

# Ship Harbour Long Lake Candidate Wilderness Area

Newsletter #2 — September 2008

## Public Consultation Summary

### Overview

This is the second newsletter of the public consultation process for Ship Harbour Long Lake Candidate Wilderness Area. In the first newsletter we asked you to tell us what you think about the candidate wilderness area. This newsletter summarizes that feedback.

In December 2007, the Province announced its intent to establish a 14,000 hectare (34,600 acre) wilderness area on Crown lands in the vicinity of Ship Harbour Long Lake, in Halifax Regional Municipality.

To ensure that everyone could share their views and opinions, a discussion newsletter was released in May 2008. The newsletter provided background information, outlined a proposed consultation process, and highlighted key discussion topics to help generate feedback. Nova Scotia Environment also held two public information meetings, in Musquodoboit Harbour and Dartmouth. These sessions included a brief presentation and a series of discussion tables focussing on key topics.

Information collected during this stage of consultation helped identify land use activities, access routes, and significant natural, cultural, and recreational features. The information collected will be used in the development of a proposal to designate the new wilderness area. Final boundaries of the wilderness area will be included in the proposal.

The public will have a final opportunity to provide input when the designation proposal is announced. A socioeconomic analysis will also be released for public comment. Our goal is to complete the work and designate Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area late in 2008.

### Consultation Process

#### STEP 1 - Information Sharing/Issue Identification

goal: collect information, finalize the consultation process, and identify outstanding issues

plan: *newsletter #1*, stakeholder meetings; public information forums, socio-economic analysis

We are here —→ \*Public Reporting\*

goal: summarize input from Step 1  
plan: *newsletter #2*

#### STEP 2 - Issue Resolution

goal: solve issues with affected individuals and stakeholders

plan: joint meetings and workshops

#### STEP 3 - Designation Proposal

goal: public input on final proposed wilderness area boundary & socio-economic analysis

plan: *newsletter #3*, 60 day consultation with regional displays, write-in opportunities, and public open houses

\*Public Reporting\*

goal: summarize input from step 3  
plan: *newsletter #4*

#### STEP 4 - Final Government Decision

goal: announce final designation

plan: news release & direct participant notification  
complete legal surveys and documents

### *Newsletter #1 and other information on Ship Harbour Long Lake Candidate*

#### *Wilderness Area available at:*

Protected Areas Branch - Nova Scotia Environment  
Box 442, 5151 Terminal Road, Halifax, NS, B3J 2P8  
Tel: (902) 424-2117 Fax: (902) 424-0501

email: [protectedareas@gov.ns.ca](mailto:protectedareas@gov.ns.ca) web: [www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas)

## How You Participated



Approximately 130 people attended the public information meetings held in Musquodoboit Harbour and Dartmouth. Public comments were tracked using questionnaires, flip charts, maps, and notes taken by staff.

A significant number of submissions were also received through email, letters, faxes, and telephone calls to the Protected Areas Branch of Nova Scotia Environment.

In total, over 200 individual responses were received during this consultation period.

Consultation also provided an opportunity for staff to meet with regional and provincial stakeholder groups to discuss how the candidate area relates to their interests.

## What You Said

There were a number of common themes in the comments received. In general, the large majority of respondents were in favour of the designation of a new wilderness area in the vicinity of Ship Harbour Long Lake.

### *Wilderness Area Boundary*

The largest number of comments focused on the candidate wilderness area boundary. Many people felt that more of the surrounding Crown lands should be included. These comments often highlighted ecological values, wildlife corridors, enforcement considerations, and important recreation opportunities.

Many people identified the Crown lands along the western shore of Lake Charlotte as an important addition; providing shoreline protection, recreation access, and habitat connectivity between interior forests and Lake Charlotte. The Crown land around Portapique Lake was also proposed as a priority addition for its relative ecosystem richness. Crown lands between this area and White Lake Wilderness area were suggested as a protected corridor for wildlife movement and habitat connection. Other proposed Crown land additions included areas that had been excluded due to existing

roads or recent forest harvesting. Examples are the recently harvested Crown lands along Lays Lake Road and adjacent to Murchyville Road. Many people felt that the long term ecological value of these areas to the new wilderness area would outweigh their present day condition and that they should be included.

Some small adjustments to the boundary were also suggested to allow for vehicle access routes to camps and for other purposes. Key examples were requests to exclude a short access road to the southern end of Scraggy Lake, and to exclude a road at the north end of Ship Harbour Long Lake.

Larger adjustments to the boundary were suggested by some mining and mineral exploration interests. Certain lease blocks are known to have significant mineral exploration and potential mining value. Some of these blocks overlap with the candidate wilderness area boundary. Examples include a block west of Lake Charlotte and an area around Gold Lake.

Responses also identified privately owned land that could make valuable additions to the wilderness area. The areas most often cited were Fishing Lake, along the Fish River, and lands around Scraggy Lake including a corridor to Tangier Grand Lake Wilderness Area. The rationale given for these suggestions were based on recreation values, boundary integrity, shoreline protection, habitat conservation, and wildlife corridors.

### *Special Values and Features*



A significant number of the comments identified special values and features in or around the candidate area. Many of these comments were based on personal experience and detailed local knowledge.

Respondents identified key features in the area, such as locations of the rare boreal felt lichen, historically and archaeologically significant Mi'kmaq sites, and various routes through the area used for wilderness recreation. Other conservation values discussed included the variety of old forest sites, large wetland complexes (including multiple raised bogs), numerous lakes and waterways, habitat for rare species, and natural corridors connecting habitats. Habitat corridors were particularly noted for their importance to the rare mainland moose population.

Key wilderness recreation opportunities were highlighted during this consultation. For example, the Fish River was identified as an important canoe route. Others spoke of the values of existing backcountry hiking trails, such as the Admiral Lake trails and some participants proposed new routes through the candidate area. Many respondents also emphasized the importance of this area for sport fishing and hunting.

In some cases, concerns were raised with the impact of some existing uses of the area. For example, several individuals who bait bears within the candidate wilderness area raised concern that this activity is not permitted in a wilderness area. Others opposed bear baiting in wilderness areas and expressed concern over existing baiting activities in the candidate area.

### *Legal Interests*

Many people who participated in the public consultation process have existing legal interests in and around the candidate area. Discussions with such interest holders generally focused on information sharing and clarifying how the designation of this candidate wilderness area may affect their interest.

For example, numerous private land owners and campsite lease holders had questions about how the wilderness area designation may affect the use of their land and camps. There were specific concerns relating to key access routes and the dam on Scraggy Lake, which maintains lake water levels.

Considerable discussion also focused on mineral exploration and mining development in the area. Most respondents felt that mineral exploration and mining development pose direct threats to conservation values in the area. Others identified mineral exploration and mining potential as one of the most significant values of the area, objecting to the lost opportunities a wilderness area designation may cause. Some of these suggested that mining development be allowed in the wilderness

area, detailed mineral potential studies be carried out prior to designation, or that compensation be offered if mineral rights or mining potential is lost.

### *Vehicle access*

A range of comments were received on the use of motorized vehicles in the candidate wilderness area. Concern was expressed that in general vehicle use in designated wilderness areas is not permitted. These comments particularly related to use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Some ATV riders would like continued use of key routes in the wilderness area. Others suggest that all existing trails and routes be left open for ATV use.



A large number of the comments received also expressed concern about the damaging effect ATVs have on the area. Many viewed ATVs as a direct conflict with the ecological values and wilderness recreation opportunities that are meant to be protected by this wilderness area.

During the consultation, many respondents agreed that it is appropriate to exclude Murchville Road, Lays Lake Road, and the short road to Rocky Lake, in order to maintain key access to the area and provide connections to the regional ATV trail networks. Additional seasonal access routes were also proposed by some respondents. For example, the route linking Salmon River Lake to Rocky Lake and Lays Lake Road was highlighted as a valued winter connector route.

### *Gold Mine*

Although not directly related to the candidate wilderness area consultation process, a number of comments were received on the Touquoy Gold Project at Moose River Gold Mines. Concerns were expressed on the potential impact this mine could have on the wilderness area.



The risk of water contamination in Scraggy Lake and downstream movement through the Fish River system was especially emphasized. Many respondents also felt that they were not given adequate opportunity to express their concerns during the environmental assessment process.

All of the comments on the environmental assessment process have been forwarded to the Environmental Assessment Branch of Nova Scotia Environment. Comments concerning the mine have been forwarded to the Environmental Compliance and Monitoring Division of Nova Scotia Environment who have ongoing responsibility for the monitoring and permitting of that project.

### ***Socio-Economic Analysis***

Few directly commented on socio-economic aspects of the candidate wilderness area. However, many of the responses identified values that would be affected by wilderness area designation. Benefits mentioned by respondents included: the protection of significant recreation opportunities in the area, contributions to tourism from the protection of large undisturbed wilderness, and intrinsic benefits of protecting wilderness and wildlife habitat for future generations. Some also discussed lost land use and resource opportunities, such as mining and forestry development, as a cost of a wilderness designation in the area.

### ***Process***

In general, respondents supported the full process leading to wilderness area designation as presented in newsletter #1. Many also expressed appreciation for the open consultative format at the public meetings, where the use of workshop tables on specific topics was seen to be very productive. Respondents also indicated that the newsletter format provided very useful background information. Some felt that the meetings were not advertised enough. A few would have liked opportunities for town hall-style discussions.

### **Next Steps**

Although the first step in the public consultation has been completed, comments are still welcome and will be considered by government in developing a designation proposal. Groups and organizations may still request a

meeting to discuss their interests or concerns. Throughout this time, the Protected Areas Branch of Nova Scotia Environment has been working to address issues raised during the consultation and follow up on additional research needs. A number of stakeholder meetings continue to be held to address specific concerns. For example, meetings have been held with mineral and mining interests, environmental organizations, camp owners, private land owners, and ATV organizations. Mi'kmaq consultation has also been initiated.

Specific issues raised during the consultation must be addressed in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. The intention is to apply the breadth of feedback provided during this round of consultation to develop a designation proposal that meets conservation goals and government commitments, while considering individual and stakeholder interests.

### **Information Sharing**

We thank all those who provided comment during this first stage of the public consultation process.

A full set of the submissions received during this comment period is available for viewing at the Nova Scotia Environment office in Halifax (5151 Terminal Road). Nova Scotia Environment considers participant identity as personal information, in keeping with the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The privacy of a participant's identity will be protected by the department, unless the participant consents to the release, or if the submission has been made public by the participant. Any person or group may give prior consent, in writing, to release of their submission.

Ideas and suggestions are welcome on any aspect of the Protected Areas Program. For more information please contact us or visit the Protected Areas website.

