

OHT?seeking feedback on Badlands

The Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) and its partners are seeking feedback from the public to help guide conservation at the Cheltenham Badlands.

Public input and dialogue are an important component of the ongoing master planning efforts for the Badlands. The planning team is seeking feedback from the public and people with a connection to the site to learn more about their views, concerns and ideas.

To gather information about visitors' experiences and recommendations for the Badlands, a short survey is available online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/CheltenhamBadlands

There are also opportunities to participate in a series of upcoming public consultation meetings. The first is scheduled for Oct. 13 at the Caledon Community Complex in Caledon East, starting at 7 p.m. For more details about this and future meetings, visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/badlands

Earlier this summer, Dillon Consulting Limited was contracted to begin work on the master plan for the Badlands. As required under the Niagara Escarpment Plan, this plan will provide for an appropriate balance of resource management, environmental protection and public access to the site. The master plan will take several years to develop and implement.

Over the years, increasing numbers of visitors have accelerated the erosion of the sensitive red shale surface of the Badlands, permanently changing its unique appearance. While the master planning process is underway, the site has been temporarily closed to visitors to prevent further damage. Sections of the Bruce Trail running through other areas of the property remain open to hikers.

The Badlands is owned by OHT, which works alongside a group of partners to manage the property, including the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Region of Peel, Town of Caledon, Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club, Niagara Escarpment Commission, Credit Valley Conservation, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee and Caledon Countryside Alliance.

The striking landscape of the Cheltenham Badlands is one of Ontario's geological treasures and one of the best examples of badland topography in the province. The exposed bedrock at the Badlands is Queenston shale, and this iron-rich shale was deposited more than 445 million years ago.

Due to removal of vegetation during land clearing and livestock grazing in the early 1900s, the shale has eroded into a series of hummocks and gullies, producing the distinctive landscape.

Today, the Badlands is recognized as a provincially significant Earth Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest.