

# Request for Decision



To: Committee of the Whole  
From: **Deputy Manager of Operations and Sustainability**  
Date: April 8, 2019  
Subject: Lewis' Woodpecker Management Plan  
Recommendation: **THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to Council to discuss implementing the Lewis' Woodpecker Management Plan at the April 23, 2019 Regular Meeting.**

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## Background

The Urban Forest Policy No. 1105 states that the City will “identify areas with wildlife habitat value and potential danger tree issues requiring further assessment;”, and that “The City will comply with the federal Migratory Birds Convention Act, federal Species at Risk Act and the provincial Wildlife Act”. Lewis' Woodpecker use the many Cottonwood trees in the City as habitat. In fact, the City has the highest density of nesting Lewis' Woodpecker in the province. They listed as Threatened under Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. This means their critical habitat, the many Cottonwood trees used in the City, is protected by federal law.

Staff consulted a local biologist and a biologist from Environment and Climate Change Canada about the best course of action to manage Lewis' Woodpecker habitat AKA Cottonwood trees. The advice centered around showing that the City has undertaken all reasonable means to avoid or minimize harm to a species at risk. For example, when habitat is destroyed, it is expected that mitigation measures will take place. One nest tree in City Park had a plan written specifically for it. Because we have so many Cottonwood trees on public land, staff wanted to have a plan that addressed the issue across the City.

The management plan aims to guide the City in maintaining compliance with legislation, to identify appropriate land use decisions, and ultimately to maintain the breeding population of Lewis's Woodpecker. It identifies what areas are potential habitat, and how those areas should be managed. Succinctly, Cottonwood trees are to be protected, new growth restored, and disturbances minimized during the breeding season. By adopting a comprehensive plan, staff will have guidance on maintenance in the habitat areas, compliance with legislation will be enhanced, and tree removal permit applications will better demonstrate that the City has taken all reasonable means to avoid or minimize harm.

Follow up items from the plan include further study to map critical habitat at a finer scale than existing data, incorporating a LEWO Development Permit Area in the Official Community Plan, and designating some critical habitat on City land as Protected Natural Areas.

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## Benefits or Impacts

### General

Implementing the Lewis' Woodpecker Management Plan will ensure compliance with federal legislation and show proper due diligence.

### Policy/Legislation

Urban Forest Policy No. 1105

*Species at Risk Act*

Official Community Plan

## Attachments

Lewis' Woodpecker Management Plan

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## Recommendation

**THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to Council to discuss implementing the Lewis' Woodpecker Management Plan at the April 23, 2019 Regular Meeting.**

## Options

1. THAT the Committee of the Whole accepts the report.
2. THAT the Committee of the Whole does not accept the report.
3. THAT the Committee of the Whole refers the matter back to staff for further information.