



## The Blue Mountain NEWS



Photo: I. Barrett

vol.16 Winter 2022

### STANTEC PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY NEARING COMPLETION



In late October, Stantec released its draft summary of key findings for the BMBCL National Urban Park pre-feasibility study. Participants from Friends of BMBCL appreciated the opportunity. Still, we found the information too general and believe it would be more beneficial to review the actual draft report rather than a general summary. However, comments were made regarding issues such as the importance of including mapping of the significant features of the proposed park area and information on water quality in the final report, as well as recommendations regarding possible governance models.

Several suggestions were made to initiate park planning and to do so as soon as possible. These included:

- Conduct a 'round table' session (or sessions) involving possible urban park partners (Parks Canada, HRM, NSECC, NSNT, and the Mi'kmaq) and primary stakeholders (including Friends of BMBCLs Society) – to identify the full range of relevant interests, opportunities, issues and challenges to be addressed in park planning.
- Establish a planning team to get on with the preparation of project terms of reference (and presumed RFP) to guide the park.
- Create an arm's length planning structure that allows for consideration and assessment of opportunities and options that may extend beyond limitations likely to constrain individual agencies.
- Enable stakeholder engagement through appropriate mechanism(s) to represent stakeholder and community interests and aspirations.
- Ensure effective coordination/integration of park planning for the BMBCLs area and land use and development planning on adjoining private lands, partly through the inclusion of land use planning staff representation on the park planning team.
- Recognize the park planning area as the entire ~12,000-acre that includes existing lands dedicated to conservation in the BMBCLs area and surrounding undeveloped land.
- Mandate the park planning process to propose a park boundary based on considerations relating to the maintenance of the ecological integrity of the parkland and water base, landscape connectivity, park access and related facility development, and provision of quality park visitor experiences.
- Target the park plan for completion, in final draft format, for December 31, 2023.

Many of the suggestions highlighted above are not mutually exclusive and may be adopted in whole, part, or various combinations. The essential point is that the subject matter is considered in the final Stantec Report to move the park project forward.

### REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE



"The Halifax Regional Municipal Plan sets out a common vision, principles and long-range, region-wide planning

policies outlining where, when and how future growth and development should take place between now and 2031", according to [the website](#).

The draft regional plan is currently in phase 4. This means community engagement through virtual meetings, webinars, surveys, and various forums. Currently, this phase is expected to be completed in March 2023. The BMBCL's Planning Committee is working on scheduling meetings with regional planning staff and other HRM land use planners to promote compatibility and complementarity of policies and plans and, ultimately, land development and land use in surrounding areas.

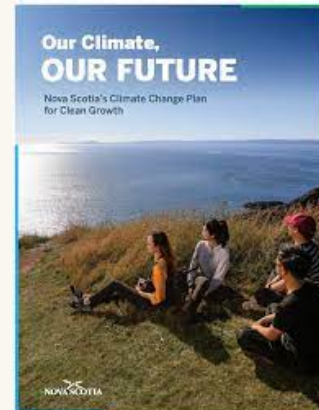
## NS CLIMATE PLAN RELEASED

The province released its [Climate Change Action Plan](#) earlier this month. [You can read it here](#). The plan sets 68 goals grouped into four areas:

- responding to climate change impacts
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- seizing opportunities for a cleaner, sustainable economy
- reporting and evaluating progress

The plan highlights the importance of ecosystems and biodiversity. It also indicates that the government will protect "at least 20 per of Nova Scotia's total land and water map by 2030 through a new protected area strategy."

However, the plan is being criticized for including few specifics and saying nothing about Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes and the importance of protecting this unique area in the heart of HRM.



## REMEMBERING A TRUE FRIEND



Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes recently lost a strong voice of support.

Truman Layton passed away in late November. He lived a beautiful life which included many canoe/camping trips to Susies Lake that he shared with his son, grandsons and long-time friends. He loved the beauty of Nova Scotia until the end.

In recognition of this love, his family asked for donations to be made to Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes. We are so grateful for these donations.

If you would like to donate in Truman Layton's honour or someone else, visit <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/ns-trails/>

Select Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Society in the "apply your donation" drop-down menu.

## AGM 2022 RECAP

Friends of BMBCL hosted its 2022 AGM in early October. With a good turnout of members and supporters, the AGM agenda was quickly covered, followed by a presentation from Parks Canada on Canada's new national urban park program.

Mary Ann McGrath highlighted the advocacy work and the support the BMBCL area is gaining to become a national urban park. Anne Vaughan was recognized for working tirelessly on behalf of Friends of BMBCL. She has contributed countless hours to advocating and supporting BMBCL.

Most Board members agreed to continue with their positions, with a "new" board member welcomed, James Boyer, as the Events Committee Chairperson. James was a board member a few years ago but moved on to other initiatives. He has happily returned and is looking forward to organizing events for members. Deb MacKinnon resigned as the Membership Chair but is staying on as a volunteer. We are grateful for everyone's time and energy in supporting our mission.

Feel free to reach out with suggestions or ideas at [events@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:events@bluemountainfriends.ca)

## OUR HEARTS ARE BIG

Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes send a big



THANK YOU to members and supporters who donated on #GivingTuesday.

This year, we set a goal of \$5000. It was ambiguous. We like to dream big. We received almost \$2000, double last year. We are thrilled as we know many organizations are looking for support, and things are tight in households.

Thank you for giving and supporting this vital work. We can't do the work without you.

## FRIENDS IS ON THE HUNT FOR A FEW THINGS...

### Meeting space

Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes are looking for space to host events and meetings. With a small budget, Friends hopes to find free or almost free space. It would be great if the space also had easy parking, free WIFI access and is accessible. If you have any suggestions, let us know at [info@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:info@bluemountainfriends.ca)

### Updating maps—can you help?

Friends is looking for a volunteer to help edit a few electronic maps. If you know photoshop and other graphic design programs and can help us, [planning@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:planning@bluemountainfriends.ca)

## Coming soon, Friends to launch *HRM's Big Backyard Speaker Series*

Please keep your eyes open in the new year for the launch of our new speaker series, appropriately named HRM's Big Backyard Speaker Series. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn about various issues affecting BMBCL Wilderness, nature and wildlife throughout HRM. The series will be launched as one of the first initiatives from our new Events Chair, James Boyer. If you have any questions or suggestions, reach out to the events committee through [events@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:events@bluemountainfriends.ca)



## WINTER HIKING

Our hiking committee is busy organizing winter hikes for members and non-members. Hikes are usually 3 hours long, and we visit various lakes in the BMBCL Wilderness. Winter is a beautiful time in BMBCL Wilderness and a great opportunity to see nature and wildlife in the quiet of snow.

Check your emails for hike notices or our website calendar for new dates. One of our first hikes for the new year is to Charles Lake. [Click HERE to register.](#)

## BMBCL IS A GIFT FOR CITIZENS FOR HEATHER LESLIE

Heather Leslie has been a member since the organization came into existence. Leslie joined Friends thinking of the future, "I think it is so important to protect this space for future generations! I can think of few greater gifts that HRM could give to its current and, more importantly, future citizens than protecting as much of the greenbelt around the city as possible."

Leslie learned about Friends through the North West Trails group, another excellent organization that supports trails

and wilderness in HRM. She has enjoyed BMBCL for years and can often be found hiking, swimming, paddling and, on a rare occasion, overnight camping. "I love that it's so close to the city, yet you feel so connected to nature as soon as you're a few minutes along the trail," adds Leslie. "I grew up in Fairview.

Through the years, I saw the blueberry fields, frog ponds, and wonderful forested areas near my home be replaced by ever-expanding subdivisions and commercial/industrial areas. In high school, a dear friend introduced me to the joys of summer weekends spent swimming, hiking, and paddling around Susies and Quarry Lakes and winter skating and hiking excursions. I found my happy place. I want others to experience the same benefits of connection to nature that I receive when I spend time here."



When asked what she would like to see happen, she quickly answers, "I would love to see the BMBCL Wilderness Area protected by a generous buffer zone around its entire perimeter...see this whole area become a protected park. Despite all the competing needs for land around HRM, I think there are few projects more important than protecting greenspace for the long-term health of our environment and citizens.

We must learn that suburban sprawl is not the smart way to address our housing issues. We, as a society, will someday regret, more than we can realize, the loss of greenspace. We all need to lend our voices to movements like Friends of BMBCL and take the time to let decision-makers know what's important to them. Sometimes governments do listen to the voices of the people."



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

Friends of BMBCL send best wishes to members and every Nova Scotian. Thank you for working with us to keep this unique area in the heart of Halifax wild for all of us today and future generations.

We look forward to making even more progress to securing this wilderness as a national urban park in 2023.

Visit [www.bluemountainfriends.ca](http://www.bluemountainfriends.ca) and see how you can join or donate (remember, there are only days left to give and receive a 2022 tax receipt when completed online through [Canada Helps](#).)

Happy New Year and all the best for 2023!

**CONTACT US:** Let us know what you think.  
Send comments or pictures to [info@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:info@bluemountainfriends.ca)

All previous editions, starting in 2018, can be viewed [on our website](#).

