

# **(DRAFT v2.2) Hogg's Falls Trail Network Improvement Project (TNIP): Improvements to the Environment and Visitor Experience at Hogg's Falls**

{A demonstration of what can be accomplished to protect and enhance both the natural environment and the resident and visitor experience in our community when all groups in the community, including the volunteer sector, contribute and work together.}

## **A: Planning and Resources**

### **Project Timelines**

- Initial planning phase: Summer 2018 to March 2022
- Construction phase: March 2022 through June 2023

### **Acknowledgements**

- **Initial Scope and ongoing support**
  - from the Hogg's Falls Stewardship Group
  - Partners include: Ontario Ministry of Northern Development Natural Resources and Forestry, Grey County, Municipality of Grey Highlands, Ontario Parks, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, Niagara Escarpment Commission, and Regional Tourism Organization 7 (BruceGreySimcoe)
- **Detailed project management, design and construction** led and/or undertaken by:
  - volunteers of the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club (over 2,800 volunteer hours)
- **Administrative Support from:**
  - Bruce Trail Conservancy
- **Funding from:**

**Canada** 

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

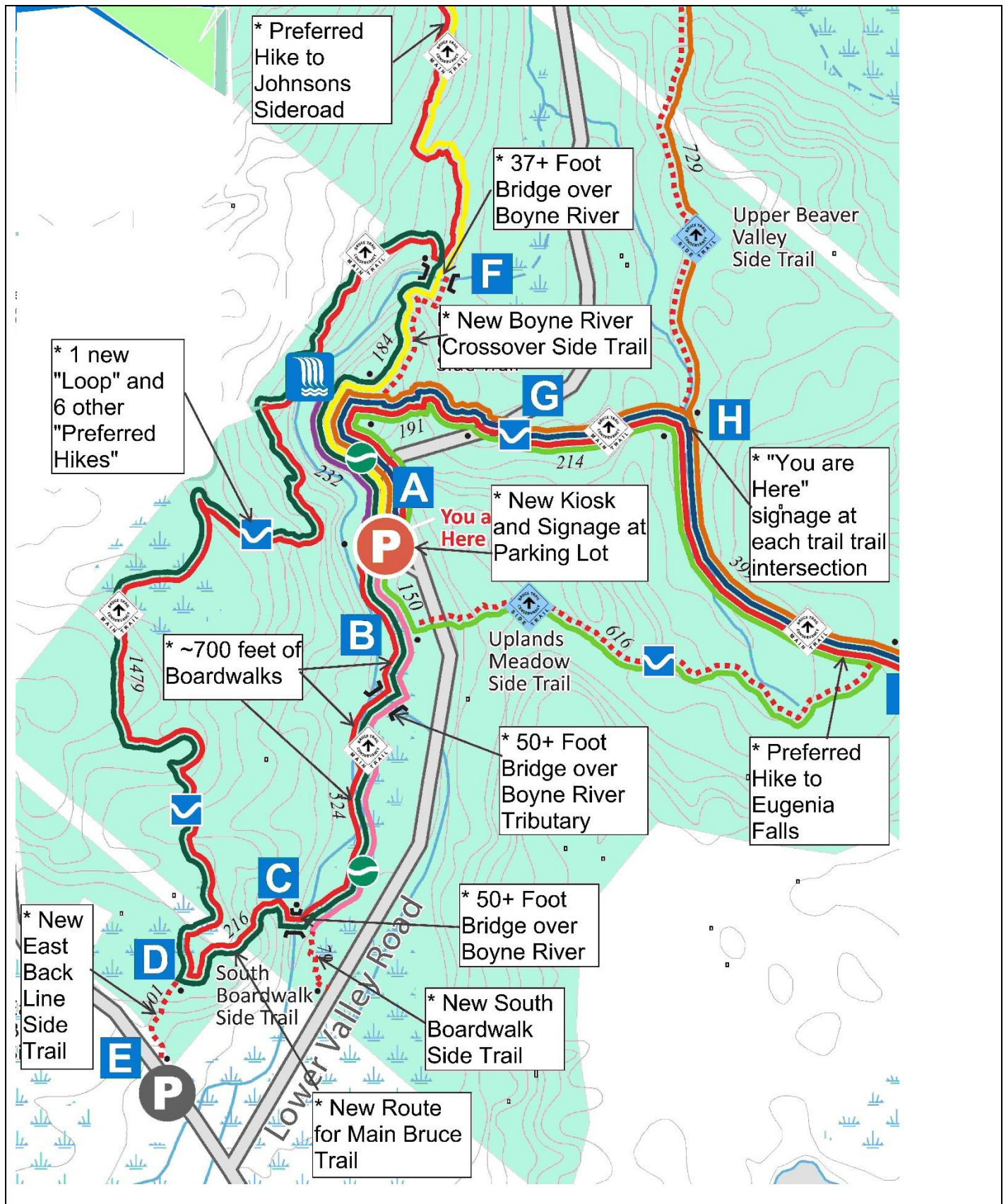


- **In kind contributions** from local businesses:



(for further information contact: Bob Hann, Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club, hannbob@ican.net)

## B. The Project at a Glance



## C: Specific Changes and Impacts: Before and Now

### 1. Environmental Impact

<b>Before</b>		<b>Now</b>
<p>A physical environment deteriorating from threats from both visitors and nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no defined pathways - visitors wandered everywhere</li><li>• changing watercourses, flooding and washouts of structures</li></ul>		<p>~700 feet of winding raised boardwalk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• guides visitors on safe and attractive route</li><li>• environment protected and natural waterflows facilitated</li></ul>
		

## 2. Routing of the Bruce Trail and Casual Visitors

### Before

Lack of safe river crossings results in:

- a major section of the Bruce Trail moved out of the forest onto the busy road
- visitors build and use unsafe temporary bridges that harm river environment



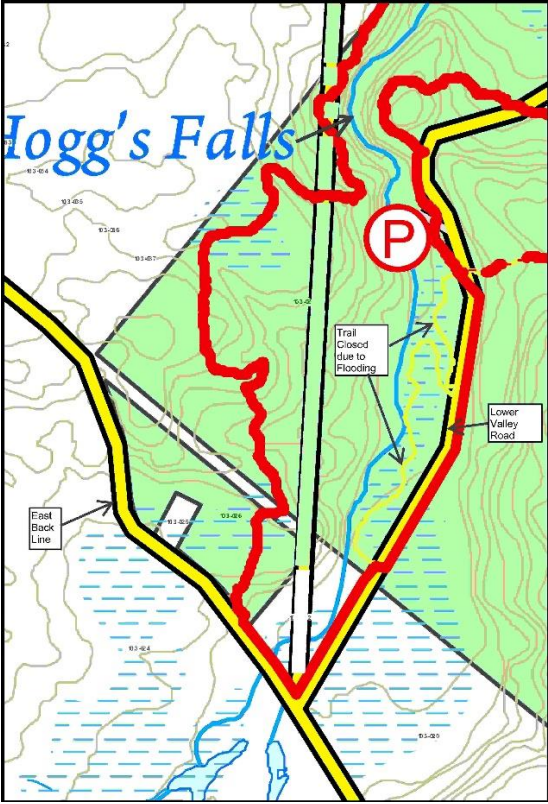


### Now

2 new 50+ foot metal and wood bridges over the Boyne River and its tributary plus a new section of main trail (with stairs)



- allow a reroute of the Bruce Trail off .8 km of roadway and onto a beautiful path through the forest beside the river
- waterways free from unsightly, polluting and unsafe temporary structures






### 3. Creation of Loop Trail for Hikers and Casual Visitors

<p><b>•Before</b></p>	<p><b>Now</b></p>
<p>Hiking options near Falls and Boyne River did not address the wishes of vast majority of visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no possibility of short “loop” trail</li> <li>• only “loop” trail available is over 20 km long</li> <li>• very short visits only to see falls</li> </ul>	<p>Third bridge (37 foot, steel and wood) downstream of Falls plus new side trail (with stairs) creates 2<sup>nd</sup> safe crossing of Boyne River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with boardwalks and other upstream bridges, allows creation of short (2.8 km) “loop” trail around Falls and river more attractive to majority of visitors.</li> </ul>
 <p>The map shows the Boyne River flowing through a wooded area. A red line indicates a loop trail that circles the falls and river. A parking area is marked with a red circle containing a white 'P'. Other features include 'East Back Line' and 'Lower Valley Road'. A note indicates a trail is closed due to flooding.</p>	 <p>A photograph showing a new bridge with a decorative steel and wood design crossing the Boyne River. The surrounding area is a dense forest with many trees.</p>
 <p>A photograph of a dirt trail with several concrete steps leading up a hillside. The trail is surrounded by trees and vegetation.</p>	



#### 4. More Variety in Visitor Experience

Before	Now
<p>Limited hiking options available to visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>visitors concentrated in parking lot and at Falls</li> <li>visitors disappointed and stay for only one short period</li> </ul>	<p>Seven “Preferred Hiking” options created that cater to the wishes and capabilities of a wide variety of visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>visitors stay longer</li> <li>visitors spread out throughout area, decrease congestion</li> <li>visitors return for other hiking options</li> </ul>
	

### 5. Improved Signage for Majority of Visitors

Before	Now
<p>Signage on trails designed for Bruce Trail hikers (e.g., white and blue blazes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• casual hikers get lost</li><li>• hikers anxious they are on right trail</li></ul>	<p>New signage (including “you are here” maps, colour-coded markers for specific preferred hikes, etc.) created that caters to visitors not familiar with specialized Bruce Trail signage and information in text (usually English) format</p>
	
	

## 6. Visitor Orientation and Education

Before	Now
<p>Visitors unaware of history of site, attractions available, visitor etiquette, stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● missed opportunity to acquaint visitors:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ with history and many wonders of the Beaver Valley, Grey County and the Bruce Trail</li> <li>○ with visitor and hiking etiquette to protect environment, to enjoy attractions and remain safe</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Old and new kiosks now contain current information on: Crown Land, indigenous acknowledgement, Bruce Trail, hiker etiquette, geological and other history, maps, preferred hikes, stewardship and construction and funding acknowledgements, and other nearby attractions</p>
	<p>N.B. Updated pictures of new and old kiosk to be added to next version of this report</p> 



## **D. Some random thoughts from the project manager explaining why we succeeded (for those who might want to try a similar project)**

- 1) At least two groups were willing to recognize the problem and organize a response. The Trail Development volunteers within the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club (BVBTC) and a staff member of NDMNRF initiated the journey.
- 2) Eight groups within the local community were willing to work together (as the informal “Hogg’s Falls Stewardship Group”) for 2 years to explore options, challenges and resources (the local partners are listed in Section A above).
- 3) We all had general agreement on specific responses needed: garbage control, port-a-potties, etc. ...and the TNIP.
- 4) One group (the BVBTC) was willing to take on the work and responsibilities of the lead role in the TNIP, with the continuing support of the other partners.
- 5) The BVBTC team developed and worked within a clear organization structure and a detailed financial and operational plan. Separate roles included: Overall Project Manager and Relations with outside agencies, Securing of Permits and Funding, Construction Planning and Management (mainly the boardwalks and bridges), Trail rerouting, development and signage, Central (Kiosk) Signage, securing of volunteers for the many work parties. Responsible and knowledgeable volunteers were recruited for each of these roles.
- 6) Fortunately, the significant funding needed was obtained (Grants totalling over \$160,000 were obtained). (Help of Bruce Trail Conservancy staff in securing and administering the major grant from FEDEV is gratefully acknowledged.)
- 7) The donations of time, materials and expertise from local businesses later in the project were critical.
- 8) Also, absolutely essential was the support of volunteers of the BVBTC beyond the call of duty (all of whom are local neighbours—full-time or “week-enders” —support that amounted to easily over 2,800 hours (equivalent to over \$70,000 at \$25 per hour).
- 9) Also critical was the existence of special types of expertise within the volunteer base to complete the project successfully and within budget. Most important, professional project management, construction management and construction trades (especially carpentry). This was not a project to be undertaken by amateurs.
- 10) We also needed a fair amount of luck – luck that is more plentiful if one lives in a community of volunteers that can quickly turn challenges into excellent memories. E.g.:
  - a) When the MNRF lead of the Stewardship Group retired, A senior staffer of Grey County immediately volunteered to replace him.
  - b) When we were searching for funding support, Members of our Stewardship Committee alerted us to potential sources as they arose—and two turned out to be successful.
  - c) When we needed a project manager with considerable construction experience to take over management of the building of the boardwalks and bridges, a highly qualified club member volunteered.
  - d) When we needed assistance to free us up to concentrate on the front-line work of the project, accounting assistance was offered by staff of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.
  - e) When we realized we needed someone at very short notice to show up very early in the morning with his own vehicle and trailer to transport materials to the site, a volunteer took on that role –and continued for weeks.
  - f) When we realized how many treads and sleepers needed to be cut up at short notice to create over 200 metres of boardwalk, one club member appeared—and continued in this and many other roles to the end of the project.
  - g) When it became obvious that we needed to change suppliers very late in the game for a major element of the project, a local engineer found us a new supplier, the new supplier delivered at short notice, and the local engineer continued to volunteer in key roles at critical times thereafter. The strong financial and legal support of our parent Bruce Trail Conservancy at that time was also much appreciated.

Finally, Was it worth it?

The transformation of the Hogg’s Falls area would be reward enough. However, on a more personal note, more important has been the satisfaction of proving what can be done when different parts of this special community pull together—and, in particular, my fellow volunteers in the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club.