, geological landforms and the historical land use of the area within the SRCA, there are various classifications of ELC polygons present within this site.

General soil descriptions were derived from the Ontario Geological Survey (OGS) regional mapping and confirmation soil sampling did not occur at this time. Field surveys were conducted to confirm vegetation communities, as well as to survey for Species at Risk (SAR) and Invasive Species.

3.2 Flora and Fauna Species Surveys

Prior to conducting any species inventory fieldwork, all available documentation, mapping including review of Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) mapping for rare species, and aerial coverage of the site was reviewed by the surveyor to familiarize with site features and historical sightings of any known locally rare species or SAR.

Verification of many ELC polygon boundaries, early spring surveys for ephemerals, as well as the species inventory were conducted in May and June of 2021, and June of 2022. Not all parts of the site were accessible to be field surveyed due to safety issues on steep slopes and the cliffs.

Systematic transects were used to cover the accessible portions of the site and when a habitat that has potential for rare species was observed either from a transect line or on aerial photos, then a meandering survey of that habitat occurred, before returning to the transect path. A GPS tracking device was used to ensure adequate coverage of a site, and to minimize overlap of areas covered. However, unique, smaller habitats may have been missed if they occur in between the transects and were not visible to the surveyor.

These surveys were done to confirm vegetation communities during the optimal growing period of many plant species. All locations of any Species at Risk (SAR) and Invasive Species that were identified were GPS'd and mapped with approximate population sizes within Manifold mapping software. A list including the regional ranking of all flora species observed was documented for the site and is presented in Appendix A.

During the vegetation surveys any observations of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species were also recorded and tabulated and are presented in Appendix B.

Full scale wildlife inventories were not conducted at this time, and any observations made of other wildlife species during the vegetation surveys were incidental. All the surveys conducted up to this point occurred during daylight hours therefore nocturnal species were not observed.

4.0 Ecological Land Classification (ELC)

The vegetation communities described in this report are based on the Ecological Land

Classification for Southern Ontario (ELC), (Lee et al 1998), and are shown on Figure 2. For the inaccessible areas, the ELC polygon boundaries were determined from aerial photo interpretation.

Within the ELC framework a forest is defined as having more than 60% tree cover. The majority of this site consists of forest cover and in the south - central portion of the site it supports Forest Interior Habitat which extends to the southern property boundary and is important for the health of birds and other wildlife. The presence of flowing open water in the northwest portion of the property as well as numerous vernal pools scattered throughout the property provides benefit to wildlife as well.

Within the property limits of the Spirit Rock Conservation Area (SRCA) there were twelve (12) vegetation communities identified. They generally consist of:

- Treed Cliff, Treed Talus area (CLT, TAT) – 2 types
- Upland Forests (FOD, FOM, FOC) – 4 types
- Marsh and Swamps (MAS, SWC) – 2 types
- Cultural and Built-Up Areas (CUM, COI, COP, CUP) – 4 types

Table 1. Summary of ELC Communities and Percent Cover within SRCA

ELC Code	ELC Community Name	Description	Total Hectares	% of Total Area
CLT1	Carbonate Treed Cliff	Carbonate Bedrock, cover varies from patchy to barren to more closed.	1.48	1.69
COI	Foundations of buildings	Built up area with impervious ground cover	0.03	0.03
COP	Road & Parking Lot	Built up area with pervious ground cover	0.34	0.39
CUM1	Mineral Cultural Meadow	Mineral soil, tree cover <25 %, shrub cover <25 %, area altered by cultural activities	3.68	4.21
CUP3-2	Cultural Plantation	White Pine Coniferous Plantation	4.12	4.72

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FOC1	Coniferous Forest	Dry - Fresh Pine Coniferous Forest	0.77	0.88
FOC4	Fresh - Moist White Cedar Coniferous Forest Dry -	White cedar dominant, with some white birch, and sugar maple. Moderately well drained	24.07	27.56
FOD5-8	Dry - Fresh Sugar Maple - White Ash Deciduous Forest	Sugar Maple, with other hardwoods, moderately dry to fresh.	19.76	22.62
FOM4	Dry - Fresh White Cedar - Hardwood Mixed Forest	White Cedar mixed with Aspen, White Birch, Sugar Maple, and White Ash. Typically, a successional forest following a disturbance.	23.56	26.98
MAS3-1	Organic Shallow Marsh	Cattail Organic Shallow Marsh	5.20	5.95
SWC1	Coniferous Swamp	White Cedar Mineral Coniferous Swamp	1.45	1.65
TAT1	Treed Talus	Carbonate Treed Talus	2.90	3.32
Total			87.36	100.0

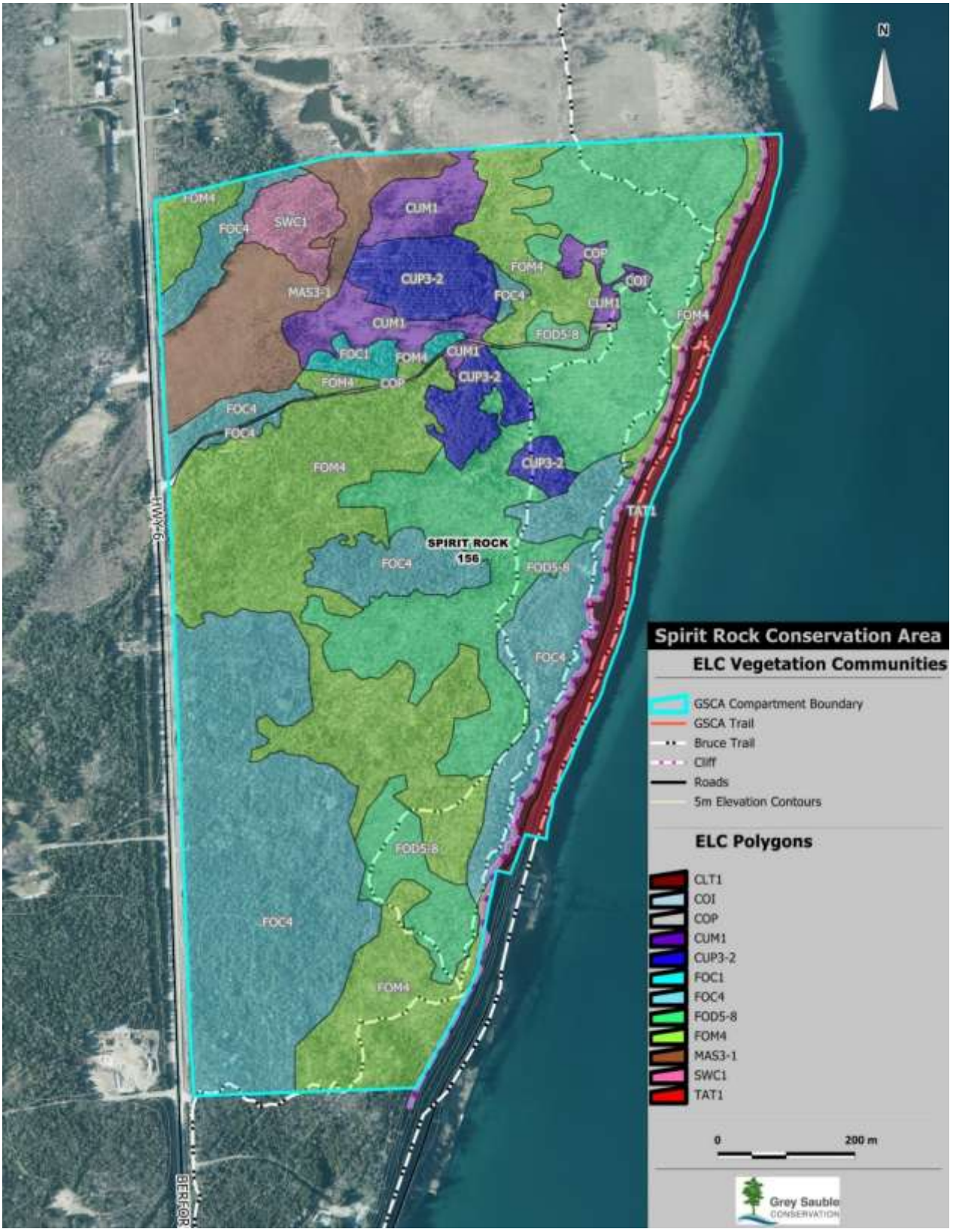

Figure 2 – Ecological Land Classification Map

4.1 Treed Cliff (CLT), Treed Talus (TAT)

4.1.1 Treed Cliff (CLT1)

The carbonate treed cliff of the Niagara Escarpment (CLT1) is considered a significant natural feature within Ontario. It runs from Niagara Falls to Tobermory and dominates the eastern shoreline of the Bruce Peninsula. The stunted cedar trees along this cliff may be several hundred years old but due to its steepness it was for the most part inaccessible for ground surveys and was interpreted from aerial photography, and from views from the trail along the shoreline.

4.1.2 Treed Talus (TAT1)

Below the cliff of the Niagara Escarpment the slopes are covered in large broken blocks of caprock that have eroded off the cliff edge forming a carbonate talus slope. Most of the talus slopes within this property are treed (TAT1), with a mixture of white cedar, trembling and large tooth aspen, and white ash. The steepness of these slopes below the cliff made most of this area outside of the Bruce Trail inaccessible for ground surveys.

4.2 Upland Forests (FOC, FOM, FOD)

4.2.1 White Pine Coniferous Forest (FOC1)

Within SRCA there are a variety of upland forests that cover the area above the cliff of the Niagara Escarpment. Within close proximity to the access road are a couple of small stands of white pine coniferous forest, mixed with eastern white cedars, white birch and some balsam poplar. Within the western end of the largest area exist a few vernal pools which may provide breeding habitat for salamanders and frogs.

.

4.2.2 White Cedar Coniferous Forest (FOC4)

The largest forested area within SRCA is the white cedar coniferous forest (FOC4), with eastern white cedar being the dominant tree species, along with some eastern hemlock and balsam fir with white birch, and other occasional hardwoods mixed in. This vegetation community is moderately drained and has some areas of standing water and vernal pools along with limited herbaceous ground cover.

4.2.3 White Cedar - Hardwood Mixed Forest (FOM4)

The mixed coniferous and deciduous stand is the second largest forest type within this property. Eastern white cedar along with eastern hemlock, and balsam fir are mixed with large tooth aspen, trembling aspen, sugar maple, beech and white ash. There were some vernal pools and large erratics observed on this site.

The herbaceous ground cover consists of common species including yellow trout lily, jack in the pulpit, wild columbine, spotted jewelweed, and horsetail in the wetter areas. There were also observations of white-tailed deer, pileated woodpecker, northern flicker and American crow.

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4.2.4 Sugar Maple – White Ash Deciduous Forest (FOD5-8)

This forest type is predominantly hardwood with the occasional coniferous species mixed in. It is less dominated with sugar maple and contains other deciduous species such as white ash, ironwood, beech, basswood in higher numbers. The presence of an endangered butternut tree was also observed in this forest community as well as auditory observations of an Eastern Wood-Pewee which is listed as special concern on the Species at Risk list for Ontario. The forest floor species are much more diverse than that of the FOC4, and included yellow trout lily, yellow lady slipper, heath speedwell, white trillium, northern holly fern, and large areas of poison ivy. Some of the former gardens have regenerated back to forest in this area and have resulted in domestic species such as daffodils, siberian squill, and daphne mezereum being mixed in with native species within the hardwood forest close to the former homestead. A pileated woodpecker was observed during surveys of this forest type.

4.3 Organic Marsh & Coniferous Swamp (MAS3-1, SWC1)

4.3.1 Organic Marsh (MAS3-1)

Near the northwestern corner of SRCA is an organic cattail marsh with some open channels of flowing water and some areas of standing water. This landform is likely due to a depression carved out of the bedrock, by glaciers in which organic, and lacustrine sediments have accumulated in with the movement of water through this depression. Cattails, and sedges are the dominant species here, with some alder, willow, and red osier dogwood shrubs along the edges as well as the occasional eastern white cedar.

4.3.2 Coniferous Swamp (SWC1)

Adjacent to the northwest edge of the organic marsh is a level low-lying stand of coniferous swamp. This stand consists mainly of eastern white cedar along with balsam fir, and white spruce. There are some open areas and areas where the trees are stunted.

4.4 Cultural & Built up-Areas (CUM1, COI, COP, CUP3-2)

4.4.1 Cultural Meadow (CUM1)

There remain some open areas (CUM1) adjacent to the ruins of the former homestead. These areas would have likely been part of the lawn and garden areas around the house, and barn and potential pasture that have not generated back into forest cover. A variety of grasses, goldenrods and common milkweed among other field species exist here but, this area is susceptible to some trampling as people tend to leave the trail in this area, and there have been signs of foraging of plants.

There are also some larger areas of disturbed land that appear to have been plowed in the past, and then attempted to be planted with white pine. The areas are poorly drained and hummocky with pools of standing water which has resulted in poor tree growth, with the remaining open areas populated with various shrubs, including hawthorns sp., willow sp., grasses and goldenrods, among other species. Occasionally there are small areas of bare exposed tabular bedrock. These areas are not very large and have little growth associated with them such as hawkweed and sedum that do not likely qualify as alvars.

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4.4.2 Culturally Developed Areas – Impervious and Pervious (COI, COP)

Currently there is an access road that leads to a parking lot that represents this culturally affected area (COP). The ground surface of the parking lot consists of natural soil and gravel, so it remains pervious for drainage. The parking area includes a pit toilet as well. Remnants of the former house and barn remain and contribute to the COP and COI designation. The area of the former house would be considered impervious due to the amount of stone covering the ground.

4.4.3 Cultural Planation (CUP3-2)

There are some areas of white pine plantation that are surviving in the drier areas of formerly plowed fields. (CUP3-2). The rows of trees are very visible and there is some regeneration of shrubs and white ash occurring in amongst them as well.

5.0 Species at Risk

For the purposes of this report Species at Risk (SAR) are defined as those designated by Federal and Provincial legislation as being Endangered (END), Threatened (THR), or of Special Concern (SC). Rare species include species designated as provincially rare (S1-S3) by the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC), or locally rare by local Field Naturalists (i.e. Joe Johnson – MNR - Vascular Flora report 1990)

Table 2. SARO & SARA Categories

SARO & SARA Categories	Definitions of Categories
Special Concern (SC)	refers to the species living in the wild in Ontario, that may become threatened due to a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
Threatened (THR)	refers to the species living in the wild in Ontario but is likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it.
Endangered (END)	refers to the species still living in the wild in Ontario, but it is facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
Extirpated	refers to the species having lived in the wild in Ontario at one time, but no longer does. However, it does exist somewhere else in the world.
Extinct	refers to a species that no longer exists anywhere on the earth.
Note: SARA has the same categories and descriptions, but it is a Federal Regulation that pertains to all of Canada.	

The only encountered SAR plant in the Spirit Rock Conservation Area was a butternut tree sapling (Juglans cinerea) that was observed in the hardwood forest, (FOD5-8). This species is listed on SARO and SARA as endangered and is declining due to a disease known as butternut canker.

Four auditory observations of a SAR bird, the eastern wood pewee was heard within the upland hardwood forest and mixed forest (FOD5-8 and FOM4). This species is listed as Special Concern on SARO registry, meaning that they are at risk of becoming threatened by a

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combination of identified threats. This species has had significant declines in population abundance in recent years due to habitat loss.

The Species at Risk that were observed during the field surveys are presented below in Table 3:

Table 3. SAR at Spirit Rock Conservation Area

Species at Risk located in Spirit Rock Conservation Area Compartment # 156				
Common Name	Scientific Name	SARO Status	SARA Status	Taxa
Butternut	Juglans cinerea	END	END	Plants
Eastern Wood Pewee	Contopus virens	SC	SC	Birds

Locations of observations are shown in Figure 3.

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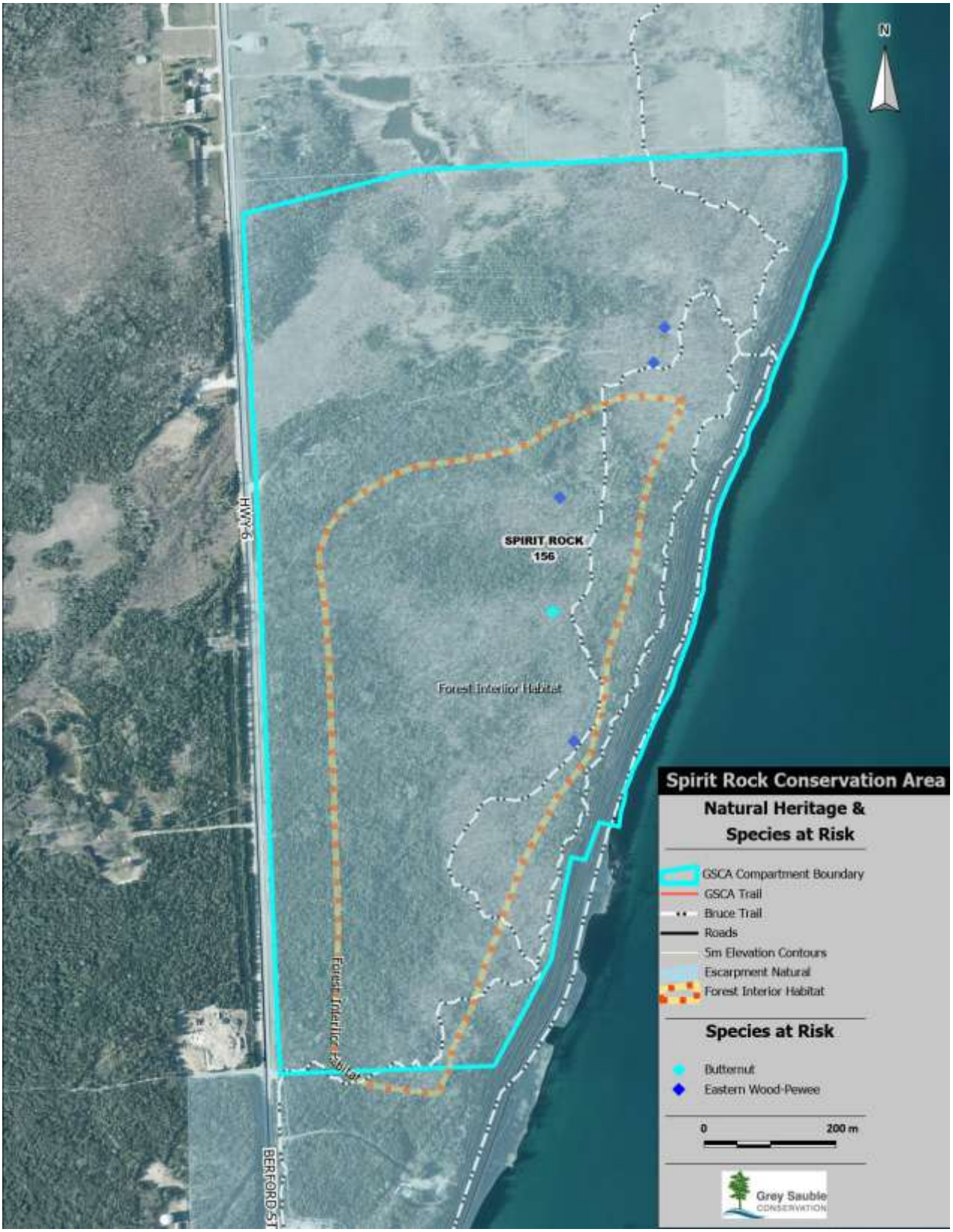

Figure 3 – Natural Heritage Features and Species at Risk Locations

6.0 Invasive Species

Invasive species refer to any plant, animal, insect or diseases that are not native to the area and have an aggressive growth nature that enables them to outcompete native species for habitat. This can directly affect the populations of wildlife due to impacts on natural food supplies and nesting habitat. As part of the Terrestrial Vegetation/ELC confirmation species surveys that have been conducted in Spirit Rock Conservation Area, some invasive species were tabulated and mapped. Some of these species would have been introduced to the area likely due to the historical uses of the property. Popular introduced garden species like Bell's Honeysuckle (Lonicera Bella), have been found within the area close to the former homestead.

Some invasive tree pest/diseases were also noted within this site and included beech scale insect and beech bark disease (Neonectria faginata & Neonectria ditissima). Beech bark disease is caused by fungi and the spores can travel via beech scale insects, wind, and rain which makes control of these diseases extremely difficult.

Species that bear fruit i.e., oriental bittersweet, and bell's honeysuckle are able to spread by the feeding activities of wildlife. A strategy should be developed to eradicate these species before they become extensive.

The Invasive Species observed during the field surveys are presented below in Table 4:

Table 4. Invasive Species at Spirit Rock Conservation Authority

Invasive Species located in Spirit Rock Compartment # 156				
Common Name	Scientific Name	Taxa	Number of Occurrences	Average Pop Radius (m)
Beech Bark Disease	Nectria coccinea var, faginata	Fungi	1	1
Beech Scale Insect	Cryptococcus fagisuga	Insect	1	1
Bells Honeysuckle	Lonicera x bella	Plants	3	10
Oriental Bittersweet	Celastrus orbiculatus	Plants	1	3

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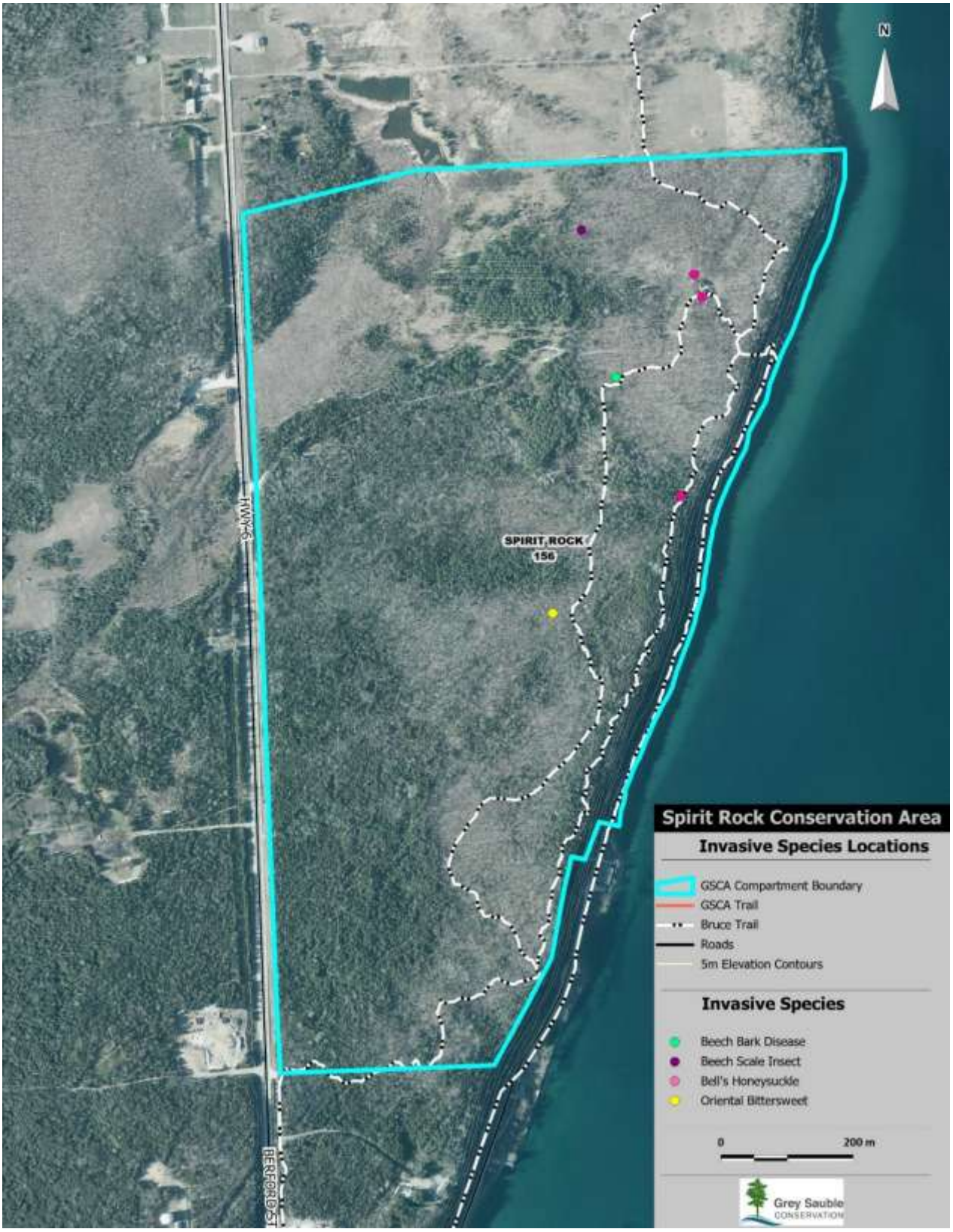

Figure 4 – Invasive Species Locations

7.0 Conclusion

This site consists largely of natural forested areas, cliff faces and some wetlands. The area of the cliff face remains relatively undisturbed from human activities, resulting in the likely presence of old growth cedars. The area of the predominantly eastern white cedar coniferous forest has less diverse undergrowth than that of the mixed hardwoods, and hardwood forests, likely due to the amount of canopy cover reducing the light to the forest floor. All three types of forest are important SAR bird habitat and contribute to an even larger area of Significant Interior Forest Habitat that benefits all wildlife.

Historically disturbed areas around the site of the former homestead have begun to regenerate to native forest for the most part, there are still domestic garden plants still evident near the former homestead, as well evidence of people foraging for plants. Some areas east of the wetland are fairly wet and open and there is evidence of historical ploughing of the ground resulting in furrows and pockets of standing water, as well as some drier areas where plantations of white pine exist.

The central area of the forested section south of the former homestead has the potential for Forest Interior Habitat that could be important to many wildlife species and enhance the quality of the hiking trails in this area. Keeping Spirit Rock Conservation Area as natural as possible will help to support the diverse ecosystems that rely on the natural features of this area. Limiting the impacts of the public (like foraging and trampling off trail) and keeping the area from becoming fragmented with trails and off trail hiking, should be a priority, in order to maintain undisturbed areas for wildlife.

Continued maintenance of the spiral staircase at the cliff will ensure the future enjoyment of safely accessing the shoreline section of the Bruce Trail from the site.

8.0 References

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8.0 Limitations

Surveys were conducted during the daylight hours which reduces the likelihood of observing nocturnal species. Many parts of this property are inaccessible to due to safety issues. While every effort was made to ensure the best coverage for the accessible portions of the surveyed site, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) warrants that there is a possibility that species may exist within the study areas that were not apparent during the site visits.

GSCA believes that the information collected during the survey is reliable, however GSCA cannot guarantee that the information provided is complete. GSCA reserves the right to amend and/or supplement this report if additional information becomes available.

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Appendix A

Compiled List of Wildlife Species Observed on Site

Wildlife Species List - GSCA - Spirit Rock # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PROVINCIALLY TRACKED	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP LOWER
X	American Crow	Corvus brachyrhynchos	N	S5B			Birds
X	American Redstart	Setophaga ruticilla	N	S5B			Birds
X	American Robin	Turdus migratorius	N	S5B			Birds
X	Black-capped Chickadee	Poecile atricapillus	N	S5			Birds
X	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Setophaga caerulescens	N	S5B			Birds
X	Black-throated Green Warbler	Setophaga virens	N	S5B			Birds
X	Blue Jay	Cyanocitta cristata	N	S5			Birds
X	Cedar Waxwing	Bombycilla cedrorum	N	S5B			Birds
X	Common Raven	Corvus corax	N	S5			Birds
X	Eastern Wood-pewee	Contopus virens	Y	S4B	SC	SC	Birds
X	Great Crested Flycatcher	Myiarchus crinitus	N	S4B			Birds
X	Hairy Woodpecker	Picoides villosus	N	S5			Birds
X	Northern Flicker	Colaptes auratus	N	S4B			Birds
X	Ovenbird	Seiurus aurocapilla	N	S4B			Birds
X	Pileated Woodpecker	Dryocopus pileatus	N	S5			Birds
X	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Melanerpes carolinus	N	S4			Birds
X	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Sitta canadensis	N	S5			Birds
X	Red-eyed Vireo	Vireo olivaceus	N	S5B			Birds

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalists Observations - 2021 2022

Data Status referenced from NHIC

Wildlife Species List - GSCA - Spirit Rock # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PROVINCIALLY TRACKED	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP LOWER
X	Red-winged Blackbird	Agelaius phoeniceus	N	S4			Birds
X	Ruffed Grouse	Bonasa umbellus	N	S4			Birds
X	Veery	Catharus fuscescens	N	S4B			Birds
X	Winter Wren	Troglodytes hiemalis	N	S5B			Birds
X	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Sphyrapicus varius	N	S5B			Birds
X	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Papilio glaucus	N	S5			Insects
X	Hobomok Skipper	Lon hobomok	N	S5			Insects
X	Promethea Silk Moth	Callosamia promethea	N	S4			Insects
X	Spear-marked Black	Rheumaptera hastata	N	SNR			Insects
X	Eastern Chipmunk	Tamias striatus	N	S5			Mammals
X	Red Squirrel	Tamiasciurus hudsonicus	N	S5			Mammals
X	Snowshoe Hare	Lepus americanus	N	S5			Mammals
X	White-tailed Deer	Odocoileus virginianus	N	S5			Mammals

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalists Observations - 2021 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Appendix B

List of Plant Species Observed on Site

Plant Species List - Spirit Rock Conservation Area # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
X	Agrimony - Hooked (Tall Agrimony)	Agrimonia gryposepala	S5			Vascular plants
X	Anemone - Canada (Meadow)	Anemonastrum canadense	S5			Vascular plants
X	Aster - Heart Leaved	Symphyotrichum cordifolium	S5			Vascular plants
X	Aster - Large-leaved	Eurybia macrophylla	S5			Vascular plants
X	Aster - Panicled	Symphyotrichum lanceolatum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Aster Sp.					Vascular plants
X	Avens - Wood	Geum urbanum	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Baneberry - Red	Actaea rubra	S5			Vascular plants
X	Baneberry - White	Actaea pachypoda	S5			Vascular plants
X	Basil - Field / Wild Basil / Wild Mint	Clinopodium vulgare	S5			Vascular plants
X	Bicknell's Geranium / Cranesbill	Geranium bicknellii	S5			Vascular plants
X	Blue Cohosh	Caulophyllum thalictroides	S5			Vascular plants
X	Boneset - Common	Eupatorium perfoliatum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Burdock - Common	Arctium minus	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Butter-and-eggs - (Yellow Toadflax)	Linaria vulgaris	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Buttercup - Bristly / Hispid Buttercup	Ranunculus hispidus	S5			Vascular plants
X	Buttercup - Hooked	Ranunculus recurvatus	S5			Vascular plants
X	Buttercup - Tall (Common)(Meadow)	Ranunculus acris	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Canada Mayflower (Wild Lily-of-the-valley)	Maianthemum canadense ssp. canadense	S5			Vascular plants
X	Cattail - Broad leaved	Typha latifolia	S5			Vascular plants
X	Clover - White	Trifolium repens	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Creeping Jenny	Lysimachia nummularia	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Daffodils (Domestic)					Vascular plants
X	Dame's Rocket	Hesperis matronalis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Daylily - Orange	Hemerocallis fulva	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Daylily - Yellow	Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Dock - Bitter / Broad Leaved Dock	Rumex obtusifolius	SNA			Vascular plants
X	English Daisy (Common) (Lawn)	Bellis perennis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	February Daphne (Mezereon)	Daphne mezereum	SNA			Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Plant Species List - Spirit Rock Conservation Area # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
X	Fireweed	Chamaenerion angustifolium	S5			Vascular plants
X	Fleabane - Philadelphia	Erigeron philadelphicus	S5			Vascular plants
X	Forget-me-not - (Rough)	Myosotis arvensis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Forget-me-not - (Wood)	Myosotis sylvatica	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Goldenrod - Early	Solidago juncea	S5			Vascular plants
X	Goldenrod - Tall	Solidago gigantea	S5			Vascular plants
X	Goldenrod - Zigzag (Broad - Leaved)	Solidago flexicaulis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Goldenrod Sp	Solidago sp.				Vascular plants
X	Hawkweed - Common	Hieracium vulgatum	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Hawkweed - Meadow / yellow	Pilosella caespitosa	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Hawkweed - Mouse-Eared	Pilosella officinarum (Hieracium pilosella)	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Hawkweed - Orange	Pilosella aurantiaca	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Heal all / Self-heal	Prunella vulgaris	S5			Vascular plants
X	Helleborine - Eastern	Epipactis helleborine	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Hepatica - Round-lobed	Hepatica americana	S5			Vascular plants
X	Hepatica - Sharp-lobed	Hepatica acutiloba	S5			Vascular plants
X	Herb-Robert	Geranium robertianum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Horsetail - Meadow	Equisetum pratense	S5			Vascular plants
X	Horsetail - Field	Equisetum arvense	S5			Vascular plants
X	Horsetail - Marsh	Equisetum palustre	S5			Vascular plants
X	Horsetail - Swamp	Equisetum fluviatile	S5			Vascular plants
X	Horsetail - Woodland	Equisetum sylvaticum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Jack-in-the-pulpit	Arisaema triphyllum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Jewelweed - Spotted (Touch Me Not)	Impatiens capensis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Joe Pye Weed - Spotted	Eutrochium maculatum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Lady's-slipper - Yellow	Cypripedium parviflorum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Lily Sp (Domestic)					Vascular plants
X	Lily of the Valley (Domestic - non native)	Convallaria majalis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Milkweed - Common	Asclepias syriaca	S5			Vascular plants
X	Milkweed - Swamp	Asclepias incarnata	S5			Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Plant Species List - Spirit Rock Conservation Area # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
X	Mullein - Common	Verbascum thapsus	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Nightshade - Deadly	Atropa belladonna	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Onion - Ornamental Domestic Variety	Allium sp	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Oxeye Daisy	Leucanthemum vulgare	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Plantain - Poor Robin	Erigeron pulchellus	S5			Vascular plants
X	Pyrola - Pink Pyrola (Bog Wintergreen)	Pyrola asarifolia	S5			Vascular plants
X	Rattlesnakeroot - White Lettuce	Nabalus albus	S5			Vascular plants
X	Rattlesnakeroot - Tall (Tall White Lettuce)	Nabalus altissimus (Prenanthes altissima)	S5			Vascular plants
X	Scouring-rush - Common	Equisetum hyemale	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sedge - Bladder	Carex intumescens	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sedge - Bristle-Leaved	Carex eburnea	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sedge - Graceful	Carex gracillima	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sedge - Rosy	Carex rosea	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sedge sp.	Carex sp.				Vascular plants
X	Siberian Squill	Scilla siberica	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Snowdrops (Domestic)		SNA			Vascular plants
X	Solomon's Seal - Giant / True	Polygonatum biflorum	S4			Vascular plants
X	Solomon's Seal - Hairy	Polygonatum pubescens	S5			Vascular plants
X	Solomon's Seal - Large False	Maianthemum racemosum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Solomon's Seal - Star-flowered False	Maianthemum stellatum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Speedwell - Common (Heath)	Veronica officinalis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Speedwell - Germander Speedwell / Birds eye	Veronica chamaedrys	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Spreading Dogbane	Apocynum androsaemifolium	S5			Vascular plants
X	Strawberry - Wild	Fragaria virginiana	S5			Vascular plants
X	Strawberry - Woodland	Fragaria vesca	S5			Vascular plants
X	Stonecrop - Biting	Sedum acre	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Sweet William	Dianthus barbatus	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Toadflax - Bastard	Comandra umbellata	S5			Vascular plants
X	Toadflax - Ivy Leaved	Cymbalaria muralis	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Toothwort - Two-leaved	Cardamine diphylla	S5			Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Plant Species List - Spirit Rock Conservation Area # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
X	Trillium - Red	Trillium erectum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Trillium - White	Trillium grandiflorum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Trout-lily - Yellow	Erythronium americanum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Vetch - Tufted (cow)	Vicia cracca	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Violet - Common Blue	Viola papilionacea	S5			Vascular plants
X	Violet - Dog	Viola labradorica (Viola muhlenbergii) (Viola conspersa)	S5			Vascular plants
X	Violet - Woolly Blue	Viola sororia	S5			Vascular plants
X	Waterleaf - Virginia	Hydrophyllum virginianum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Wild Carrot (Queen Anne's Lace)	Daucus carota	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Wild Chervil (Cow Parsley)	Anthriscus sylvestris	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Wild Columbine - Red	Aquilegia canadensis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Wild Leek	Allium tricoccum	S4			Vascular plants
X	Wild Lily-of-the-valley (Canada Mayflower)	Maianthemum canadense	S5			Vascular plants
X	Wild Sarsaparilla	Aralia nudicaulis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Yarrow - Common	Achillea millefolium	SNA			Vascular plants
Ferns						
X	Bracken Fern	Pteridium aquilinum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Bulblet Fern	Cystopteris bulbifera	S5			Vascular plants
X	Common Lady Fern	Athyrium filix-femina	S5			Vascular plants
X	Fragile Fern	Cystopteris fragilis	S4			Vascular plants
X	Maidenhair Spleenwort	Asplenium trichomanes	S4			Vascular plants
X	Male Fern	Dryopteris filix-mas	S4			Vascular plants
X	Marginal Wood Fern	Dryopteris marginalis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Northern Holly Fern	Polystichum lonchitis	S4			Vascular plants
X	Northern Maidenhair Fern	Adiantum pedatum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Ostrich Fern	Matteuccia struthiopteris	S5			Vascular plants
X	Rock Polypody (Common Polypody)	Polypodium virginianum	S5			Vascular plants
X	Sensitive Fern	Onoclea sensibilis	S5			Vascular plants
X	Spinulose (Common) Wood Fern	Dryopteris carthusiana	S5			Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Appendix C

List of Tree, Shrub, & Woody Vine Species Observed on Site

Tree, Shrub, Woody Vines Species List - GSCA -Spirit Rock # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PROVINCIALLY TRACKED	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
TREES							
X	Apple - Common	Malus pumila	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Ash - Green	Fraxinus pennsylvanica	N	S4			Vascular plants
X	Ash - White	Fraxinus americana	N	S4			Vascular plants
X	Aspen - Large-toothed	Populus grandidentata	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Aspen - Trembling	Populus tremuloides	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Balsam Fir	Abies balsamea	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Basswood - American	Tilia americana	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Beech - American	Fagus grandifolia	N	S4			Vascular plants
X	Birch - White / Paper	Betula papyrifera	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Butternut	Juglans cinerea	Y	S2?	END	END	Vascular plants
X	Cedar - Eastern White	Thuja occidentalis	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Cherry - Black	Prunus serotina	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Eastern Hemlock	Tsuga canadensis	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Elm - American	Ulmus americana	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Hawthorn - English	Crataegus monogyna	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Hawthorn - Sp						Vascular plants
X	Hop-hornbeam - Eastern / Ironwood	Ostrya virginiana	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Maple - Mountain	Acer spicatum	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Maple - Sugar	Acer saccharum	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Mountain-ash - American	Sorbus americana	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Pine - Eastern White	Pinus strobus	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Poplar - Balsam	Populus balsamifera	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Spruce - White	Picea glauca	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Willow - Sp.						Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

Tree, Shrub, Woody Vines Species List - GSCA -Spirit Rock # 156

OBSERVED ON SITE	ENGLISH COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PROVINCIALLY TRACKED	S RANK	COSEWIC / SARA STATUS	SARO STATUS	TAXON GROUP
SHRUBS							
X	Alder- Speckled	Alnus incana ssp. Rugosa	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Barberry - European	Berberis vulgaris	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Bittersweet - Oriental	Celastrus orbiculatus	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Buckthorn - Common	Rhamnus cathartica	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Buffaloberry - Canada / Soapberry	Shepherdia canadensis	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Canada Yew	Taxus canadensis	N	S4			Vascular plants
X	Cherry - Pin	Prunus pensylvanica	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Choke Cherry	Prunus virginiana	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Cranberry - Highbush (Guelder-Rose)	Viburnum opulus ssp. trilobum	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Currant - Wild Black	Ribes americanum	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Dogwood - Alternate-leaved	Cornus alternifolia	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Dogwood - Red-osier	Cornus sericea	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Dogwood - Round-leaved	Cornus rugosa	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Elderberry - Red	Sambucus racemosa	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	February Daphne	Daphne mezereum	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Gooseberry - Prickly	Ribes cynosbati	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Gooseberry - Smooth	Ribes hirtellum	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Leatherwood - Eastern	Dirca palustris	N	S4			Vascular plants
X	Nannyberry	Viburnum lentago	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Rose Sp.						Vascular plants
X	Raspberry - Common Red	Rubus idaeus	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Serviceberry - Smooth	Amelanchier laevis	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Serviceberry / Juneberry	Amelanchier bartramiana	N	S5			Vascular plants
VINES							
X	Honeysuckle - Bell's	Lonicera x bella	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Honeysuckle - Glaucous (Limber / twining)	Lonicera dioica	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Honeysuckle - Northern Bush	Diervilla lonicera	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Periwinkle	Vinca minor	N	SNA			Vascular plants
X	Poison Ivy	Toxicodendron radicans	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Riverbank Grape	Vitis riparia	N	S5			Vascular plants
X	Virginia Creeper	Parthenocissus quinquefolia	N	S4?			Vascular plants

Observed during ELC Species surveys, 2021 Bioblitz, and iNaturalist Observations - 2021 - 2022
Data Status referenced from NHIC

APPENDIX B

Grey Sauble CONSERVATION

SPIRIT ROCK CONSERVATION AREA VISITOR SUMMARY

February 2023





DRAFT

PROTECT. RESPECT. CONNECT.
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ON, N4K 5N6
519-376-3076
www.**greysauble.on.ca**

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the number of people visiting Spirit Rock Conservation Area (SRCA) and their thoughts on the current state of the property and ideas for the future. Data on property visitation was collected by a TRAFx car counter. A public survey was available on Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's (GSCA) website and promoted through social media between January 2022 and January 2023 to gain feedback from the public. In total, 98 people responded to the survey with 57 having local postal codes, 13 from Owen Sound, 4 from the GTA, 4 from London area and the remainder from other parts of Ontario. There were two survey responses from The Maritimes. The participants ranged in age: there were three 18-24, 18 ages 25-34, 24 ages 35-44, 36 were ages 45-64, 16 were 65-74 and 1 was 75 or over. 76 were female, 19 were male. This information was voluntary. Additionally, letters were sent to neighbours within a 120 m radius of Spirit Rock Conservation Area as well as partners and stakeholders. The letter requested input on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the property. This information will be used to guide the initial draft of the Spirit Rock Management Plan, with additional public consultations taking place throughout the planning process.

Part 1: Visitor Numbers

In 2018, a car counter was installed on the road into the property. The data collected from the counter is adjusted to try and represent the number of people vs. the number of cars. This is accomplished by multiplying the number of cars by 2.7, which is the average number of people per car. This data is shown in Figure 1 and indicates that on average, Spirit Rock sees 60,000 visitors from May-October, with 2019 being the busiest of the last four years. Having an estimate of the number of visitors is helpful for GSCA staff to make operational decisions and future improvements.

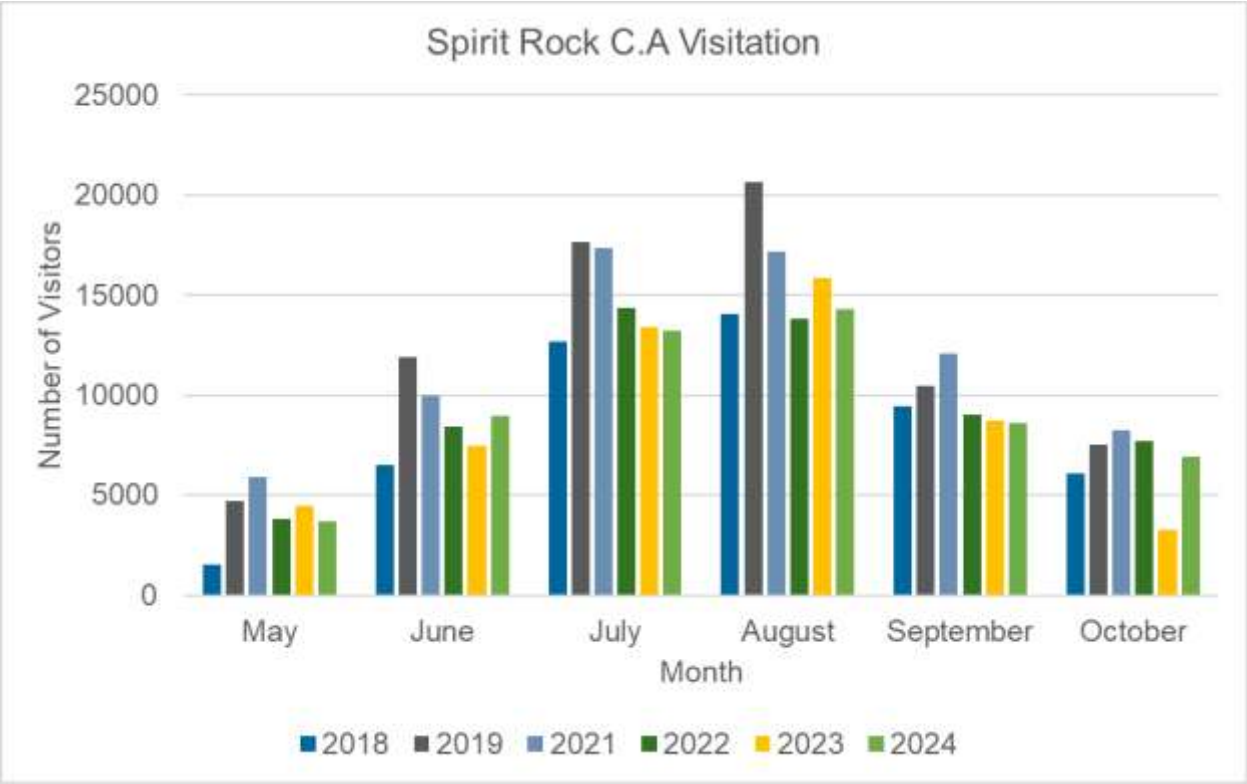

Figure 1. Visitor data at Spirit Rock Conservation Area from 2018-2024

Part 2: Survey Results

2.1 The Visitor and their Visit

Out of the 98 responses, 93% of people had visited SRCA before. The most popular month to visit was July, August and September, which had 16 responses each. 84% of survey respondents were from the local community and the remainder heard about SRCA from the Bruce Trail, word of mouth or other tourism materials.

1. What month did you most recently visit Spirit Rock Conservation Area?

More Details

January	5
February	3
March	4
April	3
May	7
June	14
July	16
August	16
September	16
October	9
November	4
December	1

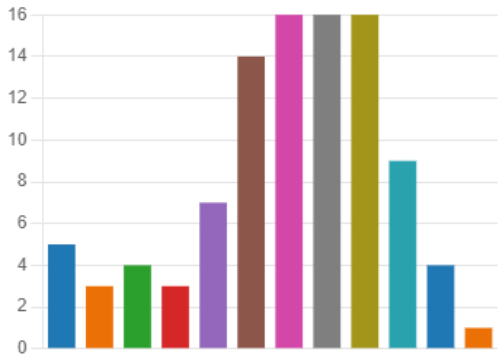

Figure 2. Visitation by Month

2. How did you hear about Spirit Rock Conservation Area?

More Details Insights

I live in the community	82
Grey Sauble Conservation webp...	0
Grey Sauble Conservation broch...	1
Other local tourism guide	3
Instagram	0
Blog TO/Narcity	0
Facebook	1
Other	11

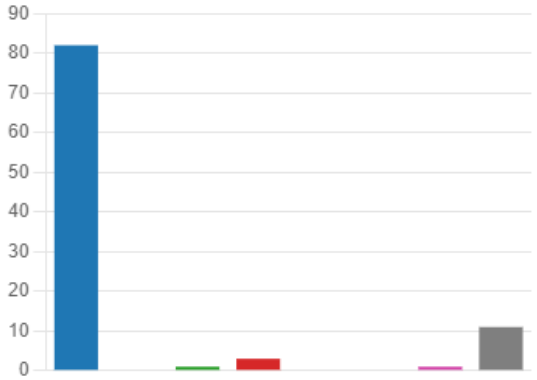

Figure 3. How visitors heard about the property

One quarter of respondents bought a season pass and of those, a pass was purchased to get free parking and to support the conservation authority. 51% of survey participants visit SRCA a few times a year. 68% of people stated they typically visit for 1-2 hours at a time and 16% of people visit for less than one hour, in total making 83% of visits under two hours. 34% of

respondents indicated that the time of day they visit SRCA varies. The most popular group size was 2-3 people.

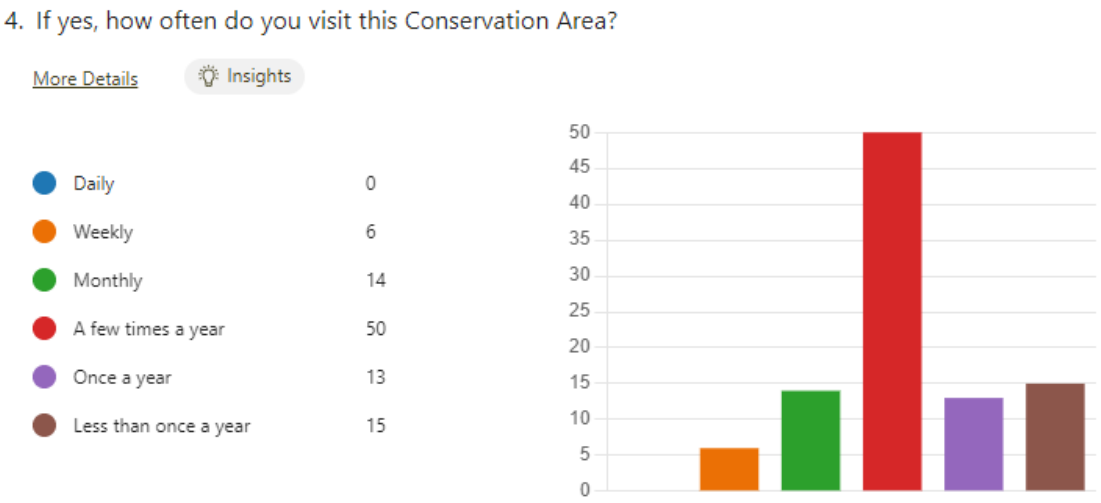

Figure 4. Frequency of visits

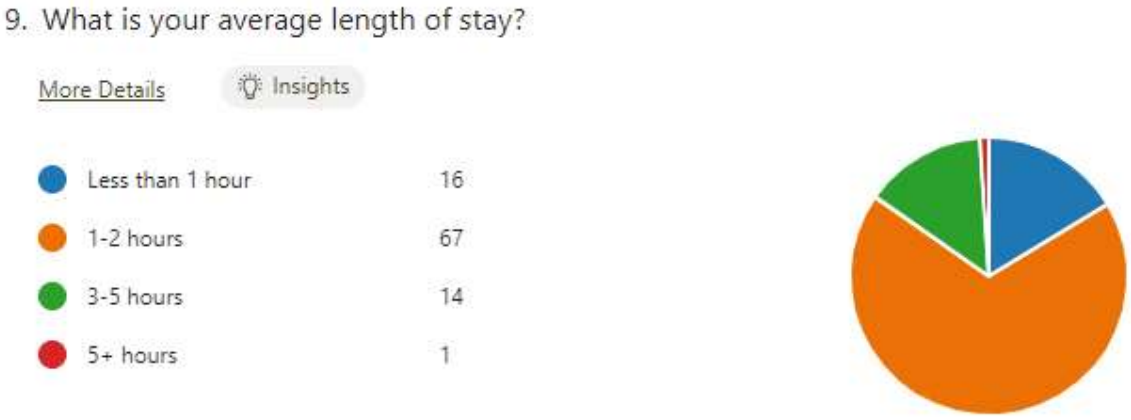

Figure 5. Average length of stay

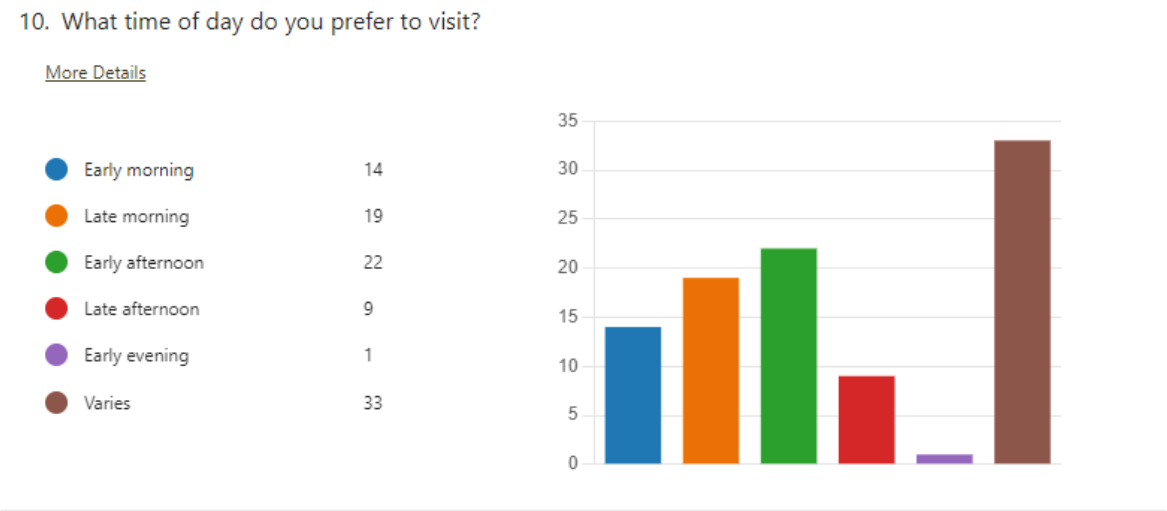

Figure 6. Preferred time of day to visit

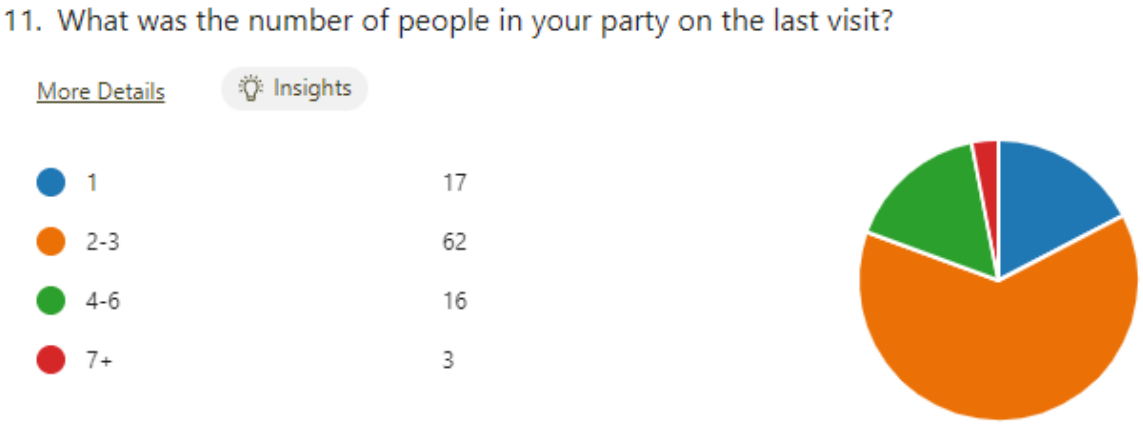

Figure 7. Number of people in a party

66% of visitors arrived at SRCA by motorized vehicle, 33% hiked in on the Bruce Trail and one person rode their bike. Of the 66% that drove to the site, 40% did not pay for parking, 35% had an annual pass and 31% bought a day pass.

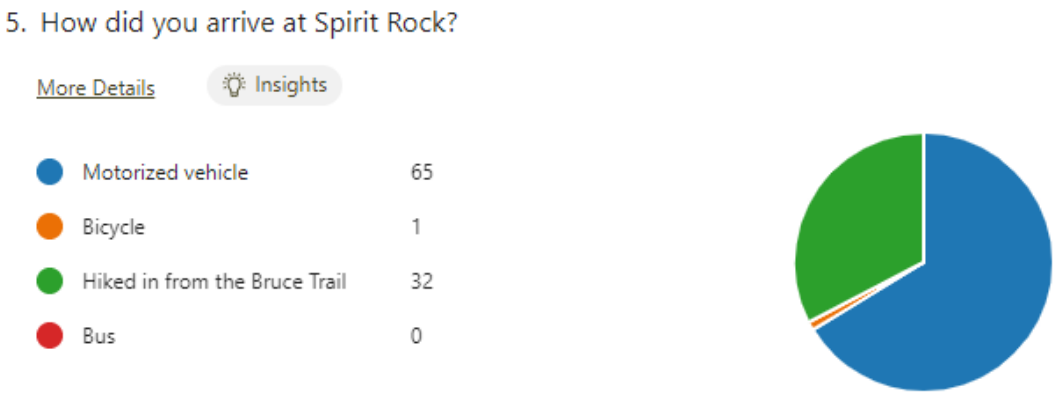

Figure 8. Mode of transportation to the property

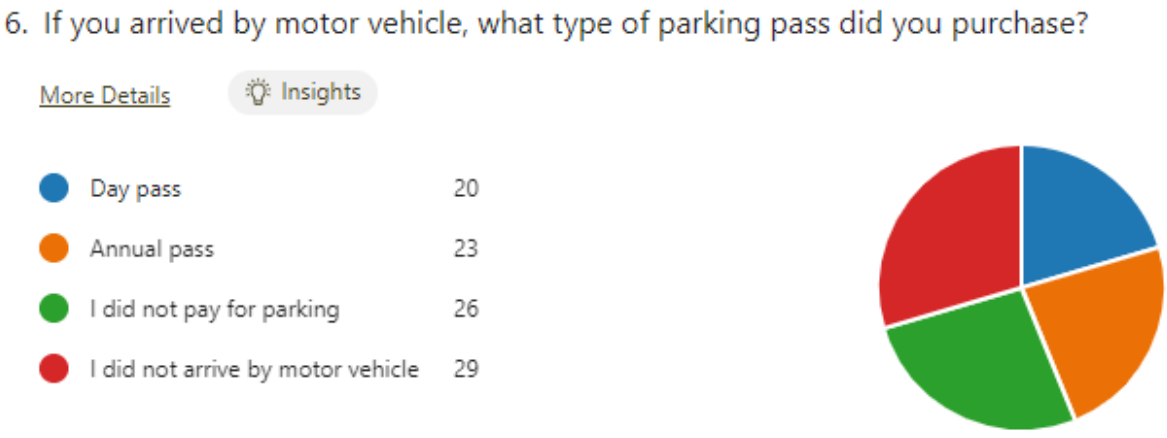

Figure 9. Type of parking pass purchased

The number one reason survey participants were visiting SRCA was to enjoy nature and scenery, followed by seeing the historic ruins and spiral staircase. Hiking/walking was the number one activity selected by 93 respondents. The second most popular activity selected by 37 respondents was photography. When asked what other activities should be added, self-guided interpretive hikes, more trails and additional viewing platforms were the top three answers.

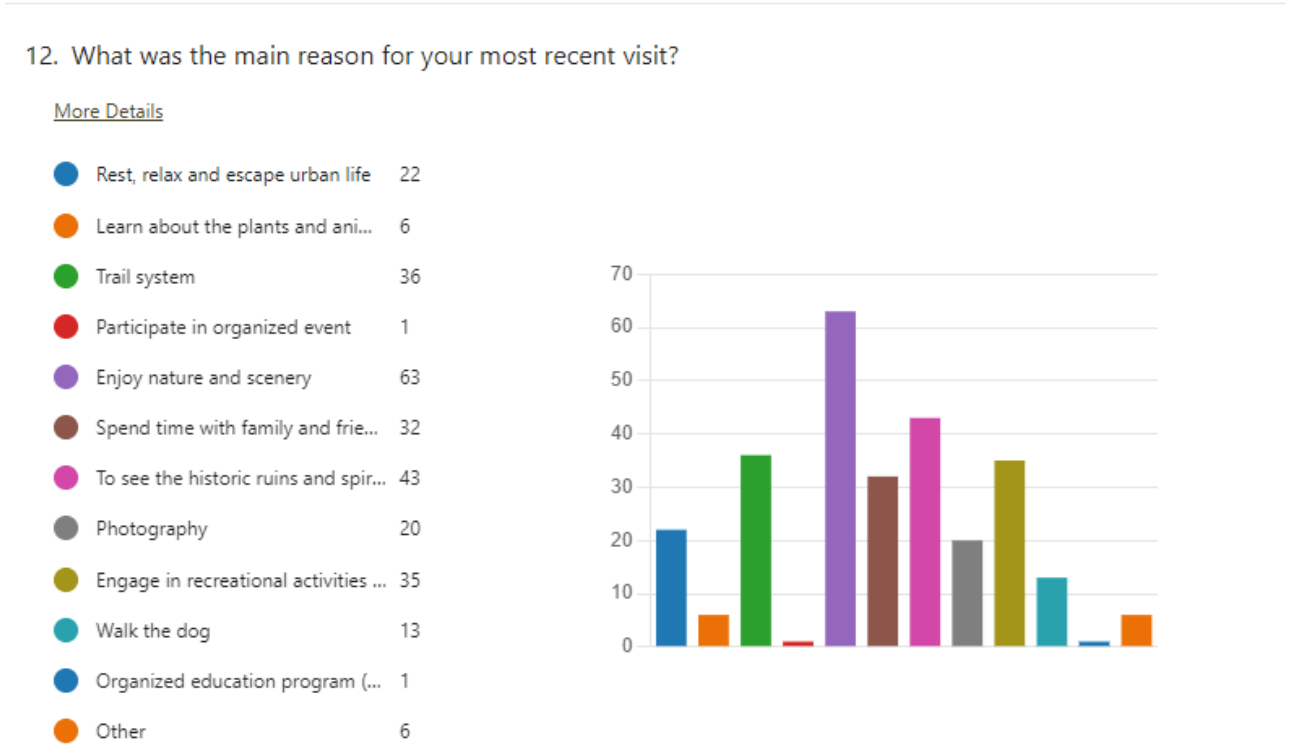

Figure 10. Reason for visit

13. Which activities do you typically participate in at Spirit Rock Conservation Area?

More Details

Hiking/walking	93
Running	6
Mountain biking	0
Dog walking	23
Snowshoeing	11
Picnicking	13
Cross-country skiing	1
Fishing	0
Swimming	12
Photography	37
Volunteer events (garbage clean...	3
Snowmobiling	0
Community events	0
Organized education program (...	2
Other	5

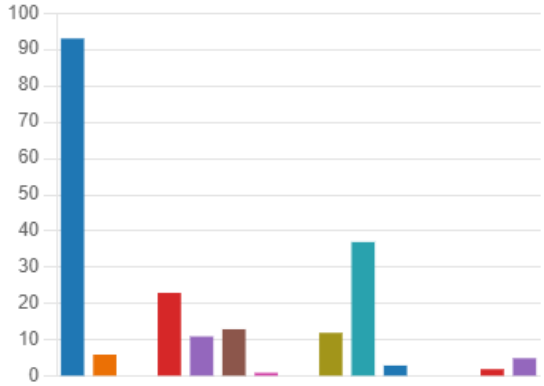

Figure 11. Activities participated in

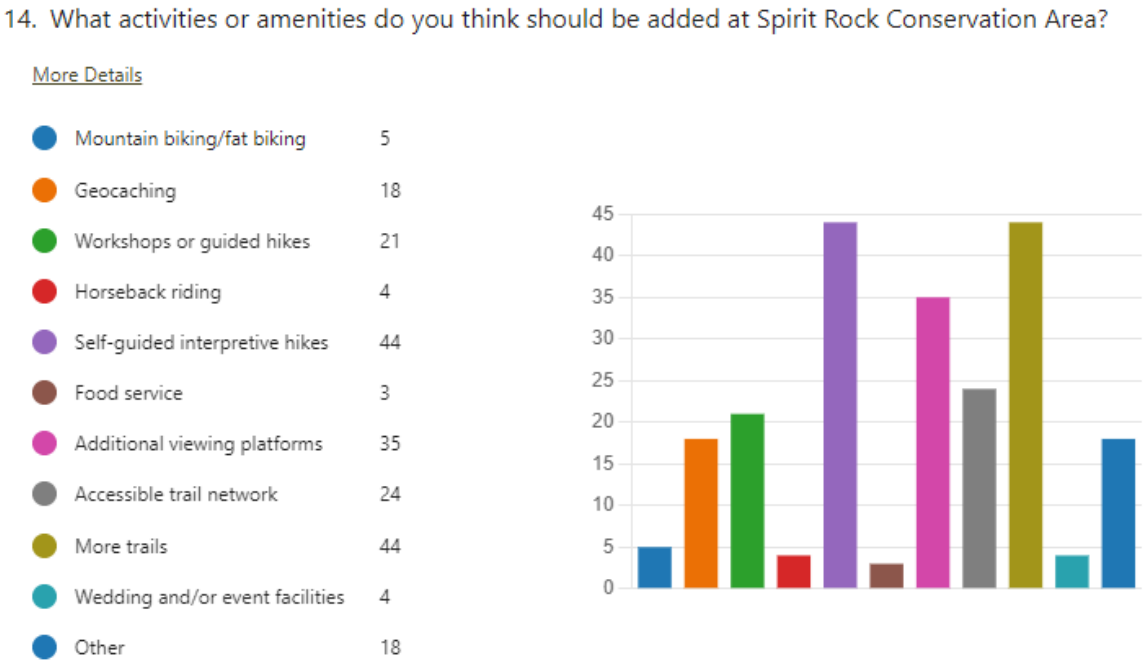

Figure 12. Activities proposed to be added to SRCA

2.2 Feedback on the State of Spirit Rock Conservation Area

Participants were also asked about the current state of the conservation area on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being “poor” and 5 being “excellent”. These results are shown in Figures 8-12. The state of the conservation area was rated ok or good by 32% and 44% of respondents, respectively. The quality of trails were rated good by 53% and excellent by 20%. 70% of respondents rated the quality of signage as good or acceptable. When asked about the availability of parking, 56% of respondents selected ok or good. 44% of respondents said the cost of parking was ok.

15. State of the Conservation Area

More Details Insights

3.72
Average Rating

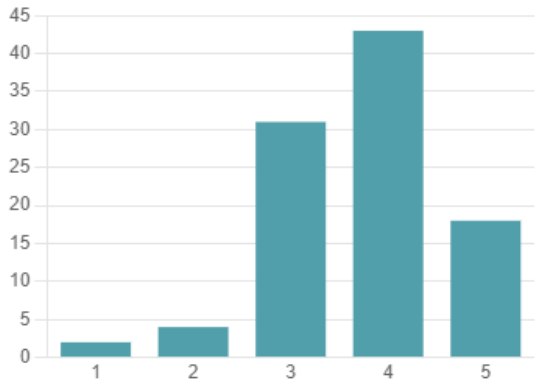

Figure 13. State of the Conservation Area

16. Quality of the trails

More Details Insights

3.84
Average Rating

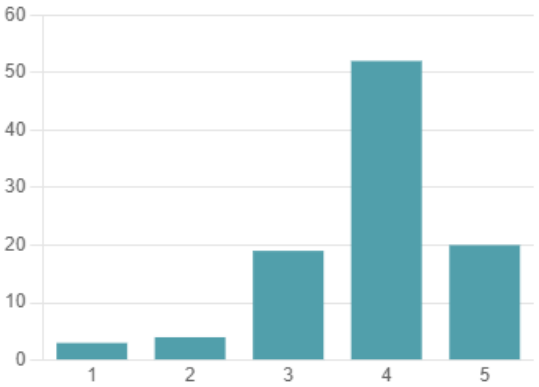

Figure 14. Quality of the Trails

17. Quality of signage

More Details Insights

3.47
Average Rating

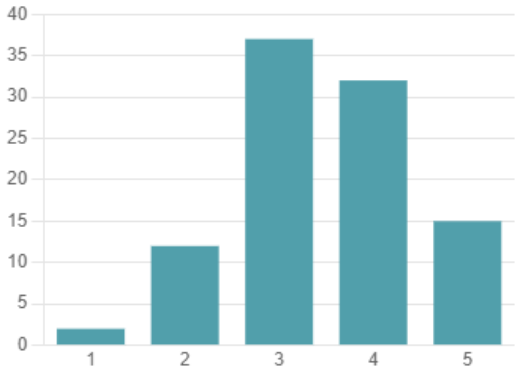

Figure 15. Quality of Signage

18. Availability of parking

More Details Insights

3.29
Average Rating

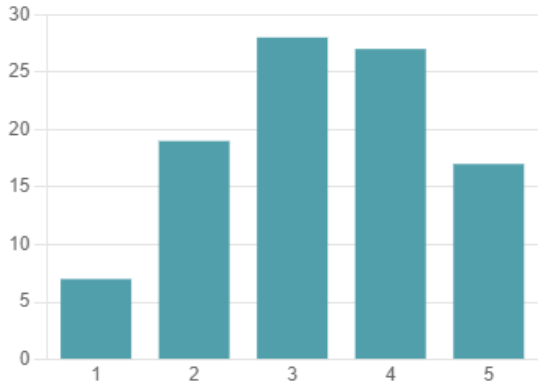

Figure 16. Availability of Parking

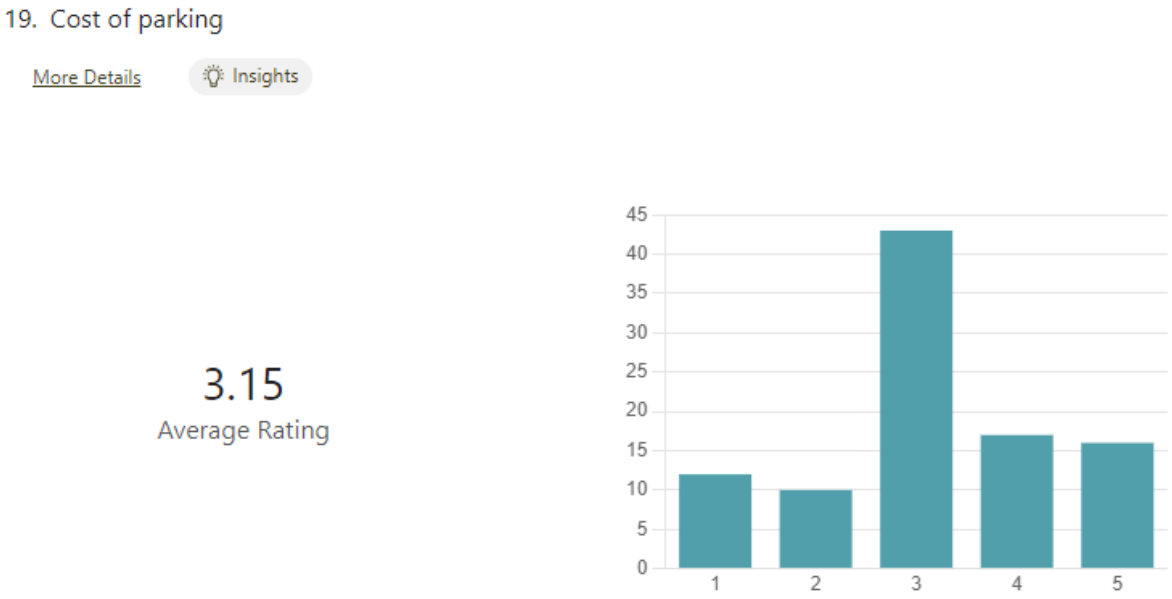

Figure 17. Cost of Parking

2.3 Future Recommendations

Access to friendly, responsive staff was ranked very unimportant and not important by 60% of respondents. Similarly, 64% said that weekend programming was not important or very unimportant. Clear information about visitor rules and safety was ranked highly, with 66% saying it was important or very important. Access to clean washrooms was important or very important to 69% of participants. 60% said well-kept parking areas were important/very important. Outreach materials were of interest to survey participants, as 65% said a useful visitor guide was important and 61% would like to see interpretive signage. Picnicking had mixed reviews, as a sheltered picnic area and picnic tables were split amongst all five ratings. Accessibility also varied with 54% saying it was somewhat important/important. But only 20% said it was very important, and 14% said it was very unimportant.

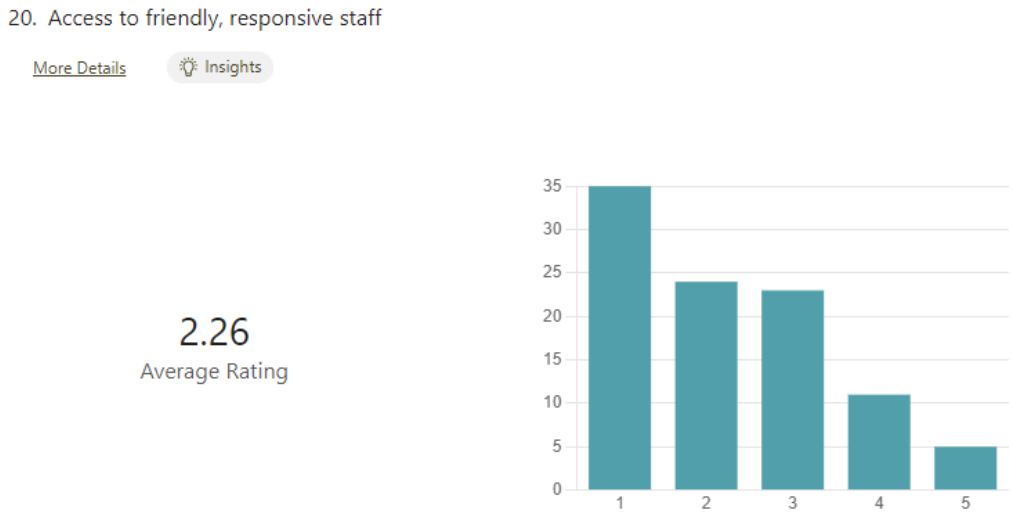

Figure 18. Access to Friendly Staff

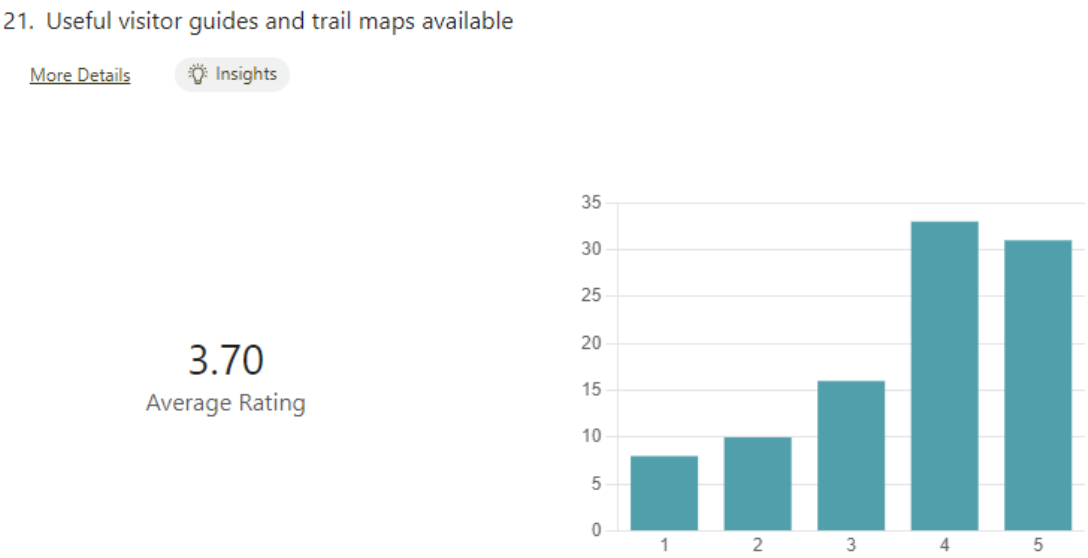

Figure 19. Useful guides/maps available

22. Clear information about rules and safety

More Details Insights

3.78
Average Rating

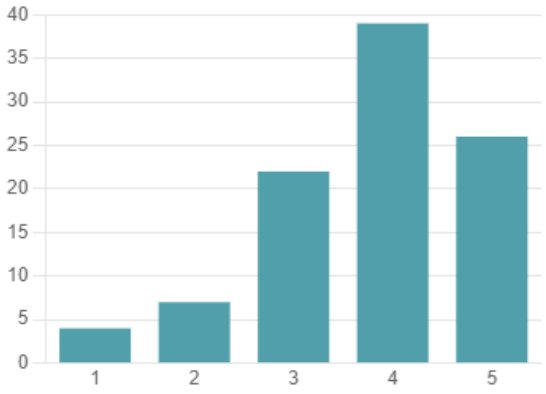

Figure 20. Information about permitted uses

23. Access to clean washrooms

More Details Insights

3.90
Average Rating

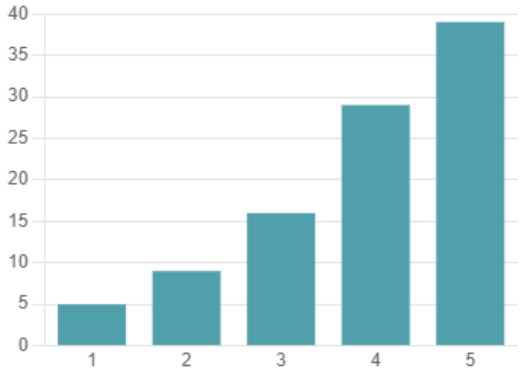

Figure 21. Access to washrooms

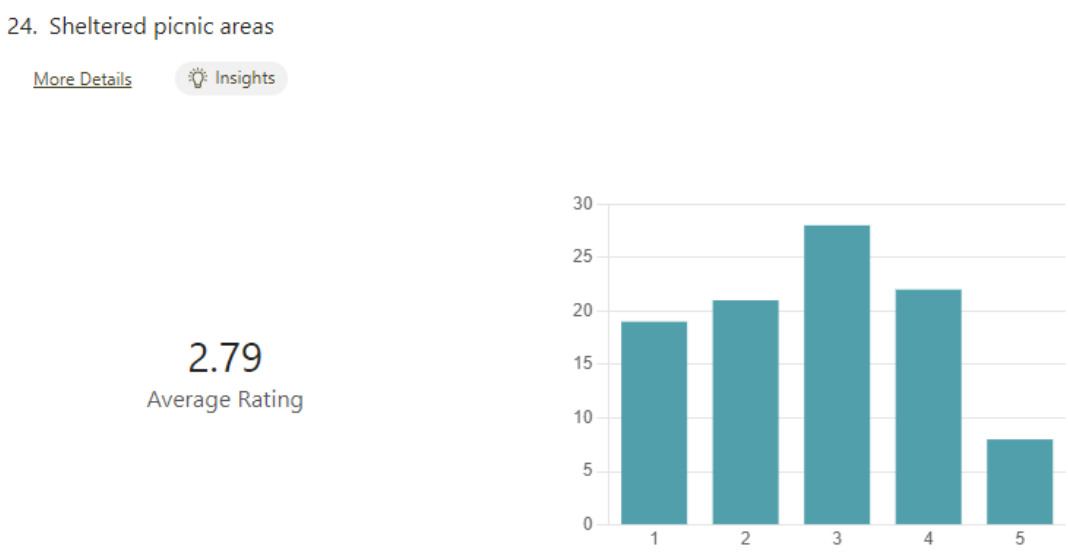

Figure 22. Access to pavilions

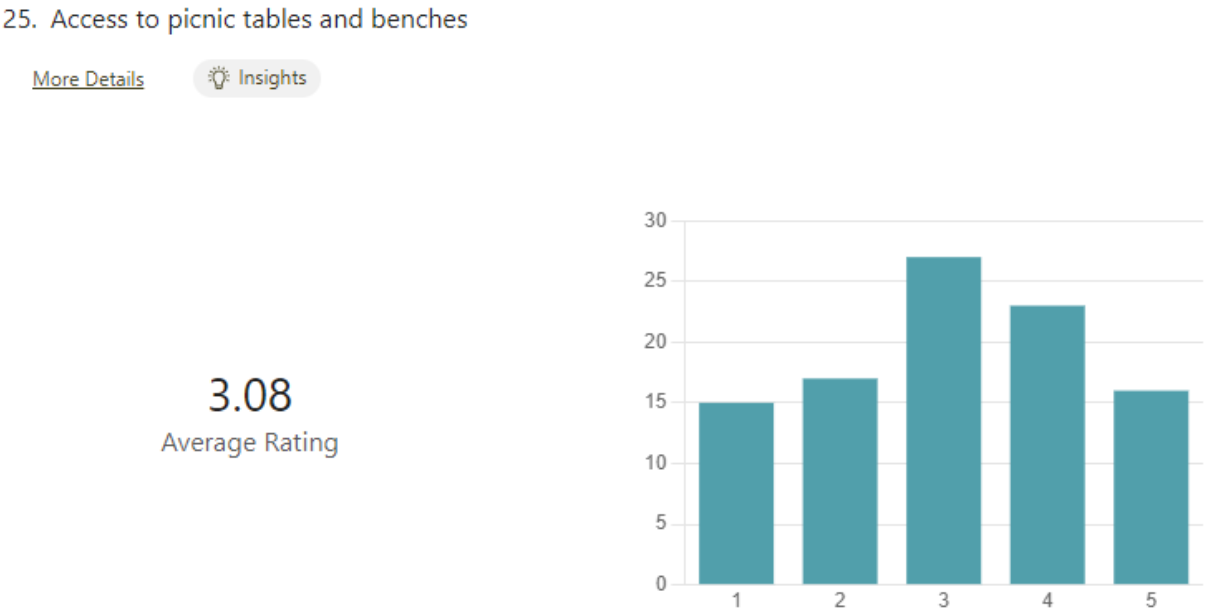

Figure 23. Access to picnic tables and benches

26. Well-kept roads and parking areas

More Details Insights

3.62
Average Rating

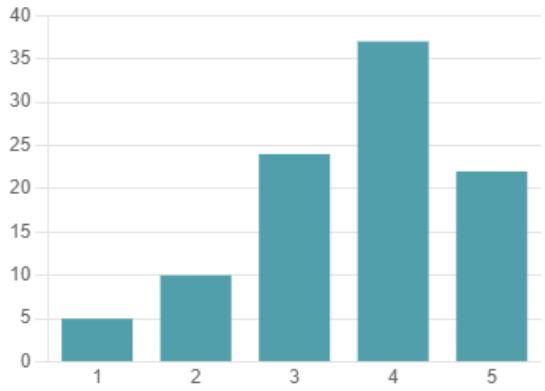

Figure 24. Well-kept access areas

27. Interpretive signage

More Details Insights

3.65
Average Rating

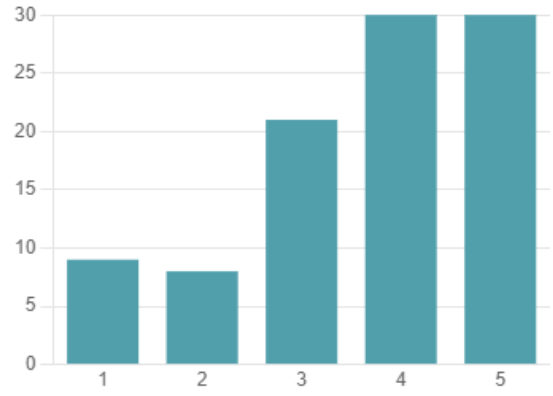

Figure 25. Interpretive signage

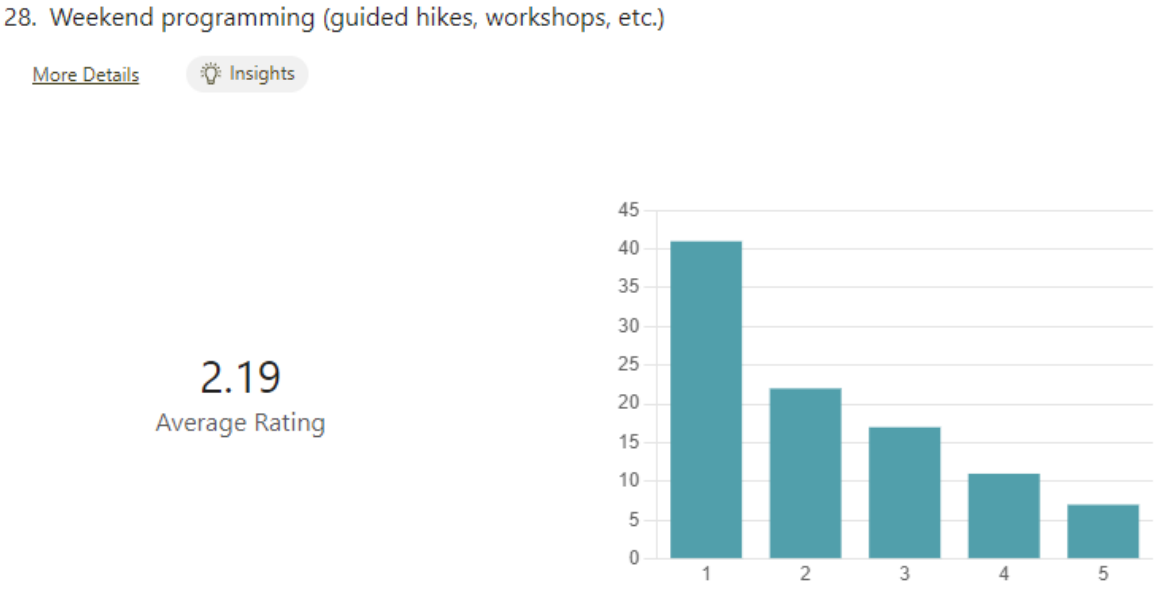

Figure 26. Weekend programming with staff, volunteers or other organizations

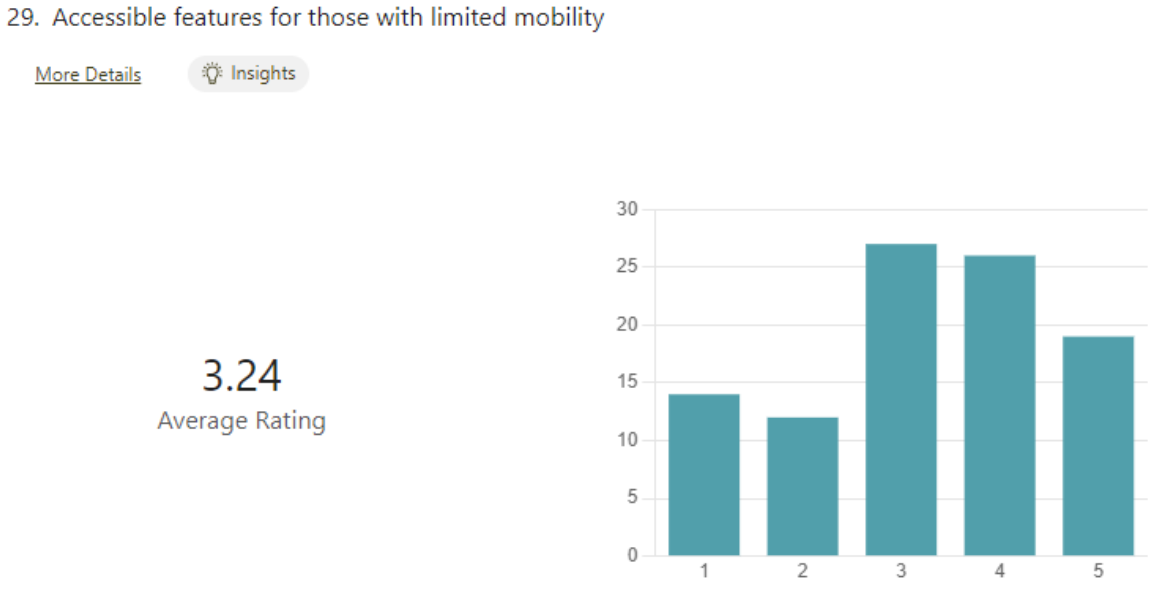

Figure 27. Accessibility

Part 3: Discussions with Neighbours and Partners

Letters were mailed to 21 neighbouring properties, in which four responded requesting a phone call. These phone conversations were very informative, as many neighbours have lived in the area for decades, one in particular since 1963. The general consensus was that people like the property the way it is, and that the focus should be on sprucing it up with tree trimming, fixing the entrance road and improving signage. Many were of the opinion that the focus should be on the history of the McNeill's rather than the Legend of Spirit Rock.

Conclusion

This feedback is very important in determining how best to move forward with property operations. It is especially important to consider how neighbours and partners may have a different connection to the property than other single day-use visitors. Things that are not as important to locals may be extremely important to visitors that travelled a distance to come, for example washrooms, accessibility, and access to staff, whether through programming or general information.

This information on visitor numbers and feedback will be considered when drafting the management plan and the public will be able to provide further comments during the public consultation period.

Appendix

This is the full list of additional comments received from the online survey:

1	anonymous	testing
2	anonymous	I live in Colpoy's Village, so drive by at least twice a day. I cannot tell you how many 'near misses' I have witnessed because of the incredibly congested parking situation at the highway. In fact, my husband and I were lamenting about it one evening over the holidays, and the very next morning, I almost got in a car accident going by, as a visit tried to back out onto the highway and nearly hit me. Seriously - this has to be your #1 priority - someone is going to be killed.
3	anonymous	I do not support the addition of mountain bike trails nor food service. Keep Spirit Rock for foot traffic use only.
4	anonymous	It is the ruins that I am most interested in - preserving history.
5	anonymous	I mostly snowshoe there (because it's quieter) so winter parking would be great and better stairs/trail at the bottom of the spiral

6	anonymous	Must keep the Bruce Trail
7	anonymous	Perfect trail for exercise and exploration for individuals who wish to stay close to sauble/wiarton area - all ages
8	anonymous	Lovely area. Keep it that way.
9	anonymous	We don't need more parking lots.
10	anonymous	we lived in the area,, love it there would worry that promotion would destroy the beauty there, it can not handle huge amount of traffic.
11	anonymous	Love Spirit Rock, and hope to walk here more this summer
12	anonymous	LOVE the trails & the side trail access to Bruce Trail
13	anonymous	It is important to me that as Crown/Conservation land is developed, it keeps a minimal impact to nature and traditional harvesting.
14	anonymous	The Corran has a significant agricultural/horticultural heritage that current facilities and interpretation vastly under service. Big missed responsibility/opportunity.
15	anonymous	I would not want to see it developed more. I enjoy the natural beauty of the area.
16	anonymous	Spirit Rock need the pot holes to the parking from Hwy 6 repaired! There in bad shape, filling the multiple pot holes may not be enough!
17	anonymous	need more garbage cans
18	anonymous	Last time I visited I had to tell two individuals that metal detecting in the ruins and in the area was not permitted
19	anonymous	I don't mind paying for parking IF it goes for upkeep and to grey Sauble conservation area. Right now most people think that the parking goes to the tsbp which if that's the case it needs to stop.
20	anonymous	The field between Spirit Rock and road into Colpoy's has quite long grass which affects visibility of footing on the trail. Some trimming would be appreciated.

21	anonymous	We had to stop hiking this area because the poison ivy is rampant. If this was somehow dealt with we would likely buy an annual pass and hike the area often.
22	anonymous	The area is lovely, but too many people at a time can ruin others time away from people. Take your own blanket if you want to picnic. Few washrooms keeps visits short so all may enjoy a quiet experience. Kids can run and play if parents aren't worrying about their safety-too many strangers, cliff edge. There are so few free places, many don't have money even for parking. Sauble is now an expensive day away for many. Keep it simple.
23	anonymous	Haven't been for a couple of years because last 2 times we tried entrance road was unpassable
24	anonymous	I love this place, please take care of it. I do every time I am there.
25	anonymous	Please don't develop it. Really enjoy it's state as is.
26	anonymous	I think it would be cool if the roses were a little more protected. There are still a couple from the original garden. I do hope we will not see a reduction in access to the building/old barn. The reduction of access to the base of Inglis and Indian Falls has prevented me from bothering to get a pass this year. Those were the experiences, particularly Indian Falls, I most loved. And now it has been taken away. I feel like with liability and safety signage and renewed agreements with fire dept. that could be reopened?
27	anonymous	I think what needs to be remembered that visitors don’t respect the land sometimes. Most do, but some disrespect it and are never held accountable. Take into consideration, also, that access to outdoors and hiking should be free—if not affordable. It is criminal that some organizations charge a ridiculous fee to just park. That’s not okay, given the economic situation most people find themselves in. Affordable and accessible outdoor spaces should be taken into consideration—let’s mot focus on greed of cooperations
28	anonymous	Keep up the great work’
29	anonymous	With the rising costs of everything in 2022 right now, I respectfully request you consider keeping it simple and cost effective for the average citizen. Thank you!!!
30	anonymous	You have a historic site that should be preserved, protected and promoted. In its present condition its actually disgracefully and not safe. With the natural beauty and history it should be one of the areas showcase attractions.

31	anonymous	Love this area, please nothing drastic
32	anonymous	I was shocked at how much poison ivy! Other than that an amazing place :) I recieved a parking pass from Inglis falls arboretum for my volunteer work there
33	anonymous	I absolutely love the trails close by. While I felt very safe hiking alone across the top of the escarpment - I was uncomfortable near the shore. I would have appreciated guides walking the trails. Also, I saw an older couple struggling back up from the water. Both were using hand railing that was covered in poison ivy. Suggest maintaining path to shore for safety.
34	anonymous	The trail was in great shape when we were there. We did pick up a number of empty beer cans along the hike.
35	anonymous	I used to love visiting Spirit Rock, grew up hiking the trails and appreciating the history and nature. Most recently we tried visiting for a short hike with our baby and it was over crowded. We don't hike there anymore.
36	anonymous	Please preserve the local ecosystem and landscape! I enjoyed finding undeveloped views here from the little rocky beach. I made it though the hike with my 3 yr old without incident, or need for amenities.
37	anonymous	I took my bf when we met to see as he's a citiot transplant and had never been before. But as local who grew up in the area, we shouldn't have to pay for something we never used to have too. Same goes for waterfalls.
38	anonymous	There should always be a staff member on hand during peek season July/Aug. An interpretative program should always be available to access, with or without a cell phone
39	anonymous	We moved here 40 years ago to get away from the city. Used to camp regularly at Cyprus Lake and hike around the Bruce with the kids, we like to spend our time and money locally. Had to stop years ago. Too many tourists and no longer enjoyable. Can't enjoy our own backyard! Bruce County Tourism was very short-sighted when it promoted the area without planning for the influx. I know so many locals who won't staycation because it's changed. This might help the economy but not so much the environment or the sites themselves. Please take care to plan carefully. Spirit Rock is a unique, beautiful site with great historic value and should be left as natural as possible.
40	anonymous	Thank you for the opportunity to participate in a survey

41	anonymous	The trails were rough which would be dangerous for children & elderly. The winding staircase although exciting was unnerving as we expected it to fall apart at any moment
42	anonymous	The stairs/ climb down really could use some work. Becoming rather unsafe and unusable for anyone who doesn't have great footing
43	anonymous	I feel that you shouldn't have to pay for parking to access our nature trails. This is a deterrent. Let nature be free and accessible to all
44	anonymous	I have a free parking pass due to volunteering with Grey Sauble Conservation
45	anonymous	Love spirit rock and go a few times a year. Main suggestion, which I am sure you know, is the stairs/railing need to be fixed - it is a bit dangerous, especially for children or older people. Also, the beach is beautiful - perhaps a bit more of a clearing near the bottom of the stairs for those who would like to swim. Thanks! Happy to see this survey :)