

Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area

Newsletter #4 — October 2009

Final Designation

Overview

After more than one-and-a-half years of public consultation and analysis, the Province has legally designated Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area. The designation was announced on September 19, 2009. The new wilderness area protects 14,730 hectares (~36,000 acres) of Crown lands between Scraggy Lake and Musquodoboit Harbour (see map), including stands of old forest, large wetland complexes and numerous wilderness lakes and waterways.

Designation decisions were made following two rounds of public and stakeholder consultation and completion of a socio-economic study. Details of the process up to the release of government's designation proposal in April, 2009 are outlined in previous newsletters. One of the goals with the designation proposal was to create an improved boundary that reflects a range of public and stakeholder priorities.

This revised boundary proposal for Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area outlined in Newsletter #3 included 887 hectares of Crown additions and 326 hectares of exclusions. These changes were influenced by feedback received during earlier stages of consultation.

In this final newsletter, we provide a summary of public comment on the designation proposal and details of government's designation decisions.

How You Participated

Approximately 55 people attended public open house meetings on the designation proposal, held at St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic Church hall, Musquodoboit Harbour (May 20, 2009); and Fairbanks Centre, Dartmouth (May 27, 2009). As well, information displays were prominently located at the Musquodoboit Harbour and Alderney Gate Public Libraries, between May 11 and June 5, 2009.

The official comment period was until June 19th, but



late comments were also considered. Staff also met with interested individuals and groups. Aside from ideas shared during conversations, we received 20 written submissions.

These opportunities to participate in shaping this wilderness area were outlined within Newsletter #3. This was released in April, 2009 via news release, newspaper advertisement, and an email notice to individuals and stakeholders known to have an interest in the area.

We heard from recreational users (anglers, hunters, off-highway vehicle riders, canoeing and hiking trail groups), campsite lease holders, adjacent landowners, woodlot owners, environmental groups, mining industry representatives, and others.

What You Said

Feedback on the revised boundary proposal was generally positive. Most people recognized that the proposed additions added important ecological and recreational features, and that excluded lands respected priority access routes and mineral and forest industry priorities. People also recognized that the proposed changes would help with management, enforcement and stewardship of the wilderness area.

Plans to maintain vehicle access on certain routes (see map) were accepted by a wide range of interests. Many supported closure of interior routes. Others stated a preference that all existing routes remain available for vehicle access.



Several people spoke of the value of the area for wilderness canoeing and related camping and angling and expressed interest in working with government to provide appropriate opportunities. There was also some discussion about better aligning hiking trail management in the new wilderness area with existing trail systems near Musquodoboit Harbour.

Suggestions were made to better manage the area's trout and related angling activities, such as increasing enforcement patrols, introducing catch-and-release, or liming lakes.

A number of people with campsite leases commented that they were satisfied with the revised boundaries, provided they can retain their leases and access is unaffected. One saw the designation as an opportunity to restore woodlands of the area to the way he remembered them as a child.

Two landowners asked how access to their private inholding will be affected. They were advised that the province must provide access but that conditions may apply. They seemed pleased that Crown land in the area will be protected and felt they may have an opportunity to benefit through tourism-related development.

Several local woodlot owners stated their support for the wilderness area. Yet, they were concerned that government's commitment to replace Crown lands licensed for forestry within the new wilderness area will simply shift harvesting to nearby, previously unlicensed Crown lands.

Mineral industry representatives were generally satisfied with the revised boundary proposal. Although some areas of mineral interest were not excluded from the boundary, representatives felt that their major priorities had been considered through the consultation process. The revised boundary excludes about 300 hectares of land that has relatively high mineral potential. Many others expressed concern about the planned Touquoy Gold Mine at Moose River Gold Mines or other potential gold mines in the region.

Many suggestions were made for further Crown land additions, including sites with endangered boreal felt lichen, land around the provincially-significant bat hibernaculum (abandoned mine) near the western side of Lake Charlotte, additional land near Reid Hill, and some other sites. Finally, much concern was expressed about the partial forestry harvest that was to occur on the proposed additions at Portapique Lake and Fishing Lake before wilderness area designation.

Consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia led to discussions on traditional uses, archaeological research, and future co-management opportunities. The Province agreed to continue discussion on these and other topics of interest to the Mi'kmaq.

Overall, most participants in this consultation felt the revised boundary is an improvement and most explicitly supported the planned designation of Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area.

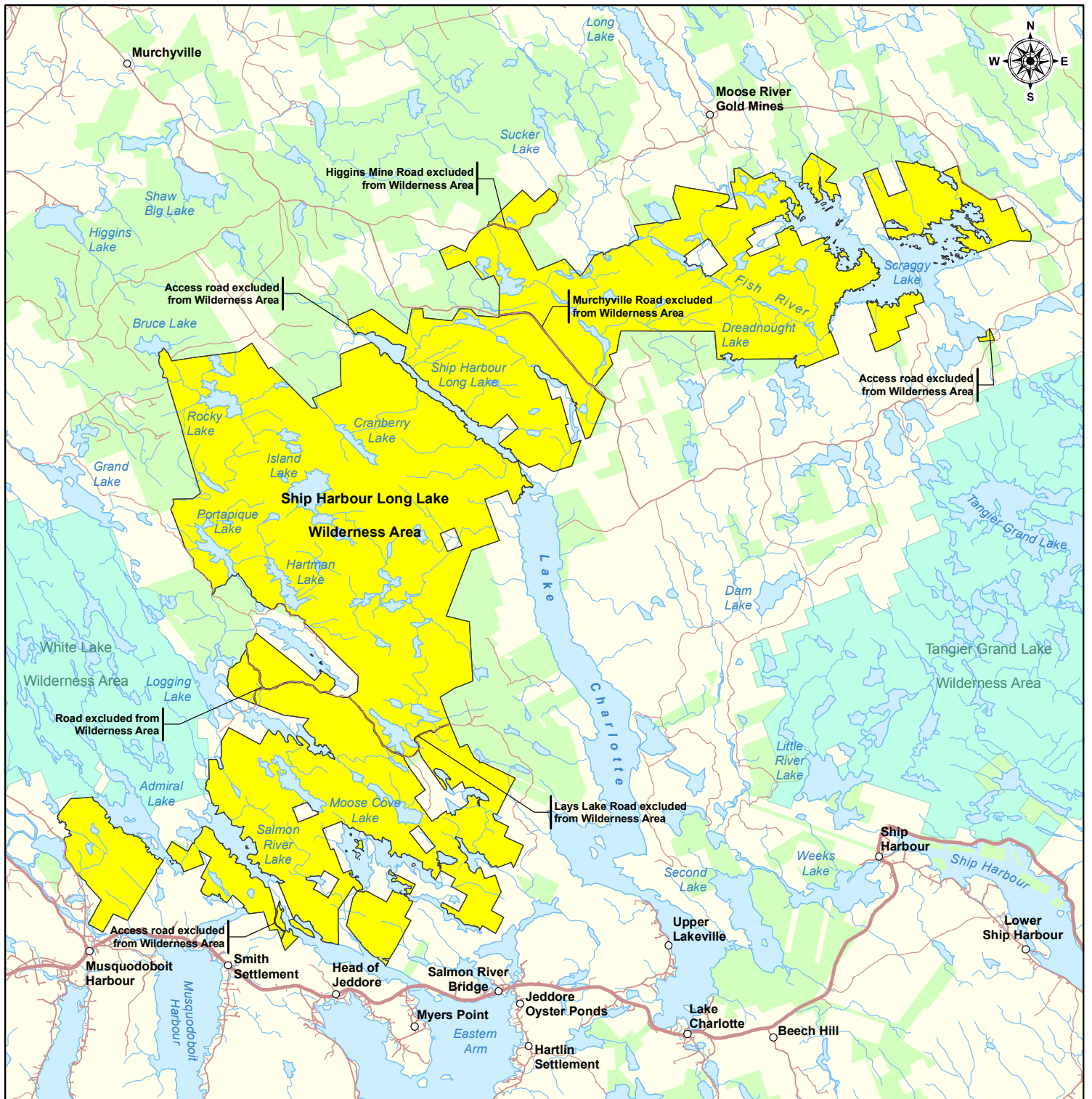
What Government Decided

After considering all available information and public feedback, the Province designated Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area in September, 2009. The boundary is identical to the revised boundary proposed in Newsletter #3. The wilderness area is about 550 hectares larger than the initial candidate wilderness area. No private lands are designated. No partial harvest will occur on lands near Portapique and Fishing Lakes.

As proposed, the following roads are excluded from the boundary: (1) Murchyville Road; (2) Lays Lake Road; (3) Higgins Mine Road; as well as spur roads to: (4) Rocky & Logging Lake, (5) south end of Scraggy Lake, (6) north end of Ship Harbour Long Lake, and (7) south end of Salmon River Lake. These exclusions allow for continued vehicle access through the wilderness area, or to popular access points for angling, hunting, canoeing or other purposes.

Vehicle access in wilderness areas is generally prohibited. But some vehicle use can be authorized under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act in certain situations. Vehicle access licences can be issued for specific uses such as for access to private land inholdings or existing legal interests. Motorboats are treated as vehicles in wilderness areas. However, current policy permits the use of motorboats for sport fishing in wilderness areas, provided the user has a valid fishing licence.

Nova Scotia Environment has agreed to work with the All-terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS) and Lake Charlotte ATV Association to consider use of a trail management agreement for an off-highway vehicle route between Logging Lake and Salmon River Lake. This route



Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area



- Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area
- Provincial Protected Areas
- Crown Lands



Map produced by the Protected Areas Branch of NS Environment, July, 2009.

The information shown here was obtained courtesy of the NS Geomatics Centre (SNSMR) and the NS Department of Natural Resources.

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links Lays Lake Road with Smith Settlement on Highway #7, via several lakes. It would be for winter use only, when lakes are solidly frozen.

While not included in the wilderness area, the boreal felt lichen sites and bat hibernaculum will be managed by the Department of Natural Resources to protect those special features.

Next Steps

With designation, Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area is now administered under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act by Nova Scotia Environment, in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources.

Next steps will include posting boundary signs at known access points, and planning and carrying out routine enforcement and monitoring.

Campsite lease holders will be contacted in due course about vehicle access to their sites. Upon expiry, existing campsite leases can be renewed as wilderness camp licences under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. We will also work with owners of private inholdings, as needed, to consider any requests for access.

We expect discussions to continue with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Protected Areas staff will also be working with (ATVANS) and Lake Charlotte ATV Club on the referenced trail management agreement.

As resources permit, the province will also explore options for securing priority private land inholdings or adjacent lands from willing owners.

Low-impact recreational use of the area, including camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, and all forms of non-motorized travel is mostly unaffected by wilderness area designation. Guidelines for the recreational use of wilderness areas are available in our Keep It Wild brochure - available at local Environment and DNR offices, online at the Protected Areas website, or by calling 424-2117.

Ideas and suggestions are always welcome on any aspect of Nova Scotia Environment's Protected Areas Program. For more information please contact us or visit the Protected Areas website.

We would like to acknowledge the important role many organizations and individuals have played in giving shape to Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area.

While public input for major land conservation decisions is always important, unprecedented collaboration between major stakeholders throughout this process has been very helpful. This helps government with difficult decisions and results in a better outcome for all those involved.

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

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

Newsletters and other information on Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area available at:

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