



## Leitrim boardwalk construction underway

EMMA JACKSON / Ottawa This Week

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The Leitrim Wetland boardwalk construction will get under way in Findlay Creek this fall as the South Nation Conservation Authority starts cutting a 460 metre path through the provincially significant wetland.

Cutting will begin in late fall with construction of the boardwalk taking place throughout the winter and into the spring and summer of 2012. The boardwalk is expected to open next fall.

The boardwalk is being completed with the help of Tartan and Tamarack Homes, who set aside \$200 from every sale for a conservation fund to preserve the wetland directly south of the Findlay Creek community.

The wetland is provincially significant, containing three distinct habitats: marsh land, mature cedar swamp and calcareous fen, the latter being "quite rare" in the Ottawa region according to the authority's water resource specialist Katherine Watson.

"The Findlay Creek community is very fortunate in that it's located next to one of the city's natural gems, the Leitrim wetland. The wetland is provincially significant, and designated as an area of natural and scientific interest," Watson told about 70 residents at the community association's annual general meeting on Monday, Nov. 7.

The wetland is home to many different species, including 90 resident bird species year round and another 40 species during migration periods. Great blue herons nest in the old growth forest, and the red shouldered hawk and short-eared owl, both species at risk, can be found there.

The wetland also contributes to the headwaters of Findlay Creek, which is an important cool water system in the South Nation watershed.

Once the boardwalk is complete, residents will be able to walk through all three types of habitat with a lookout in the fen region. The boardwalk will link to the small conservation area on the west end of the wetland, where picnic tables and benches will be installed.

A stonedust pathway will also connect the boardwalk to the actual Findlay Creek north of Findlay Creek Drive.

Watson said the project is a good chance to teach adults and children alike about the unique biodiversity of the important wetland.

"We're really excited about this project. We think it will bring lots of opportunity for interpretive hikes and educational activities," she said.

The conservation authority's board of directors chairman Lawrence Levere was also the AGM on Nov. 7, and expressed his pride in working with the community to preserve the wetland.

"You have a small conservation area that is a jewel now and will be a jewel for many, many years to come," he told the crowd.

Watson said she anticipates even more community involvement in the future.

"We're really looking forward to working with the Findlay Creek community to ensure good stewardship of the wetland."



**Trailhead.** A sign marks the head of a future boardwalk through Leitrim Wetland in Findlay Creek. *Emma Jackson*