

KNL tree cutting can begin

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Kanata Courier-Standard | Dec 13, 2016

Tree cutting could begin before Christmas on the Kanata Lakes North Development Group's lands in the South March Highlands.

KNL Development has received an "overall benefit permit" from the Ministry of Natural Resources that allows them to remove trees for phases 7 and 8, encompassing about 75 to 100 hectares of land. The city has also granted permission to cut.

"I'm sad about it," said Kanata North Coun. Marianne Wilkinson, who estimated the work would involve about 100 hectares of land. "The city has given permission to take down all the trees, except along any on city-owned land – they have to leave six metres of trees on their property."

The timing for the tree cutting hasn't been announced but it could begin as early as this week, Wilkinson said.

Jack Stirling, consultant for KNL Development, said the group is working through the conditions set forth by the ministry before work can begin.

"The actual start date hasn't been identified yet," said Stirling on Dec. 12. "We received the permit about a week ago today and we are working through the conditions."

Stirling estimated the work would comprise about 75 hectares of treed land.

CONDITIONS

When KNL applied for the overall benefit permit earlier this year, the submission drew alarm from residents because "It sounds like you're actually killing off everything," Wilkinson said previously.

KNL had to prove to the ministry it would achieve an "overall benefit" for the threatened species, which is being achieved through a list of conditions that spans 23 pages.

The permit alters KNL's original submission slightly, and allows the developer to:

- remove up to 110 and harm up to four Butternut trees, as well as damage and destroy up to 140 hectares of Butternut habitat;
- kill, harm and harass Blanding's turtles (listed as a threatened species) and destroy up to 124 hectares of Blanding's turtle habitat;
- kill, harm and harass Least bitterns (a small heron listed as a threatened species) to construct the stormwater management infrastructure to service the development.

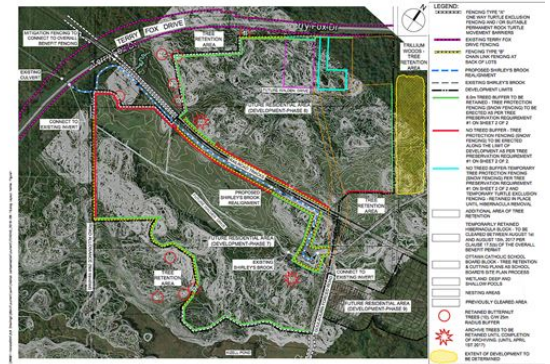
A number of conditions outlined in the permit to protect trees, animals and identified threatened species must be met before work can begin.

According to the permit, KNL must implement protection measures for the entire duration of construction for trees that are to remain in the area. Ten Butternut trees must be kept in open space blocks.

This includes working under the guidance of an arborist, erecting fences around trees that aren't to be cut down, and ensuring exhaust fumes from equipment are directed away from the tree canopy.

As well, a site visit by a city forester to check the fencing has to take place before tree cutting begins. A site supervisor has to be present for the duration of the tree cutting to make sure retained trees are not removed.

Wildlife mitigation measures must also be implemented, including helping them move, which includes those in hibernation "if they can find them," said Wilkinson. "Smaller animals that hibernate, like porcupines, they have ways to move them if they find them in time."



A map of phases 7 and 8 in the Kanata Lakes North Development Group lands, located within the South March Highlands, outlines where tree cutting will take place, as well as buffer zones and tree retention areas.

KNL is required to create six new nesting areas for Blanding's turtles, erect fencing and take other measures to protect the reptile. The developer must also create a minimum of two new ponds to either side of Shirley's Brook to function as a place for species to hibernate and as a habitat for Blanding's turtles and Least bittern.

Under the permit, KNL is required to meet certain deadlines for specific work, which is why the tree cutting needs to take place soon, said Wilkinson.

Turtle exclusion fencing must be in place before March 15, a special barrier that keeps turtles away from the road.

Clearing must halt between April 15 and Aug. 15 for bird nesting season, "unless a qualified biologist has determined that no bird nesting is occurring within five days prior to the clearing," says the city's permit.

KNL has to also realign a portion of Shirley's Brook before July 1.

"We have time frames we have to work around," said Stirling.

With approvals for tree clearing for phases 7 and 8, Stirling said KNL is likely "a couple of years away from getting their final approvals," for the residential construction.

PHASE 9, ROAD AND DRAINAGE

Work to prepare the phase 9 area has already taken place as trees were removed in that area in 2011 and 2012 . KNL hopes to have final approval in place early next year to begin the residential build.

"We're hoping to have our final approvals for stage 9 ... in place for the spring," said Stirling.

Before that, KNL will begin work on drainage and construction on Goulbourn Forced Road in the new year.

KNL entered into a front-ending agreement with the city for the work on Goulbourn Forced Road and the final drawings are going through the approval process, Stirling said.

Road construction, drainage and tree clearing "will probably be undertaken in the same time frame," he said.

Goulbourn Forced Road will be closed for a period of two to five months while the work is underway, said Wilkinson.

"There will be a period of disruption while this is going on," said the councillor.

For more information on the permit and other documents on the KNL lands, visit Ottawa.ca/devapps and search "300 Goulbourn Forced Road."

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