



# Winter 2021 Parks and Protected Areas Consultation

February 3<sup>rd</sup> – April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Prepared by Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change



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## Overview

This document provides a summary of what we heard during the public consultation (February 3 – April 13, 2021) on eight proposed wilderness areas and expansions, and four provincial park sites and expansions in Nova Scotia. A separate formal consultation was completed with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

On February 3, 2021 the Province started the required consultation for the wilderness areas and park sites. Seven sites are additions to existing wilderness areas, one site is a new wilderness area. Three sites are new park designations, one is an addition to an existing park. Public consultation of at least 60 days is required for new wilderness areas and additions to existing wilderness areas under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

For all sites, the focus of the consultation was on proposed changes since the release of the Parks and Protected Areas Plan in 2013, because earlier consultation was completed as part of that process.

The current consultation process was supported by an interactive web map and site descriptions. A copy of site descriptions and maps available during the consultation is available in Appendix A. The consultation asked for comments on the following proposed parks, wilderness areas and wilderness area additions:

- ▶ Dunns Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- ▶ Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (expansion), Halifax Regional Municipality
- ▶ Economy River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties
- ▶ Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area (expansion), Antigonish
- ▶ Five Islands Provincial Park (expansion), Colchester County
- ▶ Medway Lakes Wilderness Area (expansion), Annapolis County
- ▶ Middle River-Framboise Wilderness Area (expansion), Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- ▶ Monks Head Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- ▶ Pomquet Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- ▶ Portapique River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties
- ▶ Sackville River Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality
- ▶ Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland County

Several methods were used to notify the public about the open consultation process. On February, 2 2021, the Province issued a news release announcing the consultation. On February 3, 2021, an email was sent to individuals and organizations who had indicated interest in information about protected areas consultations. The consultation was communicated through Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change's website and the Department's Facebook and Twitter channels. Advertisements were placed in the following media outlets (copy of advertisements in Appendix B):

- ▶ The Chronicle Herald
- ▶ Progress Bulletin
- ▶ South Shore Breaker
- ▶ Tri-county Vanguard
- ▶ Antigonish Casket
- ▶ Guysborough Journal



## Summary Consultation Results

A total of 653 unique responses were submitted from individuals and organizations across the province. More than half of comments concerned the proposed Sackville River Wilderness Area, with a total of 361 unique comments. Comments were submitted by:

- ▶ E-mail to [protectedareas@novascotia.ca](mailto:protectedareas@novascotia.ca)
- ▶ Phone
- ▶ Letters to Nova Scotia Environment
- ▶ Letters to the Minister of Environment
- ▶ Comments received through communications with staff or during meetings

The most common method of submitting public comments was email. There was some duplication of emailed and posted letters, and these were cross referenced so that the same submission was not double counted. Several respondents took the opportunity to comment on sites and issues not part of this consultation. Such feedback was noted for future reference.

A number of respondents indicated they were submitting a response on behalf of an organization or were a member of an organization. Below is a list of organizations that respondents indicated they were affiliated with. Please note that individuals are not included in the list below:

- ▶ All Terrain Vehicle Association Nova Scotia (ATVANS)
- ▶ Antigonish Rivers Association
- ▶ Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Nova Scotia
- ▶ Cliffs of Fundy Geopark
- ▶ Cumberland Wilderness
- ▶ Ecology Action Centre
- ▶ Elemental Energy
- ▶ Friends of Nature
- ▶ Hike Nova Scotia
- ▶ Isle Royale ATV Club
- ▶ Lucasville Greenway Society
- ▶ Mining Association of Nova Scotia
- ▶ Municipality of Cumberland County
- ▶ Nova Scotia Power
- ▶ Royal Canadian Legion Calais Branch 162
- ▶ Sackville NS Lions Club
- ▶ Sackville Rivers Association
- ▶ Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia
- ▶ St. Mary's River Association

Highlights include:

- ▶ Over 98% of respondents indicated support for land protection.
- ▶ 42% of all respondents submitted general comments for all areas under consideration.
- ▶ The remainder of comments were site specific, sometimes naming more than one site in a submission.
- ▶ Most respondents valued areas for the protection of biodiversity, and the preservation of habitat for fish and wildlife.
- ▶ Potential for non-motorized access and recreational opportunities such as paddling.
- ▶ Potential for economic development or benefits resulting from environmental protection.
- ▶ Desire to protect lands valued for traditional recreational use, such as hunting, fishing, and camping.
- ▶ Concern about loss of motorized vehicle access.
- ▶ Concern about loss of hunting and trapping access.
- ▶ Concern that land protection may limit future economic development in some areas, particularly mining.

Detailed information about what we heard about individual sites is included in the following sections.





## Area specific comments

### **Dunns Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County**

Thirteen (13) unique responses were submitted for this area. Generally, respondents supported the designation. A few comments indicated support was tied to the ability to continue traditional activities in the area such as hunting waterfowl. Department of Natural Resources and Renewables staff met with several members of the community to discuss these concerns and gain a better understanding of this usage, and where it has been taking place.

Some respondents noted the ecological importance of the area and suggested doing as much as possible to protect ecological integrity, and afford the greatest protections for species such as Piping Plover.

There were a few suggestions to consolidate Pomquet Beach, Dunns Beach, and Monks Head into one provincial park for the official designation.

### **Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (expansion), Halifax Regional Municipality**

Eleven (11) unique responses were submitted for this area. All responses to this protection proposal voiced support for the addition to Gerard Island with many noting that Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area contains diverse coastal ecosystems, including coastal barrens, tidal salt marshes, barachois ponds, coastal boreal rainforests, headlands, beaches, and estuarine flats. They stated the importance of ecosystems to provide habitat for seabirds and waterfowl.

Recreation and tourism activities, such as sea kayaking and hiking, are popular within Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area.

### **Economy River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties**

Eight (8) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents indicated support for the expansion of the Economy River Wilderness Areas. They emphasized the importance of large and contiguous areas to species sensitive to disturbance, such as endangered mainland moose. Further, it was noted the expansion will protect forested ecosystem types and rare plant species that are not found within the existing wilderness area boundaries.

There was support for enhanced protection along recreational trails. Some respondents stated that multiple and potentially-conflicting values and uses must be well managed to minimize disturbance to moose, and other species sensitive to human activities. Some indicated support for OHV use in the area, and some indicated they would prefer no OHV use in the area.



Some concern was expressed that designation of 372 hectares of the proposed addition will only occur if mineral rights are not issued within a year or once any issued rights expire.

Letters were sent to campsite lease holders and the municipality; no concerns were raised.

### **Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area (expansion), Antigonish**

Six (6) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents expressed support for the expansion. The area is valued for its ecology, and the protection of biodiversity, and respondents noted that the James River is an important river for spawning Brook and brown trout, as well as the Atlantic salmon and other aquatic species.

### **Five Islands Provincial Park (expansion), Colchester County**

Three (3) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents supported the park expansion on the basis of ecological and Mi'kmaw cultural values. Some requested additional camping spaces be added to expand potential use of the area.

### **Medway Lakes Wilderness Area (expansion), Annapolis County**

Forty four (44) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents submitted detailed comments for this area, indicating support for protection. The ecological values, recreation opportunities, and cultural significance of the area to the Mi'kmaq were noted.

Many respondents requested to expand the boundary beyond what was consulted on. Specifically, there were requests to:

- ▶ enlarge the proposed addition northwest of Frog Lake to better connect the eastern and western portions of Medway Lakes Wilderness Area
- ▶ add Little Bear Lake and surrounding lands, northeast of Alma Lake
- ▶ add 925 hectares at Little Cranberry Lake (disjunct parcel east of the existing wilderness area)

It was noted that Little Bear Lake is a pristine (no developments) headwater lake providing protection for the waters of the Medway Lakes Wilderness Area. One respondent indicated that there is a large amount of old growth forest in the suggested addition, including some trees aged at over 300 years.

Some respondents suggested adding the Crown road corridor located west of Frog Lake to the wilderness area to restrict access. Other suggestions included restricting traffic on the road to a limited number of days a week, and no traffic during nesting season.

### **Middle River-Framboise Wilderness Area (expansion), Cape Breton Regional Municipality**

Four (4) unique responses were submitted for this area. Generally, respondents indicated support for the proposed expansion (multiple parcels).

Some respondents suggested a boundary adjustment on the southern side of Middle River – Framboise Wilderness Area to include an area of known high occurrence of boreal felt lichen.

### **Monks Head Provincial Park, Antigonish County**

Thirteen (13) unique responses were submitted for this area. Generally, respondents supported the designation. A few comments indicated support was tied to the ability to continue traditional activities in the area such as hunting waterfowl, hunting other game, and trapping. Department of Natural Resources and Renewables staff met with several members of the community to discuss these concerns and gain a better understanding of this usage, and where it has been taking place.

Some respondents noted the ecological importance of the areas and suggested doing as much as possible to protect ecological integrity, and afford the greatest protections for species such as Piping Plover.

There were a few suggestions to consolidate Pomquet Beach, Dunns Beach, and Monks Head into one provincial park for the official designation.

### **Pomquet Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County**

Thirteen (13) unique responses were submitted for this area. Generally, respondents supported the designation. A few comments indicated support was tied to the ability to continue traditional activities in the area such as hunting waterfowl, hunting other game, and trapping. Department of Natural Resources and Renewables staff met with several members of the community to discuss these concerns and gain a better understanding of this usage, and where it has been taking place.

Some respondents noted the ecological importance of the area and suggested doing as much as possible to protect ecological integrity, and afford the greatest protections for species such as Piping Plover.

There were a few suggestions to consolidate Pomquet Beach, Dunns Beach, and Monks Head into one provincial park for the official designation

### **Portapique River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties**

Four (4) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents supported the expansion of Portapique River Wilderness Area and noted the significance of the multiple ecological and other recreational values for this site. These forests provide habitat for the endangered mainland moose.

There was some concern that designation of an additional 154 hectares will only occur after completion of an existing geological research project that overlaps with these lands, and once any mineral rights that may be issued as a result of this research expire. It was proposed that designation of these 154 hectares be included in the expansion without these conditions.

Some respondents asked that no OHV trails be authorized in the new area, due to hilly terrain, moose habitat, and the overwintering areas for deer. Other respondents indicated support for limited OHV use.

### **Sackville River Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality**

Three hundred and sixty one (361) unique comments were submitted for this area, voicing support for the designation of Sackville River Wilderness Area.

Respondents noted the proposed Sackville River Wilderness Area contains important conservation values, including intact forests and wetland ecosystems, representation of the Sackville Drumlins Natural Landscape, and frontage on the Sackville River. This wilderness area was noted as being significant for community recreational activities in a near-urban setting, such as hiking, biking, paddling, hunting, fishing, and cross-country skiing. Comments also indicated that protection of the area is supported by local businesses for its nature tourism potential. It was also noted that the area forms an important connectivity corridor across the northern section of the Halifax Greenbelt.

Many felt the proposed wilderness area boundary is too small and proposed addition of adjacent Crown lands, particularly on the eastern side of the wilderness area. These lands were noted as including a variety of conservation values, including intact forests, old forest stands, floodplain forests, frontage on Beaver Bank River and Jarrett's Brook, wetland ecosystems, vernal pools, ephemeral river channels, diverse habitat mosaic, species of significance, wildlife corridors, natural red pine stands, and landscape representation. It was noted these adjacent public lands include key public access points and important recreation opportunities.



Multiple comments showed support for allowing continued use of the Sandbar Drive to Brushy Hill off-highway vehicle trail. Respondents indicated it is an important connector trail for many ATV enthusiasts in the area from Springfield Lake and Patton Road area subdivisions to access to Beaver Bank and Mount Uniacke areas.

A few respondents stated they felt off-highway vehicle use should not be allowed within this area, due to its near-urban location and popularity for non-motorized use.

### **Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland County**

Ten (10) unique responses were submitted for this area. Respondents supported the Wentworth Valley Wilderness area expansion. The area was noted to be of high ecological value, and there was some interest expressed in the potential for mountain biking and single-track trail development.

The access off Highway #4, within one parcel of the proposed expansion, was noted as being critical to offer users entry to the area. Local respondents noted that over the winter there were regularly 10 cars parked along the highway on weekends. Snowshoers were accessing the old woods roads in the wilderness area. It was suggested a small parking lot be developed adjacent to the highway to allow hikers and snowshoers off-highway parking when they access the area. From this area visitors quickly enter the wilderness area and encounter old forest and a series of beautiful waterfalls.

Respondents noted that Higgins Brook contains mature tolerant hardwood forest and old red spruce-dominated stands, and provides habitat for endangered mainland moose. Sighting of fishers and pileated woodpeckers were reported in the area by respondents.

Several additional Crown parcels were also proposed for designation.

# Appendix A – Site descriptions and maps

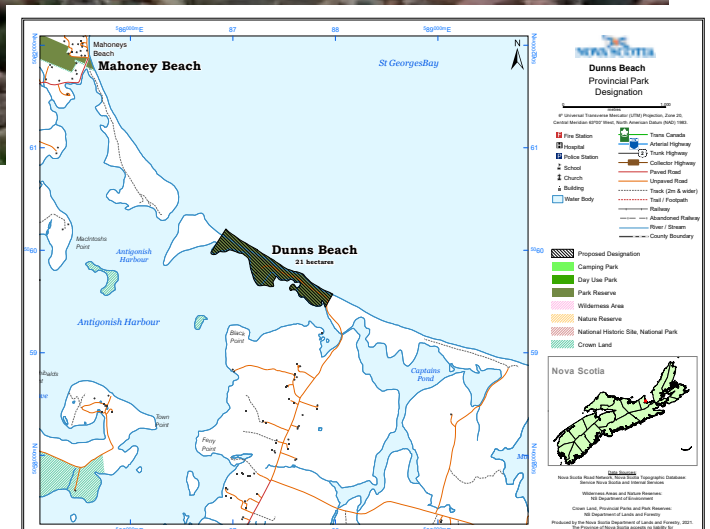
## Dunns Beach Provincial Park

Dunns Beach forms part of a provincially-significant coastal system along with Monks Head and Pomquet Beach, protecting more than nine kilometers of beach ecosystems along St. Georges Bay. Dunns Beach includes 21 hectares of land, including sandy beach, small wetlands, and forested backshores comprised of softwood and mixedwood species.

The endangered Piping Plover have been reported at Dunns Beach. Dunns Beach is protected under the *Beaches Act* (Dunns and Monks Head Protected Beach) and is susceptible to coastal processes and erosion.



Dunns Beach Provincial Park



## Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (expansion)

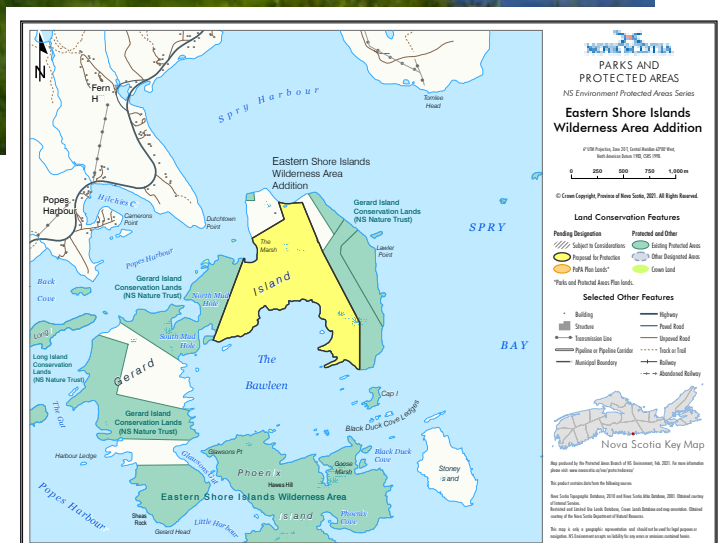
[Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area](#) protects hundreds of islands and island properties along 75 km of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, between Clam Harbour in Halifax County and Marie Joseph in Guysborough County. The total area is about 1,850 hectares.

A proposed 82 hectare addition will protect rocky shores and coastal forest on Gerard Island. This parcel was recently acquired by the Province through a title clarification process. Much of the parcel is bordered by properties which have been secured and protected by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust as part of its "100 Wild Islands" conservation initiative.

Adding this parcel to Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area supports efforts by multiple partners to secure and protect islands and certain headlands along the Eastern Shore and to provide opportunities for Nova Scotians and visitors to experience this wild coast.



Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (expansion)





## **Economy River Wilderness Area (expansion)**

[Economy River Wilderness Area](#) is a 6,145 hectare (ha) protected forest wilderness in the heart of the Cobequid Mountains, between Economy and Springhill. This is a scenic landscape of hardwood and conifer forest uplands and steep-sided, mixed forest ravines and canyons, with fast flowing streams and river.

A proposed addition of about 5,504 ha of Crown land will almost double the size of Economy River Wilderness Area to more than 11,600 ha. Most of these lands are identified for protection in the 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan. This includes the following:

1. About 2,100 ha between Wyvern and Leamington, over half of which was acquired for protection from J.D. Irving in 2010;
2. About 2,400 ha between Lynn and British Lake and from British Lake to River Phillip Road, most of which was acquired for protection from Northern Pulp in 2010. This portion includes 118 ha next to River Phillip Road which is not identified for protection in the Parks and Protected Areas Plan; and
3. About 1,000 ha at the southern end of Economy River Wilderness Area, consisting of:
  - a. a parcel along 3 km of the lower Economy River, which includes the Devils Bend hiking trail, managed by Kenomee Trail Society
  - b. certain parcels along the north side of Pleasant River Road, and
  - c. lands around the western and southern side of Economy Lake.

Expanding this regionally-significant wilderness area will help species that are sensitive to disturbance, such as endangered mainland moose, and protect forested ecosystem types and rare plant species not found in the existing wilderness area.

The addition expands the protected land base for nature tourism and wilderness recreation, adding to existing opportunities for hiking, camping, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and other activities at Economy River Wilderness Area.

Almost the entire 24 km+ Kenomee Canyon hiking trail system will now be within the wilderness area, including most of the Devils Bend trail, south of Economy Falls. Protection of these lands complements Cliffs of Fundy Geopark, which recognizes Economy Falls as a highlight of the Geopark.

To maintain connectivity of the regional off-highway vehicle trail system, additional off-highway vehicle trails will be designated, adding to those already designated within Economy River Wilderness Area. Nova Scotia Environment intends to amend existing provincial trail management agreements with SANS and ATVANS to allow continued use and management of the following trails within the addition:

- ▶ Route 1 – an additional portion of River Philip Road
- ▶ Route 13 – portion which connects to River Philip Road
- ▶ Route 3 – located east of Lynn
- ▶ Route 5 – between Wyvern and Leamington Brook
- ▶ Route 104 – adding to portion of 104 already authorized (SANS only)

Where access to private properties crosses lands of the addition, such access will be licensed by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Access needs will be discussed with landowners on a case-by-case basis.

Campsite leases within the addition will be honoured under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. Vehicle access to campsites in a wilderness area can be licensed by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the interim camp owners may continue to access their campsites by vehicle on existing and direct routes, subject to any other applicable rules or regulations.

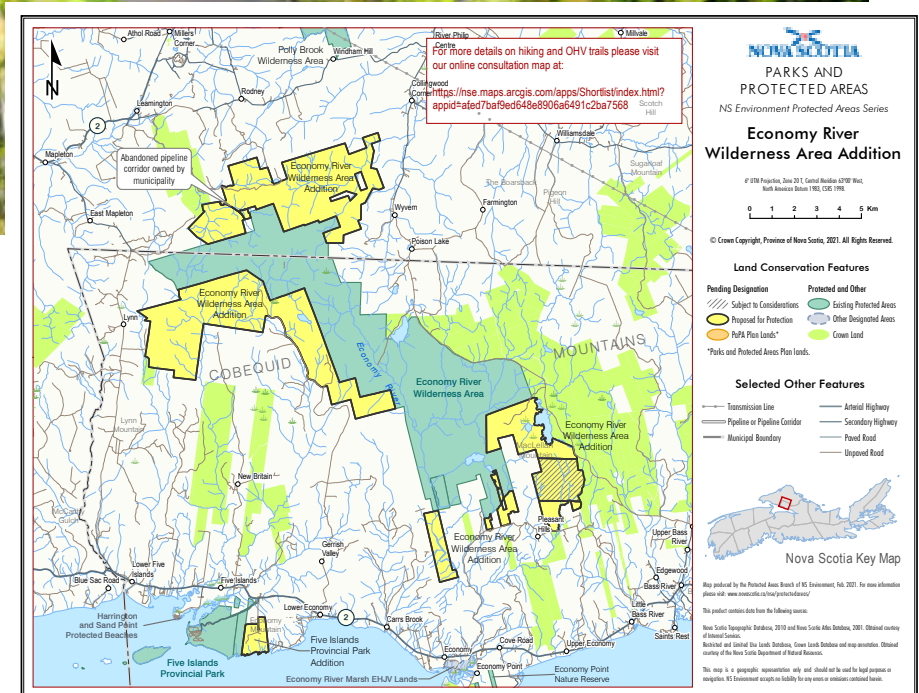
The northern part of the addition overlaps with part of the Leamington Brook watershed, which provides drinking water to Springhill. Protection of these lands as wilderness area supports the Municipality of Cumberland County's efforts to protect this drinking water supply area. Nova Scotia Environment recognizes Cumberland County's interest as a water works operator and, if necessary, will issue a license that enables the municipality to undertake waterworks-related activities on lands under wilderness area designation.

An additional 372 ha south of Economy Lake is identified for protection in the Parks and Protected Areas Plan, subject to addressing mineral rights. This area also includes a campsite lease. The overlapping mineral rights have expired. As a next step, the Department of Energy and Mines will have one year to issue new rights. Legal protection of this additional 372 ha will come into effect if no new rights are issued within one year of designation of the addition or once any new mineral rights that may be issued expire. The entire addition may therefore eventually be as large as 5,504 ha + 372 ha, or 5,876 ha.

The focus of this consultation is to seek comment on the planned addition.



## Economy River Wilderness Area (expansion)





## **Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area (expansion)**

[Eigg Mountain-James River Wilderness Area](#) protects about 7,644 hectares of hardwood hills and mixed forest ravines in the uplands about 10 km northwest of the Town of Antigonish. The wilderness area encompasses most of watershed of the Town's James River drinking water supply and includes about 1,400 hectares owned by the Town.

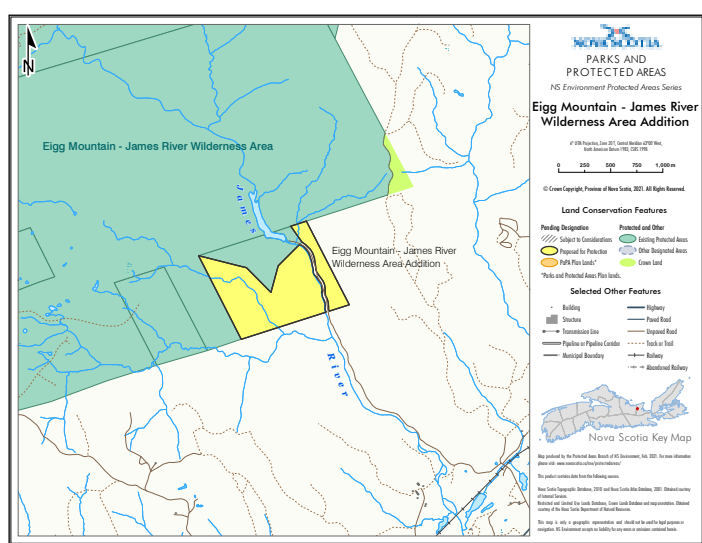
A proposed 59 ha addition will add to the wilderness area several adjoining, forested Crown parcels along both sides of James River, just below a reservoir dam on James River. These lands were acquired for protection in 2014. The addition will also include about 700 m of the river, which provides spawning habitat for the West River Atlantic salmon population.

The addition does not include a road parcel owned by the Town of Antigonish, used to access the Town's dam on James River. If necessary, Nova Scotia Environment will amend an existing license with the Town under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* to enable the Town to access or manage lands within or adjacent to the addition to meet its responsibilities as a drinking water supply operator.

Adding these parcels to the wilderness area will increase the amount of protected intact forest in the James River watershed and help support efforts to conserve Atlantic salmon.



# Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area (expansion)



## **Five Islands Provincial Park (expansion)**

Five Islands Provincial Park is a 510-hectare camping park that is currently designated under the *Provincial Parks Act*. It is situated on the shores of the Bay of Fundy and attracts thousands of visitors with over 2,500 hikers and over 5,000 campsites booked per season. Popular activities include coastal exploration, picnicking, hiking, and snowshoeing. The park landbase has been recognized as having significance to Mi'kmaq culture and history.

The camping park has had significant upgrades in recent years. In 2014, redevelopment of the campground included upgrades to the water system, including a new dishwasher station and water distribution lines, reconfiguration of the main camping loop including better accommodations for larger recreational vehicles (31 new sites), reconfiguration of existing RV campsites (13 new sites), (5) new walk-in sites, new vault toilets, an interior connecting trail system and an extensive surface drainage system. In 2016, the main park entry road was repaved and in 2018 the park saw additional upgrades of water and electrical services to the new campsites. A tree-planting program was initiated in 2020 with almost nine thousand trees (red spruce, eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, sugar maple, red oak, mountain ash and yellow birch) being planted in previously disturbed areas within the park. For more information on park facilities and services please visit <https://parks.novascotia.ca/park/five-islands>

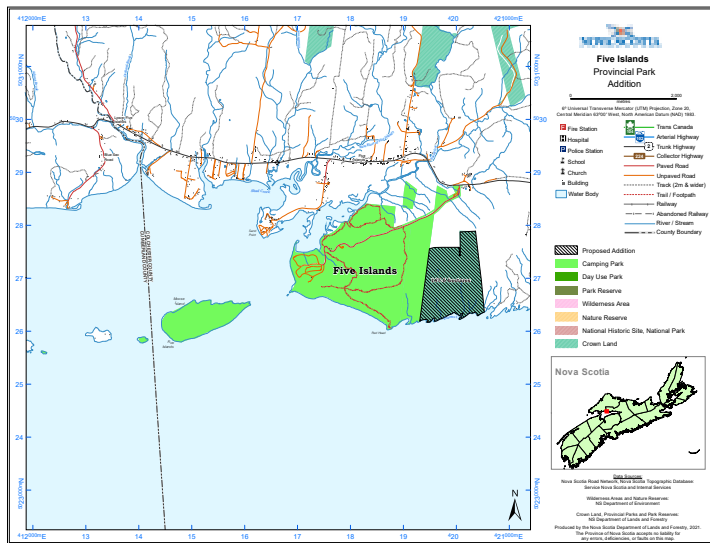
Beyond the campground, the park features a relatively large, undisturbed coastal area that contributes to Provincial protection goals.

In 2018, the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables acquired a 147.6-hectare property that abuts the eastern park boundary. This property includes over 1 kilometer of coastline including Dixons Cove and large tracks of inland forests. Some forested areas have been harvested in the past with natural regeneration occurring. Forest cover is predominately softwood, with mixedwood and hardwood stands occurring. It is recommended that this property is added to Five Islands Provincial Park to further management objectives of protecting natural and cultural heritage values, while providing opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.





# Five Islands Provincial Park (expansion)



## **Medway Lakes Wilderness Area (expansion)**

[Medway Lakes Wilderness Area](#) protects over 19,650 hectares (ha) of woodlands and waterways in the headwaters of the Medway and Mersey Rivers, Annapolis County. It provides habitat for many species and is a popular outdoor and wilderness recreation destination.

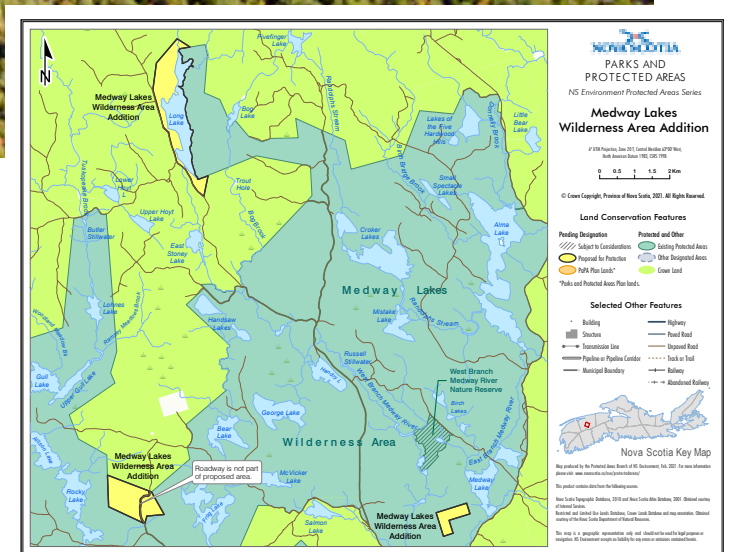
A proposed 429 ha addition will add the following Crown lands to the wilderness area:

- 1.** 121 ha between Frog Lake and Rocky Lake to provide better long-term connection between eastern and western portions of Medway Lakes Wilderness Area. Most of the forest here was harvested in recent years. The main forest access road passing through this area is not part of the addition, however this road remains closed to public vehicle use.
- 2.** 268 ha at Long Lake, consisting of the lake plus mature and older woodlands immediately west of the lake. The western boundary is along a well used forest access road. Ongoing use of the road will not be affected. The road enables easy day-use excursions at this beautiful lake.
- 3.** A 40 ha forested parcel located southwest of Medway Lake. This relatively remote parcel is fully surrounded by Medway Lakes Wilderness Area and was acquired for protection in 2020.

Adding these parcels to Medway Lakes Wilderness Area will improve ecological connectivity within the wilderness area, eliminate an inholding, protect mature to old forest, and maintain the beauty and recreational appeal of Long Lake.



## Medway Lakes Wilderness Area (expansion)





## Middle River-Framboise Wilderness Area (expansion)

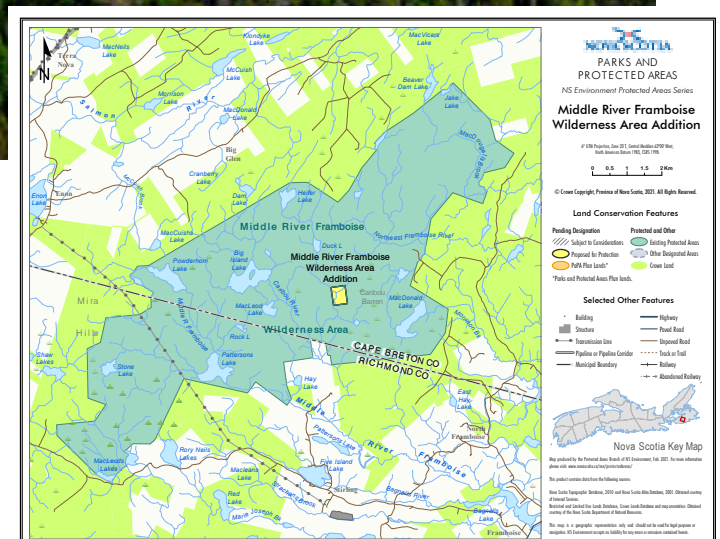
The 5,640 hectare (ha) [Middle River Framboise Wilderness Area](#) protects a patchy mix of hardwood and mixed forest drumlin hills, poorly drained conifer forest and extensive wetlands. It straddles the boundary between Richmond and Cape Breton counties.

The proposed 21 ha addition is a remote conifer forest and wetland parcel that is fully surrounded by the wilderness area. It includes a headwater stream of Middle River Framboise River.

This parcel was acquired by the Province several years ago through a title clarification process. Adding this parcel to the wilderness area will eliminate the only unprotected land parcel in this wilderness area and simplify management in the long term.



Middle River-Framboise  
Wilderness Area (expansion)



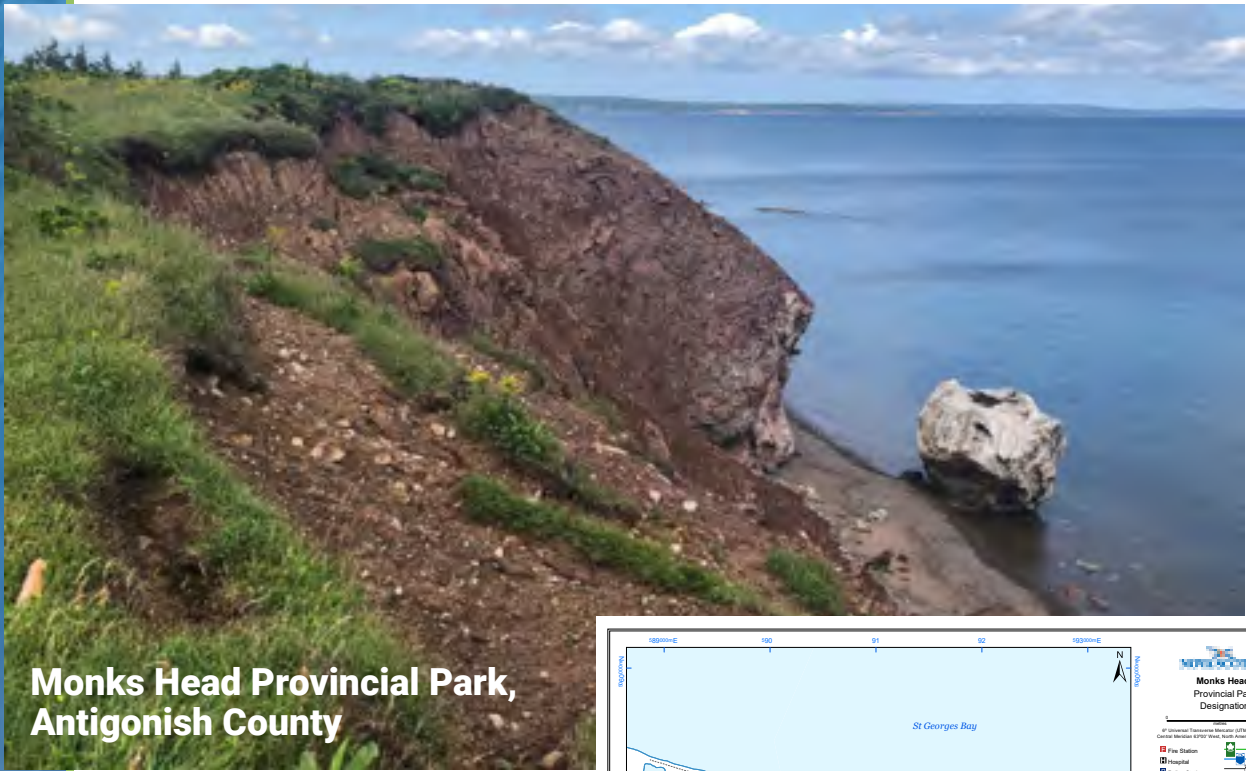
## **Monks Head Provincial Park, Antigonish County**

Monks Head forms part of a provincially-significant coastal system along with Pomquet Beach and Dunns Beach, protecting more than 9 kilometers of beach ecosystems along St. Georges Bay. Monks Head includes 128 hectares of land, including sandy beach, coastal headlands, old fields, a barachois pond, and stands of softwood and mixedwood forest in varying stages of succession. A portion of the property, known as the Chez Deslauriers property, is leased to the Pomquet Development Society who operate a seasonal tearoom featuring traditional Acadian lunches. An interpretive centre features local natural and human history of Pomquet. The Pomquet Development society played a central role in developing the Pomquet Acadian Trails on the Monks Head property. The hiking trail system includes three stacked loops totalling approximately 6 kilometers in length. More information about Chez Delauriers and the hiking trails can be found here: <https://www.pomquet.net/en/chezdeslauriers.html>

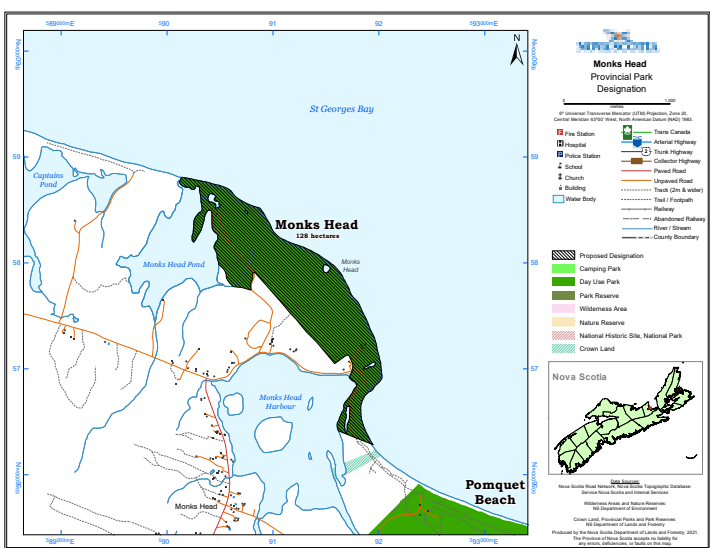
Monks Head is home to one plant species listed as “may be at risk” (Bastard’s Toadflax), one bird species listed as “sensitive” (Common Tern), and one bird species listed as “may be at risk” (Willet). Endangered Piping Plovers have been reported at Monks Head in the past, although there have not been sightings in recent years.

The coastal headlands within Monks Head are highly susceptible to coastal erosion and may pose a risk to unwary visitors and pets.

The western boundary of Monks Head abuts the Monks Head Conservations Lands. This 85-hectare protected area is owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and contributes towards Provincial protection goals. A large portion of Monks Head is protected under the *Beaches Act* (Dunns and Monks Head Protected Beach).



**Monks Head Provincial Park,  
Antigonish County**





## **Pomquet Beach Provincial Park**

Pomquet Beach forms part of a provincially-significant coastal system along with Monks Head and Dunns Beach, protecting more than 9 kilometers of beach ecosystems along St. Georges Bay. Pomquet Beach represents one of the best examples of dune succession in Nova Scotia and has a range of successional forests.

Pomquet Beach is recognized as a site of Ecological Significance. Six species of plants are listed as “may be at risk” or “sensitive”. One species of bird (Piping plover) found at the park is considered “at risk”, two birds species are listed as “may be at risk” (Bank Swallow and Willet), and two bird species are listed as “sensitive” (Boreal Chickadee and Common Tern). The forested areas of Pomquet are dominated by softwood colonized old dunes, with some mixedwood stands. Pomquet Beach is protected under the *Beaches Act*. As with many coastal properties, Pomquet Beach is susceptible to erosion due to coastal processes. The sensitive marram grass present in the dune system is the first line of defense in fighting erosion and holding the sand dunes together.

Pomquet Beach is an operational day-use park offering a high-quality beach experience with accessible beach access, swimming, picnicking, and an interpretive walking trail. The beach is supervised in the summer months by the Nova Scotia Lifeguard Service and sees an estimated 10,000 visitors per year.

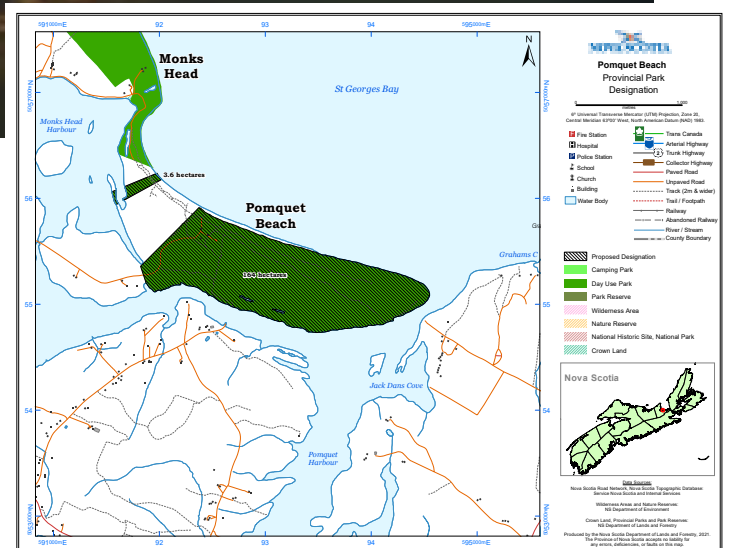
In recent years, the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables has partnered with the Municipality of the County of Antigonish to improve park accessibility, which included a new accessible beach mat, a beach access wheelchair, and four new accessible parking spaces. For more information on park facilities and services please visit <https://parks.novascotia.ca/park/pomquet-beach>

During the Parks and Protected Areas Planning Process, we heard that some people enjoy migratory bird hunting in areas surrounding the park boundaries. We are interested in learning more about this usage prior to designating the park under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

In 2020, the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables acquired a new parcel of land located in between Monks Head and Pomquet Beach. This property consists of 3.6 hectares and includes beach area along St. Georges Bay and waterfrontage along Monks Head Harbour. It is recommended that this property is added to the proposed Pomquet Beach Provincial Park boundary to further management objectives and protection of this sensitive ecosystem.



**Pomquet Beach Provincial Park**



## **Portapique River Wilderness Area (expansion)**

[Portapique River Wilderness Area](#) protects 2,050 hectares (ha) of mature and old forest along both sides of the deep gorge of Portapique River, as it passes through the Cobequid Mountains of Colchester and Cumberland counties.

A proposed 974 ha addition will widen the band of protected land along several parts of the gorge and add 1.5 km of river corridor and rich floodplain habitat. These lands are identified for protection in the 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan.

Most of the forest of the addition is mature to old hardwood, along with some mixed and softwood forest, especially on steep slopes. Parts of the area are deer wintering areas. A portion of the addition, near Matheson Brook, was acquired by the Province in 2013 to protect the old forest found there.

Southern, lower elevation portions of the addition are within the Cobequid Foothills natural landscape which is poorly represented in Nova Scotia's parks and protected areas system.

An expanded Portapique River Wilderness Area will help maintain important habitat for endangered mainland moose and expand the protected land base suitable for trail-based recreation, such as hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, or mountain biking on designated trails. The area is also suitable for hunting, angling and other recreation in a wilderness setting.

There are currently no managed trails within the addition, including no part of the regional off-highway vehicle trail system promoted and maintained by provincial off-highway vehicle organizations.

As of January 2021, the "Swinging Bridge" trail between Castlereagh and Dominique Meadow Brook (Sutherland Lake) within the existing wilderness area is managed under agreements with the All Terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS) and Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia (SANS). There are currently no other managed trails in this wilderness area.

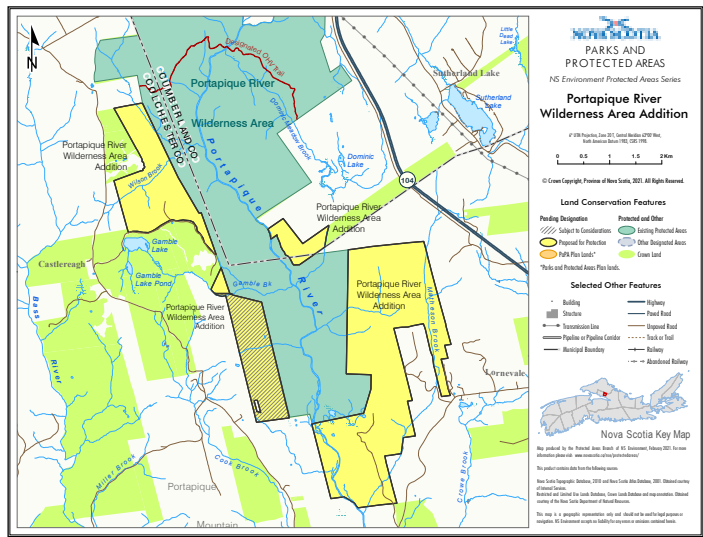
Another 154 ha along the western side of the wilderness area is identified for protection in the Parks and Protected Areas Plan, subject to addressing mineral rights. Overlapping mineral rights have expired, but this parcel is now within the study area of a regional geoscience research project being undertaken by the Department of Energy and Mines and other partners. Legal protection of this additional 154 ha parcel will come into effect if no new rights are issued within one year of completion of this research or once any new mineral rights that may be issued expire. The entire addition may therefore eventually be as large as 974 ha + 154 ha, or 1,128 ha.

The focus of this consultation is to seek comment on the proposed addition.





**Portapique River Wilderness Area (expansion)**



## Sackville River Wilderness Area

The proposed Sackville River Wilderness Area will protect about 674 hectares of provincially owned woodlands and wetland, just outside of Sackville, HRM, and partially within the Sackville River watershed.

Most of this site was previously consulted on and proposed for protection as a nature reserve in the Province's 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan (the Plan). Designation as a wilderness area will allow hunting, fishing, limited vehicle access on specified routes and some other uses not permitted in nature reserves. The proposed boundary has been expanded from that in the Plan to include Hawkin Hall Lake.

Most of the woodlands are a mix of mature softwood and mixedwood forest. Hardwood forest primarily occurs on several well drained hills, also known as drumlins. These drumlins are a defining feature of the Sackville Drumlins natural landscape, which is poorly represented in Nova Scotia's parks and protected areas system. Some of the forest is recognized as old forest under the Department of Lands and Forestry's Old Forest policy. Wetlands include swamps, fens and bogs. A rare orchid, known as Southern Twayblade, has been documented in one of the forested wetlands.

The proposed wilderness area includes more than 1 km of frontage on Sackville River, where Highway 101 crosses the river. About half the site is within the watershed of Sackville River, and the remainder is within the Shubenacadie River watershed.

This is a near-urban area used for hiking, hunting, fishing, paddling, camping and other activities. There are currently no formally managed trails within the area.

Forest access roads or ATV trails around much of the perimeter provide easy access by vehicle. In addition:

- ▶ A 300 m section of forest access road which passes directly through the area about 1 km north of the Windsor and Hantsport rail line will not be part of the wilderness area.
- ▶ An 800 m section of ATV trail crosses the area just south of Brushy Hill. Government is seeking additional information on the use and management of this trail to help determine whether its continued use should be authorized under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

Much of the western boundary is bordered by a power transmission line. At Lewis Lake, the boundary extends to a Crown parcel that is leased to the Lewis Lake Girl Guide camp; this Crown parcel is not part of the proposed wilderness area.

About 20 ha of the southern portion of the site, at Sackville River, overlaps with the Pockwock Lake Watershed Protected Water Area, administered by Halifax Water. The Pockwock Lake drinking water supply area provides a significant portion of HRM's distributed drinking water, and the Protected Water Area designation and Off-highway Vehicle Order regulate certain activities within this portion of the drinking water supply area. NSE intends to license Halifax Water under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* to enable continued management of these 20 ha, consistent with Halifax Water's responsibilities as a drinking water supply operator.

Since most of these provincial lands were previously consulted on, the main purpose of this consultation is to seek comment on:

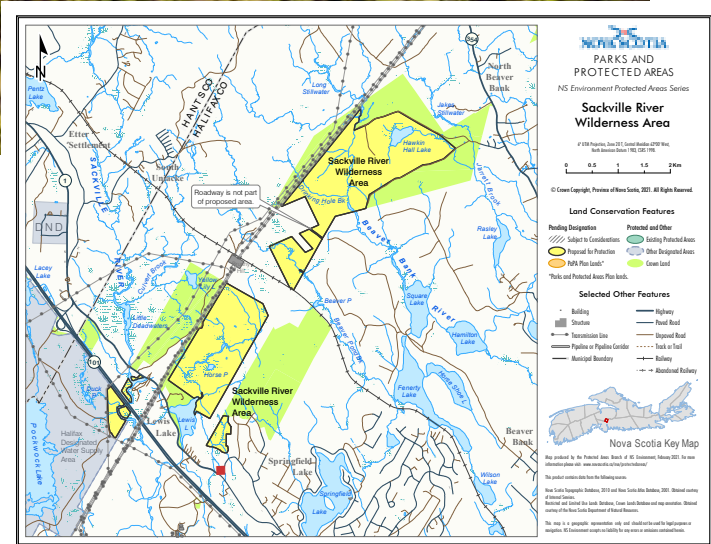
- ▶ the addition of Hawkin Hall Lake and surrounding Crown land
- ▶ the change in designation type from nature reserve to wilderness area, and
- ▶ additional feedback on off-highway vehicle use

However, other feedback is also welcome and will be considered as part of the decision on the legal designation of the wilderness area.





Sackville River Wilderness Area



## **Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area (expansion)**

[Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area](#) protects almost 2,000 hectares (ha) of scenic woodlands in the Cobequid Mountains at Wentworth Valley, east of Highway #4 and near Ski Wentworth.

A proposed 65 ha addition to this wilderness area will add two parcels of Crown land near Highway #4:

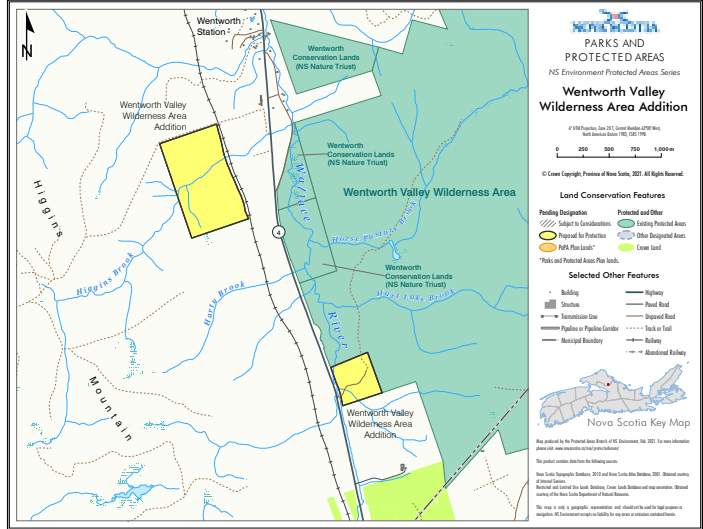
- 1.** 11 ha at an important access point to the wilderness area, located directly off Highway #4. Parking will continue to be permitted at this site.
- 2.** 54 ha of old, mixed forest ravine along Higgins Brook, located west of Highway #4 and the CN rail line, and just upstream of the popular Wentworth Falls.

Adding these parcels to the wilderness area will protect additional old and mature forest and add a well-known access point, simplifying management of the wilderness area.

This also complements non-government efforts to protect private land in the Wentworth Valley and develop expanded, four-season trail and tourism opportunities.



# Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area (expansion)





## Appendix B – Copy of newspaper advertisement

### Protected Areas Consultation

We are asking Nova Scotians for comments on the following proposed parks, wilderness areas and additions:

- Dunns Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (expansion), Halifax Regional Municipality
- Economy River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties
- Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area (expansion), Antigonish
- Five Islands Provincial Park (expansion), Colchester County
- Medway Lakes Wilderness Area (expansion), Annapolis County
- Middle River-Framboise Wilderness Area (expansion), Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- Monks Head Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- Pomquet Beach Provincial Park, Antigonish County
- Portapique River Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland and Colchester counties
- Sackville River Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality
- Wentworth Valley Wilderness Area (expansion), Cumberland County

Information at: [novascotia.ca/parksandprotectedareas/](https://novascotia.ca/parksandprotectedareas/)

Please submit comments by April 13, 2021 to:

[protectedareas@novascotia.ca](mailto:protectedareas@novascotia.ca)

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