

I am currently in my 30th year teaching science at Collingwood Collegiate. I have accessed many public areas for teaching purposes including the Pretty River Provincial Park, Harbourfront Park in Collingwood, and the Craigeith Shore just to name a few. An ANSI like the one in question is exactly that: and Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. It has been singled because of its significance to all citizens, not just a few.

CCI teachers of Earth Science bring students to this ANSI each semester, every year, as this area west of the limestone pathway is Provincially Significant for its fossils. This year on September 15 a teacher visited to scout the site given higher water levels and was totally shocked that boulders and plants are now obstructing the usual path for access. Asking students to risk climbing over these rocks is dangerous. Placing of on the boulders has created substrate for weeds and non-native plants which offend the ANSI designation.

Public land is a vital resource for educational and recreational purposes, but seems to be a resource that is facing increasing pressure from private concerns. For the landowner who blocked access to a public ANSI to claim that he is only protecting it is ludicrous. Indeed, it is patently obvious that he has usurped public land for his private use. While it may be inconvenient for people to be able to walk within sight of his home, he knew what his property boundaries are and choose to erect a house that occupies most of the property. This choice does not give him the right to deny access to public land. In my opinion, the landowner should be required to remove any impediments to access public land. The alternative is the further erosion of the right of the public to access public land.

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