

The Blue Mountain NEWS

Photo: R. Vinson

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2nd National Urban Park On Its Way in Ontario

April 26th, 2023, was a historic day. Parliament passed Bill C-248 designating the Ojibway Nature Centre located on the Detroit River in Windsor, Ontario, as Canada's second National Urban Park – the first in the current round of Canadian cities vying for this designation. The park will be known as Ojibway National Urban Park. Hopefully, BMBCL will be next.



Parliament passed Bill C-248 unanimously with all-party support – a testament to the park's importance to all Canadians. Bill C-248 now must go before the Senate, but given its all-party support in Parliament, there is every reason to believe the Senate will heartily embrace what Parliament has done.

BMBCL and the other National Urban Park candidates follow a non-legislative designation track led by Parks Canada. This is a four-step process – (1) pre-feasibility, (2) planning, (3) decision and (4) implementation. We are well into step 2, which has a March 2024 completion date, with a 2026 deadline for a designation decision.

As part of the Planning Phase, in March, Parks Canada entered into separate contribution agreements with HRM and the Province providing critical funding to support the work necessary for decision-making. These agreements included funding for dedicated personnel in HRM, the Province, and the N.S. Nature Trust to make this happen. Additional discussions/agreements with the indigenous community are underway, making the establishment of BMBCL as a National Urban Park a collaborative endeavour.

What can you do to help? Feed flora and fauna data into *Naturalist* every time you visit BMBCL, as the more data area available, the more informed the decision-making. Also, contact the Premier and your MLA, MP and City Councilor to express your support for BMBCL becoming a national urban park.

Major Timberlea Property For Sale

Over 600 acres of Timberlea land abutting the western boundary of the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Regional Wilderness Park on the north side of Governors Lake is for sale. The lands are owned by Parkdale

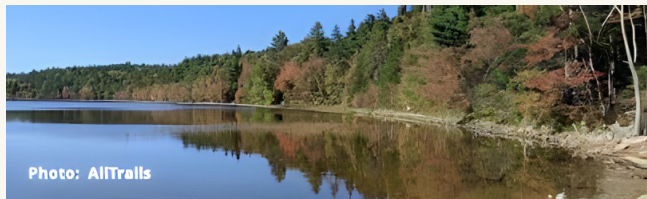
Developments, a company owned by the late John R. Fiske, is on the market as part of the resolution of his estate. At one point, HRM had discussions with Parkdale about developing the land in a manner that would also be supportive of the City's vision for the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park. That included having a regional entrance on Parkdale lands near the Tim Horton's in Timberlea. With this land now for sale, there is concern that another pressure point is placed on the park boundaries and potential public access to the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park.



Everwood Avenue

HRM has acquired a small piece of land on the north side of the newly built extension of Everwood Ave, Hammonds Plains abutting Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes national urban park lands owned by the Province and the N.S. Nature Trust (the Blue Connector piece). These lands were acquired from Ramar Developments as part of its 10% subdivision dedication requirement (both the Province and HRM have contribution agreements). Early HRM budget documents for the upcoming year indicated that money was to be allocated for trailhead design at this location. Whether that remains, the case is unclear.

Unique Habitat at Risk (supporting our neighbour's green spaces)



As Chair of Canada's Big City Mayors, Mayor Savage attended the COP 27 meeting in Egypt this October, participating in an HRM video celebrating the event. Embracing what the world is trying to achieve through such events, the Mayor stated in the video: *"We are accepting our responsibility. There is always a reason not to do the right thing. But we have to do the right thing. I am proud of the fact that Halifax is."*

The challenge now is whether the City and the Province are willing to do the right thing by Sandy Lake. The scientists have said that the Sandy Lake environs are unique within HRM with its 11 separate habitats, supporting at least 24 species at risk. To the non-biologists, the Sandy Lake environs look similar to many of our wonderful Nova Scotia lakes/forest environments. In this case, the **Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park Coalition** is fortunate to have the assistance of scientists/experts sounding the alert of what we are at risk of losing if Sandy Lake's western shore is paved over for development – unbelievable biodiversity in a relatively small area located amid our urban world.

This is why Sandy Lake environs do not belong on the province's Special Planning Areas List – targeting it for accelerated housing development. The Mayor is right. There is always a reason not to do the right thing. The Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park Coalition (made up of 30 organizations including Friends of BMBCL) is doing its best to point out to the Province and the City that they must live up to the Mayor's commitment Halifax will do the right thing.

The Sandy Lake–Sackville River Regional Park Coalition needs as many as can contact their councillor and MLA by email or social media to tell them that Sandy Lake must be removed from the Special Planning Areas list.

Please help by writing to the Premier, Minister Lohr, and your MLA. Copy the city.

Premier Tim Houston: PREMIER@novascotia.ca

Housing Minister John Lohr: DMAMIN@novascotia.ca

Copy letters to the City Clerk's office to send to all councillors, CAO and the Mayor: clerks@halifax.ca

Where to find your MLA's contact info: <https://nslegislature.ca/members/profiles>

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New Trailhead Parking

A new parking lot and trailhead access to BMBCL is open, thanks to HRM with funding support from Parks Canada.

The new trailhead parking lot on Brookline Drive in Bedford is a welcome addition for many hikers looking to enjoy Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness. Friends is excited by the possibility of

more funding opportunities for the wilderness area thanks to Parks Capital Projects. Hopefully, HRM will soon build the trail connection from Brookline to Hobson's Lake.



Final Speaker in the series set for May 10th

Our last speaker for the HRMs Big Backyard series is scheduled for May 10, 6:30 pm. This time the spotlight is being placed on the importance of biodiversity. Karen McKendry, Ecology Action Centre's Wilderness Outreach Coordinator, will highlight how healthy biodiversity helps to foster a healthy community.

Titled **"A Healthy BMBCL Wilderness = A Healthy Community"**, Karen will discuss what biodiversity is found in BMBCL, the connection between human health and forest health, and how human dependence on biodiversity goes beyond just food, water and air.

Everyone is welcome, and it's free. Help spread the word. For more information, contact events@bluemountainfriends.ca or visit www.bluemountainfriends.ca



Thank You! Thank you!

Friends, send a big thank you to Bay Treasure Chest organizers. Once again, the Bay Treasure Chest supported BMBCL Wilderness and we are so appreciative. Their support of \$500 is a big help to our efforts.

(Photo: L-R, Board members Eleanor Humphries, Vice Chair, and Diana Whalen, Past Chair)



AGM - Mark your calendar (and we need you!)

Friends AGM is set for Monday, June 5th at the Canada Games Centre. Doors open at 6:30 pm. The meeting begins at 7:00 pm. Please save the date and keep your eyes open for more details. We're working on organizing interesting speakers for this event. So stay tuned.

We are also looking for other board or committee members. Interested in writing, organizing events, leading hikes or researching grant opportunities? Are you a social media guru? Let us know. The more, the merrier.

If you want to join the board or a committee or just give a few hours a month, contact chair@bluemountainfriends.ca or membership@bluemountainfriends.ca.

Help us realize the dream of turning BMBCL Wilderness into a national urban park.

Together, let's turn BMBCL into a
National Urban Park
#somuchtoloveinbmbcl

YOU CAN BE HOOT-FUL



We're looking for writers, organizers, event planners, website designers, social media gurus, and fundraisers. In short, we're looking for more friends.

**Everyone is welcome.
Every little bit helps.**

For more information email membership@bluemountainfriends.ca

CAMPING IS FUN, FOREST FIRES ARE NOT

CHECK BEFORE YOU BURN. TRIPLE-CHECK WHEN YOU LEAVE.



Forest Fire Season Underway

With the camping season underway, it means burn reminders are necessary. The Department of Natural Resources posts by 2 pm daily on when we can burn. **Check the burnsafe map** before you start a fire. If you start a fire, ensure you:

- Drown the campfire with water
- Mix the ashes and embers with soil
- Scrape all partially-burned sticks and logs to make sure all the hot embers are off them

Recently, a guided hike happened in BMBCL. On the way into the wilderness area, the hiking group was called into action to help put out a slow burn. Campers had been in the area but neglected to ensure the fire was completely put out before leaving. Hikers detected a smell of smoke and soon found a fire pit smouldering. The fire had moved into the duff (layer of organic material).

The five hikers spent 30 minutes digging out the pit and pouring water onto it. They doused the area to a depth of 12". Rocks were still warm, but the group did as much as they could.

This was a very close call on a potential forest fire.

We're sharing this story to help educate people about how important safe burning is and to show how easy it is for a fire to spread out of control. The grounds are dry already. Please, check before you burn.

ENJOYING BMBCL BY WATER IS THE ONLY WAY FOR DUSAN SOUDEK

Dusan Soudek has been a Friends member from the start. "I attended the founding meeting and knew I wanted to support since its sole mission was and continues to be to advocate for the protection of BMBCL area and ultimately for establishing a parkland," says Soudek. "I knew a number of the key personalities leading Friends, which gave me confidence in what the group was about and now I see the organization as a great information hub and a place to get updates on what is happening with the area."



Soudek is a believer in keeping BMBCL protected. "I believe this is a truly unique place. So close to the city, yet it retains many aspects of its wild and scenic nature. And it's all by happenstance, not human design. I love spending time in BMBCL, but I don't get as much time there as I would like."

"These days, I volunteer for a few groups, including Friends of McNabs Society and Nova Scotia Nature Trust. I also spend a lot of time with Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia as chairman of the Portage Committee. We are about to start the second year of our ten-year agreement with NS Environment and Climate Change, where we manage the maintenance of selected portages, campsites, and old cabins in different wilderness areas, including several water trails within the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area."

So what does Soudek see for the future of BMBCL? "When I think of the future of BMBCL, I support the urban national park proposal. I'd like to see the future park boundaries and other elements such as buffers, trail systems, trailheads and water access points. We have a great opportunity to create something extraordinary. I hope we don't mess it up with a lack of buffers or development before the urban park decision-makers can work through the processes they must follow. For now, I'll keep watching the announcements and encouraging anyone I can to go and see this wilderness. Perhaps even take some time to paddle in the area....there is nothing like it."

CONTACT US: Let us know what you think.

Send comments or pictures to info@bluemountainfriends.ca

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



Newsletter Ed: C. McKellar