

Riverview marking new entrance to Mill Creek Nature Park

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TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

The newly-landscaped north entrance into Riverview's Mill Creek Nature Park will be officially opened on Sunday morning, celebrating latest push to bring new life to a park rich with history.

The Rotary Gateway includes a parking lot, benches and archway landscaped into the shape of the Rotary wheel logo.

The gateway leads visitors from the end of Runnymede Road into the nature park, which the Town of Riverview intends to become a "flourishing local and regional destination for nature, play and sport."

The feature was funded by a donation from the Rotary Club of Moncton West and Riverview.

The park covers 536 acres of forested town land that was once used by the Canadian Navy to host a Radio Direction Finding station because its boggy terrain allowed strong transmission of radio frequency signals. About 150 personnel at the station intercepted enemy communications during the Second World War, and played a role in the Korean War and Cuban Missile Crisis. The station was in service from the 1940s until 1971.

The headpond that remains in the middle of the park was created by a dam installed by Department of Defence that wanted a water source if there was a fire on the base caused by an enemy attack. The pond remains an emergency source of water for the town.

The seven-metre high-gravity dam is 1.5 kilometres up the Mill Creek from the Petitcodiac River.

The headpond acts as a scenic anchor in the middle of the park that has seen ongoing development to its trail system driven by the Friends of Mill Creek.

"All the trails aren't finished - there's a series of completed trails and a whole series of undeveloped trails and that development is certainly ongoing," said Micha Fardy, Riverview's economic development officer.

As in previous winters, the trails will be groomed for snowshoeing, skate and cross-country-skiing, and fat bikes.

The vision for the changing park was first proposed by Daniel Delong who, as a high school student, pitched the concept for the park to town council. Now Delong is working on a graduate degree in resource and environmental management at Dalhousie University.

"He still Skypes in to [Friends of Mill Creek] meetings," Fardy said.

Fardy said she's noticing much more use of the park by those on foot, bikes and motorized vehicles.

Partnerships, like the one with Rotary, have been crucial as the park takes shape.

The town partnered with Riverview High School's environmental studies' class, Fundy National Park and the Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance on a "biobits" to catalogue the living species in the park - which is a part of the Fundy Biosphere reserve.

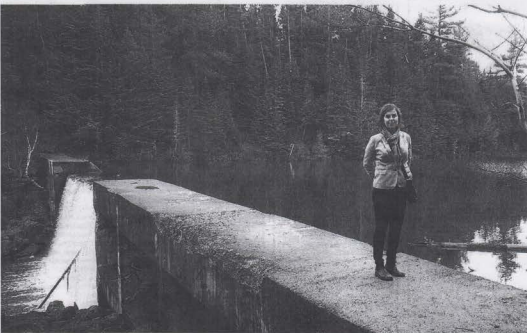
The Université de Moncton's Symbiose Association, Scouts Canada, and a group from TD also volunteered in the park, and a civil engineering course from NBCC is plotting out the park's boundaries.

Fardy said as the park keeps growing, continued help from community groups is crucial.

"There's different portions of that plan that can move ahead when we tap into their resources - it's not just the town working on it. That increases the engagement and how the park is valued," she said.

"That's where we're building from and that's the knowledge and expertise we want in place to help develop."

The Rotary's Gateway will be officially opened by town mayor Ann Seaman and representatives from the Friends of Mill Creek and Rotary on Sunday at 10 a.m.



Riverview's community economic development officer, Micha Fardy, at the head pond in Mill Creek Park

PHOTO: TOM BATEMAN/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT



The new Rotary Gateway at the north entrance to Riverview's Mill Creek Nature Park at the end of Runnymede Road

PHOTO: TOM BATEMAN/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT



The dam at Riverview's Mill Creek Nature Park at the end of Runnymede Road

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