

MRC's new tree policy incites public action

MRC's Technical Services Director Raymond Malo, outgoing deputy prefect Gilles Farand and outgoing prefect Normand Ménard.

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VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES The MRC's Politique de l'arbre et des boisés (PAB) was officially launched last week. A 52-page document, the PAB details a set of 25 proposals to protect the rapidly dwindling woodlands that remain in Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

The PAB was adopted by the MRC during their October 22 council meeting after consultation with employees from the region's 23 municipalities and four agricultural unions.

The document also outlines the necessity of re-linking fragmented woodlands, and offers proposals to protect vegetation along streams.

Details of woodland restoration projects currently underway were not announced during the official inauguration of the PAB.

Côteau-du-Lac mayor Robert Sauvé said climate change is a concern even at a regional level. There are not sufficient powers for municipalities to protect woodlands, Sauvé also said.

"I don't think we have tools that are adequate," Sauvé said.

Trees should be replaced if they are cut down, Sauvé said.

The PAB also drew some flak from environmentalists when contacted by the Hudson/St. Lazare Gazette.

"Other economic development policies run counter to the tree policy and are oblivious to tree protection," Green Coalition transport critic Avrom Schtern said.

Terrasse-Vaudreuil District five councillor Suzanne Ferreira also said more has to be done at all levels of governance.

"Governments and municipalities should give accounts to citizens of how many trees they destroy," Ferreira said.

Île Perrot mayor Marc Roy said four trees have to be preserved by developers when buildings are constructed, and he said the woodlands west of Don Quichotte are largely preserved.

Roy also addressed recent complaints raised by cross-country skiers who saw their trail networks fragmented by residential development.

"It's private property, unfortunately," he said.

The PAB is designed to seek solutions to similar conflicts by raising awareness and attempting to enhance the value of green spaces.

The 25 "orientations" listed in the report break down into three categories: inform and sensitize, promote reforestation and protection of existing trees, and finally to enhance the value of woodlands along with good forestry practices.

Nine of the orientations deal specifically with communications, suggesting everything from tree planting days to taking part in regional and educational events.

Another nine points deal with larger-scale preservation and reforestation projects, such as consulting with agricultural land owners, municipalities and property owners with at-risk or endangered species present.

The final seven points suggest means of increasing the value of woodlands. Information sessions with municipal leaders, farmers and property owners with large forests; sharing the economic and environmental benefits of woodlands; and inviting experts to visit the region are among the final proposals listed.

Copies of the full report will be made available online in the near future, according to MRC technical service director Raymond Malo.