



Nature for All



Guiding Principle

Making nature accessible so that everyone can enjoy our:

- *Conservation areas*
- *Outdoor education programs*



Rideau Valley Conservation Authority



- 11 conservation areas
- 300,000 visitors a year
- 42 kms of trails
- 3 beaches
- 2 outdoor education sites
- 10,000 students a year

11
Conservation
Areas

Started Simple... Didn't always get it right



Nature For All Committee

Nature For All believes everyone should be able to embrace the great outdoors.

Nature for All is about inclusion. It's about accessing the natural world, but also feeling safe and welcome there.

To that end, the aim is to transform Baxter Conservation Area into a fully accessible and integrated natural park for persons of all ages and abilities.

A multi-phase project will upgrade Baxter's trails, boardwalks, programs and facilities to the gold standard of accessibility, providing opportunities for all who want to experience and enjoy a natural wilderness setting.




Mike Nemesvary, a former competitive freestyle skier who was paralyzed in a training accident, has been visiting Baxter Conservation Area in his power wheelchair for nearly 20 years.

He founded the Nature for All committee with the goal of making Baxter a gold standard destination for accessibility.

Accessibility Standards Matrix

Matrix developed by Marnie Peters and Associates that examines:

- Parking
 - Signage & Navigation
 - Information & Communication
 - Trails
 - Boardwalks
 - Ramps
 - Rest Areas
 - Viewing Areas
 - Sensory Rich
 - Trail Amenities
 - Outdoor Eating Areas
 - Beach Access
 - Outdoor Play Spaces
 - Camping
 - Docks and Fishing Piers
 - Obtaining Service
 - Exterior Paths of Travel
 - Stairs
 - Depressed curbs and ramps
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Goals for Baxter and Beyond

- Enlarged, accessible marshland **bridge and viewing structure**
- Side railings on bridge and boardwalk approaches
- **Widened boardwalks** everywhere (2 m width, 3 m at pinchpoints)
- Accessible outhouse
- Accessible **picnic tables**
- Improved ramps, automated doors, accessible spaces at **Interpretive Centre**
- Inclusive signage (larger letter-size, Braille)
- Widened, improved stone-dust **pathways**
- Improved **ramps/seamless connections** between trails, onto platforms
- **Beach mat** for crossing sand & entering water at river shore
- Accessible **slope grades** on all trails
- Stability-enhanced boardwalk (bounce control)
- Raised **guardrail edges** & other tactile boardwalk features
- Accessibility enhanced **all-terrain wheelchairs for borrowing**
- Accessibility enhanced winter snow sleds for borrowing
- Improved cellular connectivity for safety throughout conservation area
- Beachside dock and lift for accessible canoeing
- **Platforms** for wetland vista and other sight lines designed for accessible viewing
- Enhanced online accessibility features
- More turnouts with accessible **benches** at regular intervals

Baxter Boardwalk



Other Enhancements Using the Matrix



Community Support

Feds grant \$429,000 for accessibility projects at RVCA properties



MANOTICK, Dec. 15, 2022 – Baxter and Chapman Mills conservation areas are fast becoming some of Ottawa's most inclusive natural parks thanks to more than \$429,000 in recent funding from the federal government. Nepean MP Chandra Arya announced the funding through the FedDev Ontario's Canada Community Revitalization Fund on Dec. 15...

Build bridges, build community: City's rural grant supports Nature For All



MANOTICK, June 3, 2022 – Baxter Conservation Area will build more than just a bridge this summer: it will build a more inclusive and accessible community, as well. The Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation is one step closer to making that dream a reality, thanks to a \$50,000 grant awarded by the...

Someone else's shoes: Cubs complete "accessibility hike" in support of Nature For All



KARS-ON-THE-RIDEAU, Dec. 2, 2021 – You've heard it before: to understand a person, you must walk a mile in their shoes. A local Cub Scouts pack did just that recently when they walked – and rolled – in the shoes of people with disabilities at Baxter Conservation Area south of...

Birthday boys forgo gifts in support of Nature For All



KARS-ON-THE-RIDEAU, June 16, 2021 – Birthdays are for having fun, and this year Michel and Philip Charron are making sure people of all abilities can get in on the fun at Baxter Conservation Area. The twin brothers from Metcalfe, ON turn 10 on June 16. Instead of gifts, they've asked their...

Key Take Aways and Lessons Learned

- Talk to the people whose needs you're trying to meet
- Accessibility doesn't always cost more money
- Think before you build – “pick up a hammer, pick up the matrix”
- What benefits one user often benefits others
- Not about making every inch accessible but every site should be accessible
- RVCA working on an accessibility matrix handbook



Thank You!



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