

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area

In October 2007, the province publicly announced its plans to designate Crown lands of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes area of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

The 1,350 hectare (3,350 acre) candidate wilderness area includes forests, lakes, barrens, and wetlands. The wilderness area will protect valued wildlife habitat and a range of wilderness recreation opportunities, all within minutes of Atlantic Canada's largest urban centre.

Before a candidate wilderness area is officially designated, the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* requires a period of public consultation to ensure groups and individuals can comment on the designation decision. A socio-economic analysis of the effects of designation is also required and is currently in progress. A summary of the comments and the socio-economic report will be released later this summer.

This newsletter describes the candidate wilderness area and provides background information to help generate discussion and public comment.

Tell Us What You Think

Government is inviting public comment on the decision to designate Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area. The goal is to complete the consultation and designate the area by fall 2008.

Help us meet this goal by taking part in public open houses:

Wednesday **July 2, 2008** at the Keshen Goodman Public Library in Halifax from **11:00 am - 1:00 pm**

Monday **July 7, 2008** from **6:30 - 8:30 pm** at the St. Margaret's Centre in Upper Tantallon

To share your thoughts - submit comments in person at an open house; request a meeting for your group or organization; or call or write the Protected Areas Branch of Nova Scotia Environment. Please comment by August 22, 2008 to ensure your views are considered.

"This will be Nova Scotia's first urban wilderness area; protecting air quality, watersheds, and natural ecosystems. For many this will be a wilderness in their own backyard - a beautiful natural area right in the provincial capital."

Mark Parent, Minister of Environment



Photo: David Yound

Contact Information

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Background



As a wilderness area, Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes will protect exceptional near-urban outdoor education and recreation experiences. It will also help provide better air quality, watershed protection, and nature conservation.

Protected “green” spaces are also recognized as an important element of good city planning. Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will protect Crown lands that would support the future regional park HRM wishes to establish in this area. It helps to reduce HRM’s footprint of urban development, and contributes to the municipality’s “smart growth” approach.

The new wilderness area will contribute to meeting the Province’s goal of protecting 12% of Nova Scotia’s landmass by the year 2015, as stated in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will provide a foundation for prosperity by helping make our province and HRM attractive places to live, work, and do business. The Province will collaborate with HRM to explore options for managing the new wilderness area.

Location and Boundary Selection

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Candidate Wilderness Area is located on Crown land within HRM, between Highway 103 and the Bicentennial Highway, and adjacent to the Bayers Lake Business Park (see map). The proposed boundary for the candidate wilderness area includes Crown land with high ecological and outdoor recreation values. This boundary also reflects recommendations made in the environmental assessment (EA) focus report as part of the ongoing EA process for the proposed highway 113.



For general information on Wilderness Areas please refer to the Protected Areas web site or contact us for copies of these publications:

- [Nova Scotia Wilderness Areas: Questions and Answers](#)
- [Wilderness Areas Protection Act](#)
- [Protecting Wilderness: A Summary of Nova Scotia’s Wilderness Areas Protection Act](#)
- [Keep it Wild: A Guide to Low Impact Recreation in Nova Scotia’s Wilderness Areas](#)

www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas

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Wilderness Area Values



Connected Waterways

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will protect a system of interconnected lakes, streams, and wetlands, including frontage on 17 lakes and ponds. These undeveloped waterways are important habitat for fish, waterfowl, and other aquatic dependent species.

Opportunity exists for high quality lake-to-lake canoeing, with much of the route on lakes within the candidate area including Ash, Crane, Three Finger, and Big Cranberry Lakes. There is potential to link to the Nine Mile River system to the southwest via Fraser Lake.

Natural Features

The candidate area encompasses a diversity of ecosystems including a number of significant forest types such as older stands of red oak, red spruce and uncommon jack pine. Numerous wetlands (including bogs, fens and swamps), granite barrens and cliffs, as well as lakes, streams and stillwaters fall within the candidate area boundary.

Landscape Representation

The new wilderness area will provide representation of two of Nova Scotia's Natural Landscapes: South Mountain Rolling Plain and Central Quartzite Hills and Plains.

Rare Species

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will help protect habitats and species which depend on interior forests, riparian corridors, wetlands and granite barrens. The candidate area is also known for some uncommon bird and plant species, including a rare arctic-alpine plant called mountain sandwort.

Wilderness Recreation and Education

With its scenic views and natural setting, the area offers a range of exceptional outdoor education and wilderness recreation opportunities in a near-urban setting. Hiking, camping, canoeing, swimming, angling, hunting, trapping, and cross-country skiing are all within minutes of downtown Halifax. Blue Mountain Hill is the highest point on the Chebucto Peninsula and is a popular destination for hikers, providing an exceptional view of the surrounding lands.

Ecosystem Services

Protecting the lands and waters within the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will help maintain air and water quality within HRM.



Comments / Questions

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