

# DISCUSSION PAPER

Socioeconomic Analysis Of  
Designating Wilderness Areas

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT  
PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

**PROJECT NO. 1038026**

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## **REPORT NO. 1038026**

REPORT TO

**Protected Areas Branch  
Environmental & Natural Areas  
Management Division  
Department of Environment  
5151 Terminal Road  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 2P8**

ON

**Socioeconomic Analysis of Designating  
Wilderness Areas within the Blue Mountain-  
Birch Cove Lakes,  
Ship Harbour Long Lake and  
Shelburne River Crown Parcels**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The planning, designation, and management of Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas (WAs) are the responsibility of the Department of Environment (NSE). This may be done in partnership with other agencies and through agreements with non-government organizations. In 1998, 31 areas were designated under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* (1998, c.27, amended 2005, c.56, s.18) (the Act). Two additional areas, Gully Lake and Eigg Mountain-James River WAs, were designated in 2005. In total, the 33 WAs protect approximately 295,400 hectares (ha), which represents approximately 5.3% of the land area of Nova Scotia. When all categories of legally protected land are considered, approximately 8.2% of Nova Scotia is protected.

The *Environmental Goals and Sustainability Act* (2007, c.7) focuses on the health of the environment, economy, and people of Nova Scotia. The legislation's major objective is for Nova Scotia to have one of the cleanest, most sustainable environments while achieving economic prosperity equal to or greater than the national average (Government of Nova Scotia 2008). In order to achieve this long-term objective, one of the Province's environmental goals is to ensure that 12 percent of the total land mass of Nova Scotia will be legally protected by 2015. To help meet this target, the province announced its intention to designate three new WAs on Crown lands.

Under Section 15(4) of the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* (1998, c.27, amended 2005, c.56, s.18), before the designation of a WA,

*"...a socioeconomic analysis of the impact of designation of a wilderness area shall be prepared for every wilderness area designated on Crown land after this Act comes into force..."*

This analysis is to be completed and made available to the public before a new designation is made. This study presents the results of the socioeconomic analysis. It considers a comprehensive range of social and economic benefits and costs that may be associated with designation, with the ultimate goal of providing decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public with the information to support informed discussion and judgment respecting the designation of protected WAs. The three Candidate Wilderness Areas (CWAs) under consideration are:

- Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (Halifax County);
- Ship Harbour Long Lake (Halifax County); and
- Shelburne River (Queens County).

Designated Wilderness Areas protect examples of Nova Scotia's varied landscapes, native biological diversity, and outstanding phenomena. They provide a protected land-base for scientific research, education, and a variety of recreational and nature tourism-related activities in a wilderness setting, including hiking, canoeing, kayaking, camping, sportfishing, hunting and trapping.

Designation of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, Ship Harbour Long Lake, and Shelburne River parcels as WAs will involve the loss of commercial forestry values and any mining values that may be associated with mineral rights not yet established (note that there will be no substantial effects on existing rights to develop mines). In addition to these prohibitions, the activities that may be considered

for restriction include the use of off-highway vehicles (*i.e.*, ATVs and snowmobiles), but it is important to note that no regionally-important connector trails were identified in this study that would be affected by designation for any of the CWAs. Available information indicates that some current users may be inconvenienced, but some of these impacts are largely associated with current illegal or unauthorized use. Thus, the actual impacts on vehicle users associated with designation are predicted to be small.

With designation of the three CWAs, the values that will increase include those associated with:

- Tourism;
- Research and education;
- Wilderness recreation;
- Cultural heritage;
- Existence;
- Climate change mitigation;
- Water regulation; and
- Biodiversity maintenance.

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