



DIVISION: Engineering, Planning & Environment
POLICY SECTION: Forestry
SUBJECT: County Forest Recreation Policy
POLICY NUMBER: POL-SCF-002
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 26, 2018
SUPERCEDES: POL-CSF-001

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Simcoe County Forest (SCF) is owned and managed by the Corporation of the County of Simcoe. The over-riding principles and goals which govern the management of the SCF are established within the approved 20-year forest management plan 'Simcoe County Forests 2011-2030'. The following assumptions which guide this policy and its implementation are derived from the management plan and the former Recreation Policy:

- Sustainability of the Forest is paramount
- The SCF is considered to be a 'working forest' and is not parkland, preserve or for single-use
- Forest health, management and associated operations take precedence over recreational activities
- Social benefits provided by the SCF are an important contributor to our resident's quality of life
- All activities within the SCF have some impact on the forest environment. In order to reduce impacts, recreational uses will be directed away from sensitive natural heritage features
- Multiple uses of the SCF are promoted, however some areas may not be suitable for all activities
- Recreational pursuits in the forest are a privilege, not a right

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the guidelines under which recreational uses are governed within the Simcoe County Forest in accordance with the principles and goals of the approved forest management plan, and will strive to reduce conflict between users, reduce environmental impacts and limit the liability of the County of Simcoe.

This Policy should be considered a framework to enable cooperation and understanding amongst various users. Ultimately, respect for the forest environment and for the enjoyment of others utilizing the SCF is of primary importance.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all lands owned and managed by the County of Simcoe and identified as Simcoe County Forest.

4. RELATED POLICIES, PLANS, BY-LAWS

- Simcoe County Forest 2011-2030
- Simcoe County Forest Property Use Agreement Policy
- Simcoe County Forest Recreation By-law

5. CRITERIA FOR ANALYSIS OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

While assessing the level of impact is subjective, the following criteria are applied to determine the level of impact of each:

- Activity must have minimal environmental impact;
- Activity must not have significant impact upon other forest users;
- Activity must be compatible with forestry operations;
- Activity must not pose significant liability concerns to the County;
- Activity should not require significant County staff intervention for administration or policing.

6. LIMITING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

In order to reduce environmental impacts, recreational uses will generally be discouraged or directed away from certain High Conservation Value (HCV) Forest Areas and/or sensitive natural heritage features.

Trail development will be avoided or minimized within:

- Wetlands;
- Riparian areas (stream crossings to be limited);
- Areas of Natural or Scientific Interest.

Trail development will also be directed away from:

- Springs and seeps;
- Vernal pools;
- Rare, threatened or endangered flora;
- Habitat of rare, threatened or endangered fauna;
- Deer wintering concentration areas;
- Archaeological sites.

7. GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACTIVITIES

Unless otherwise restricted in this Policy and associated by-law, generally accepted outdoor recreational activities are permitted in the Simcoe County Forest.

8. ACTIVITIES PERMITTED WITH RESTRICTIONS

8.1 Dog Walking

Dogs must be under control or on-leash at all times.

Dogs must be on-leash at all times in SCF Tracts as specified within the County Forest Recreation By-law.

8.2 Foraging

Gathering of mushrooms, fiddleheads and other naturally occurring edible and medicinal plants is permitted for personal use only.

8.3 Off-Road Motorized Vehicles (ORMV's)

Operation of snowmobiles, off-road motorcycles or all-terrain vehicles are permitted only:

- On designated trails with Property Use Agreements in effect;
 - With a valid Permit.
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Notwithstanding the above, all-terrain vehicles are permitted to enable:

- Volunteer patrols or stewardship activities under Property Use Agreements by authorized club members;
- Disabled or infirm hunters to access the SCF during all hunting seasons;
- Hunters to retrieve large game (deer, moose, bear).

8.4 Hunting / Fishing

Hunting and fishing is permitted in accordance with provincial regulations, except on Tracts as specified in the County Forest Recreation By-law.

Hunters must be members in good standing with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

Temporary, portable tree stands are permitted only between September 15th and January 15th, and must not use nails, spikes or other hardware to affix to trees.

Notwithstanding the above, Section 8.4 does not limit or supersede any recognized constitutional rights of indigenous peoples to hunt or fish within the SCF.

9. ACTIVITIES PERMITTED ONLY WITH A PROPERTY USE AGREEMENT OR PERMIT

9.1 Trail establishment

Trail establishment and maintenance is permitted only with an approved Property Use Agreement as per the Simcoe County Forest Property Use Agreement Policy.

9.2 Organized Events

Organized events must have a valid Use Agreement in effect. This includes any activity which is advertised or if participants are charged an entry fee, but does not include organized hikes or nature walks.

9.3 Trapping

Trapping is allowed by permit only and in accordance with provincial regulations within select Tracts. A provincial trapping license and membership in the Ontario Fur Managers Federation are required.

Notwithstanding the above, Section 9.3 does not limit or supersede any recognized constitutional rights of indigenous peoples to trap within the SCF.

10. PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

The following uses or activities are prohibited:

- Operation of motor vehicles (cars, trucks) except to access designated parking areas;
 - Littering, dumping or disposal of any foreign material;
 - Open fires;
 - Camping;
 - Consumption of alcohol;
 - Target practice / patterning or sighting of firearms;
 - Paintball;
 - Cutting, pruning, digging or gathering of trees, shrubs, groundcover or firewood;
 - Construction of unauthorized structures or permanent tree stands;
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- Disturbance or removal of any object of potential archaeological significance;
 - Digging or the use of a metal detector;
 - Placement of unauthorized signs.
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