

Nova Scotia Wilderness Areas

Questions & Answers

Overview

Q: What are protected Wilderness Areas?

A: Wilderness Areas are significant natural areas designated under Nova Scotia's *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. These areas protect the natural environment while providing for education, research, wilderness recreation, sportfishing, hunting, and community stewardship. Most Wilderness Areas are remote with limited access.

Q: Does the Wilderness Areas Protection Act apply now?

A: Yes. The Act has been law since 1998.

Q: How were the Nova Scotia Wilderness Areas selected?

A: Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas were selected through a 7-year planning and public consultation process which started in 1990. The areas were selected based on numerous factors including how well they represent natural landscapes, the presence of outstanding natural sites or features, and opportunities for wilderness recreation.

Q: How much of the province is protected in designated Wilderness Areas?

A: Nova Scotia currently has 31 Wilderness Areas, protecting over 285 000 hectares. This area is about 19% of provincial Crown land, or just over 5% of the province. The total area protected in all land categories (provincial, federal and private) is about 8% of Nova Scotia.

Q: Where are these areas?

A: The 31 designated Wilderness Areas are distributed across Nova Scotia, and may be seen on the Nova Scotia Protected Areas Program map. All Wilderness Areas are also shown in the *Nova Scotia Atlas* (2001 - 5th edition) which is available in most bookstores.

More detailed maps showing Wilderness Area

boundaries may be available for viewing at local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or Nova Scotia Environment and Labour (NSEL) offices. You can also purchase maps of individual Wilderness Areas through the DNR library.

Q: Who takes care of these areas?

A: Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas are the responsibility of the Minister of Environment and Labour, and are managed by Nova Scotia Environment and Labour (NSEL), Protected Areas Branch.

Enforcement and field services are provided by the Department of Natural Resources. Specific aspects of Wilderness Areas, like hiking trails, may also be managed by a local community group through a management agreement with NSEL.

Q: What activities are restricted in Wilderness Areas?

A: Commercial resource development, such as forestry and road development, is not permitted. Other activities, such as mining, using a vehicle, building structures or trails, and damaging or removing plants are also prohibited, except in certain circumstances which are outlined in the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

Protection and Stewardship

Q: Why is protection of these areas important?

A: Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas are a core component of our province's contribution to a worldwide effort to protect wild places. Protected natural spaces provide numerous essential services, such as conserving biological diversity, protecting important habitat, improving air quality, creating and protecting soils and providing clean water. Wilderness Areas act as natural laboratories in which to monitor the natural world and learn how ecosystems function and respond to stresses.

Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas also provide high quality wilderness recreation opportunities, foster healthy lifestyles, and offer places for spiritual renewal and inspiration in an increasingly busy and crowded world.

Q: What can I do to support Wilderness Area protection?

A: Public involvement plays an important role in developing effective plans and enhancing stewardship of Wilderness Areas. If you or your community group is interested in becoming involved in stewardship of a specific Wilderness Area, please contact the appropriate Regional Protected Areas office.

Q: Is forest harvesting permitted?

A: No. Forest harvesting is not permitted in designated Wilderness Areas.

Q: Is mining permitted?

A: Mining is not permitted in designated Wilderness Areas except where pre-existing commitments were made. Valid mineral rights which were held prior to the 1993 moratorium for the 31 areas now designated as Wilderness Areas will be honoured. In such cases, activities associated with mineral exploration and/or development must be conducted under the terms of a licence issued by the Minister of Environment and Labour.

Q: Is scientific research permitted?

A: Yes. Scientific research is encouraged. Research activities must not degrade the Wilderness Area. A permit or letter of approval is required from Protected Areas Branch for all scientific research. Please contact the NSEL Protected Areas Ecologist in the Central Region office for details on filing a scientific research permit application.

Q: Can I build a hiking trail or develop a site for camping?

A: All construction and site clearing must be approved by Nova Scotia Environment and Labour. Groups who are interested in developing hiking trails should contact a Regional Protected Areas office.

Q: Can I take shed antlers, harvest berries, or collect other natural materials?

A: No. Natural materials are protected from removal. To keep human impact to a minimum, users are encouraged to leave natural items as they are. They are important to the ecosystems which are protected in Wilderness Areas and add to people's wilderness experience.

If you choose to pick berries for personal consumption, please keep your harvest modest, and limit picking to areas of abundance.

Recreation

Q: How do I access a Wilderness Area?

A: Most Wilderness Areas are difficult to access and are not marked for public access in any way. Some developed hiking trails have directional signage. Many "traditional" (non-maintained) access routes exist, and can be found on maps or by talking to residents near Wilderness Areas.

Q: Do I need to register or get a permit to visit a Wilderness Area?

A: No. Registration or permission is not required to visit a Wilderness Area at this time.

Q: Are there any special rules I need to know before going to a Wilderness Area?

A: Yes. Standards and guidelines for recreational users are outlined in the brochure *Keep It Wild - a guide for low impact recreation in Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas*.

If you choose to explore a Wilderness Area, please recognize that you are on your own, and accept responsibility for your personal health and safety.

Q: Are there any hiking trails in Wilderness Areas?

A: Yes. There are currently three developed hiking trails in Wilderness Areas: the Kenomee Canyon trail in Economy Wilderness Area, the North River Falls Trail in North River Wilderness Area, and the North and South Granite Ridge Trails in White

Lake Wilderness Area. Information on these trails and other Nova Scotia trails is available in the brochure *Take a Hike - scenic hiking destinations*.

There are also numerous traditionally used routes for hiking, canoeing and coastal kayaking. Please check locally when considering travel along such routes.

Q: Can I camp in a Wilderness Area?

A: Yes. There are no campgrounds or facilities in Wilderness Areas, but overnight camping is permitted at designated campsites. If there is no designated campsite in a Wilderness Area, camping is permitted anywhere as long as you follow low-impact standards and guidelines outlined in the *Keep it Wild* brochure.

Q: Can I have a campfire?

A: Yes. Campfires are permitted in existing campfire rings, or by using a fire box or pan. For details on the standards for camping and campfires, please refer to the *Keep It Wild* brochure, or the *Order on Camping and Lighting of Fires* issued by the Minister of Environment & Labour.

Q: Is sport fishing, hunting and trapping permitted?

A: Yes. During the provincial public consultation, Nova Scotians made it clear that they value these natural areas for hunting and angling. Hunting, trapping, and sport fishing is permitted under the same rules that apply to these activities on other public lands.

Q: Can I use a vehicle, bicycle, snowmobile, or motorboat in a Wilderness Area?

A: To help protect the environment and wilderness experience, vehicle and bicycle use is generally prohibited in Wilderness Areas.

Snowmobiles may be permitted on designated and managed routes, and other vehicle access may be permitted by a licence in specific circumstances.

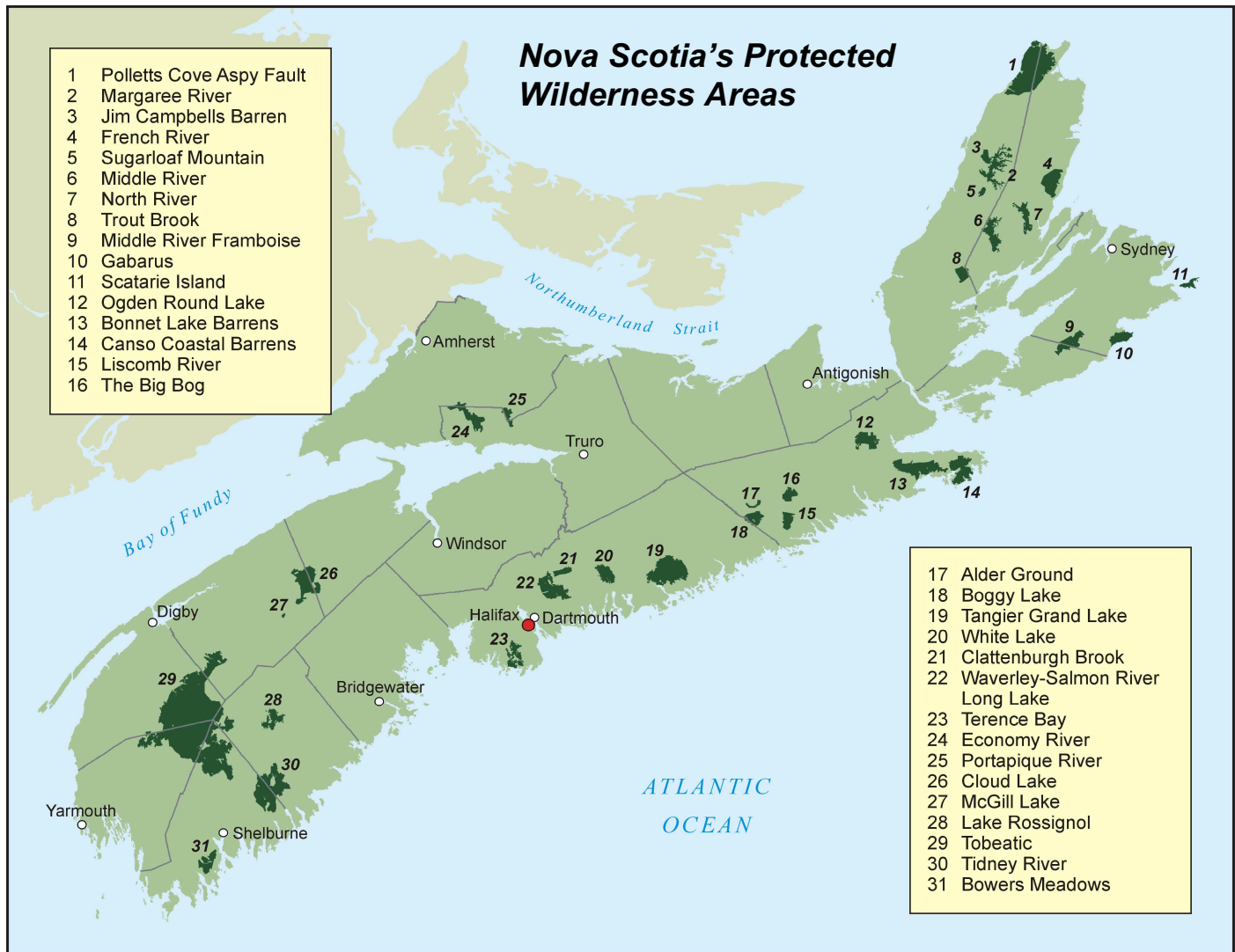
As an interim measure, unless otherwise stated, motorboat use is permitted in Wilderness Area by individuals with a valid fishing licence for the purpose of sport fishing.

For details on vehicle use, please contact a Regional Protected Areas office.

Q: Are there any guided trips in Wilderness Areas?

A: Yes. Several guides and outfitters lead trips into Wilderness Areas. Check locally or in tourism publications for additional information.





For More Information

Pick up these publications at your regional NSEL or DNR office or view them on the Protected Areas website:

- *Keep It Wild* - a guide for low impact recreation in Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas
- Order on Camping and Lighting of Fires
- *Protecting Wilderness* - a summary of Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas Protection Act
- *Take a Hike* - scenic hiking destinations (not available on website)

Wilderness Areas are mapped in *The Nova Scotia Atlas (2001 - 5th ed.)* available at bookstores. Maps for individual Wilderness Areas are available at Department of Natural Resources Library, Founders Square, Hollis Street, Halifax (Tel: 424-8633).

Protected Areas Branch, NSEL

Website: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas

Email: protectedareas@gov.ns.ca

Western Regional Office

60 Logan Road, Bridgewater, NS B4V 3J8

Tel: (902) 543-4685

Central Regional Office

5151 Terminal Road, Halifax, NS B3J 2T8

Tel: (902) 424-2117

Eastern Regional Office

295 Charlotte Street, Sydney, NS B1P 6H7

Tel: (902) 563-2100