

Ministry of Transportation
Office of the Regional Director
West Region

659 Exeter Road
London, Ontario N6E 1L3
Telephone: (519) 873-4333
Facsimile: (519) 873-4236

Ministère des Transports
Bureau du directeur regional
Région de l'Ouest

659, chemin Exeter
London (Ontario) N6E 1L3
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Télécopieur : (519) 873-4236



RECEIVED

MAY 17 2013

ENGINEERING & PUBLIC WORKS
TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

May 13, 2013

Reg Russwurm, MBA, P. Eng
Director of Engineering and Public Works
Town of The Blue Mountains
26 Bridge Street E., Box 310
Thornbury, Ontario
N0H 1P0

Dear Mr. Russwurm:

**RE: Fish Barrel Beach – Temporary Access Closure
Highway 26 – Town of The Blue Mountains**

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has initiated a project for the rehabilitation of Highway 26 between Thornbury and Collingwood. The project is on the Southern Highways Program for construction starting between 2014-2016.

As part of the design and environmental assessment for this project, MTO will be investigating strategies and options for access and controlled parking for the area of shale beach (known locally as Fish Barrel beach) located immediately east of Craigeith Provincial Park.

The Fish Barrel beach area, located between Highway 26 and Georgian Bay, is owned by MTO and part of the highway right-of-way. Historically, on a limited basis, Fish Barrel beach has been used by the public for fishing, swimming and picnicking. With the Lake Huron water levels dropping over the past several years, Fish Barrel beach has significantly increased in size and therefore has seen a significant increase in use. MTO and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) have observed and been advised by local residents of the inappropriate use of the area, including overnight camping, alcohol consumption, and excessive noise during the summer months.

In consideration of the above concerns and MTO's concerns about public health, safety, and liability, as an interim step, MTO is planning for the temporary closure of the access to Fish Barrel beach. It is intended that the access to Fish Barrel beach will be closed before the end of June 2013 and remain closed until a proper long-term strategy is developed. Along with the closing, MTO will be placing a 'No Parking Zone' on both sides of Highway 26 in the vicinity of Fish Barrel beach. The 'No Parking Zone' will extend from Arrowhead Road easterly for approximately 800 - 900 m. Public access and parking to Fish Barrel beach will still be available via Craigeith Provincial Park subject to a day use permit/fee.

MTO acknowledges the Town's desire to offer waterfront access to your residents and visitors. However, MTO is not prepared to accept the liability for the current situation nor do we have the resources to maintain and monitor the use of the site. MTO is however committed to working with the Town and MNR to develop a long-term plan for Fish Barrel beach.

Should you have any questions regarding the above please contact Tanya Cross of our office at 519-873-4578.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Bentley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kevin Bentley
A/Regional Director
West Region

c: Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP - Simcoe-Grey
Bradley Fauteux - Ontario Parks, MNR
John Salo - Ontario Parks, MNR
John Fisher - Ontario Parks, MNR
Sergeant Charles Watts - Ontario Provincial Police, Thornbury Detachment