



Friends of  
BLUE MOUNTAIN -  
BIRCH COVE LAKES

# The Blue Mountain NEWS

Vol. 24 Spring 2025

## CONCERNS MOUNT WITH PROPOSED 102 DEVELOPMENT

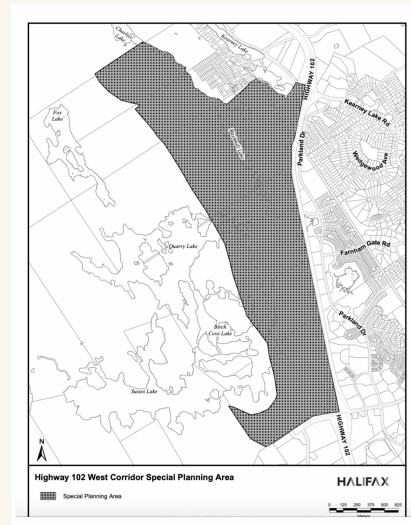
Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes continue to advocate for the protection of the wilderness area on multiple fronts: water conservation, national urban park designation, and the retirement of the proposed Highway 113.

A recent announcement from the Provincial Government has added a significant concern to our advocacy efforts. Earlier this month, the Provincial Government declared the **Hwy 102 West Corridor a Special Planning Area**. The Stevens Group and the Annapolis Group currently own this land. The Province instructed HRM to begin planning for a housing development that could accommodate 11,500 residential units on 630 acres of land.

Friends immediately began reaching out to provincial politicians to get more information. Some reports have been posted online. We are in the process of reviewing them. This effort will be the focus of our time over the summer, and we will continue to engage in discussions with provincial and municipal politicians during this process.

Our focus has always been to advocate for a park that encompasses all of the land originally identified as the ideal park boundary, including the Birch Cove Lakes. This preferred boundary has been identified in HRM planning documents for decades and is grounded in scientific and environmental reasoning, aiming to protect the watersheds within the proposed park area.

In addition to risking the park boundary, Friends is equally concerned about the impacts on water quality, wildlife corridor fragmentation, and the overall quality of life for all residents. It is anticipated that more than 25,000 individuals will reside in the small area adjacent to BMBCL. Imagine the population of Sydney compacted into 630 acres. Proposals for the development of this area also recommend building high-



risers immediately abutting the southern edge of MBCL. This would provide enclosures Susie, Quarry, Washmill and Little Kearney Lakes. In contrast to BMBCL Wilderness Park and former HRM's intent to take park users into a wilderness and limit the city's impacts within the park, the development proposals will effectively place high-rise buildings within the park.

Over the coming weeks, we will review the Special Planning Area documents and post information to our website and other social media channels. We will also continue to work with other organizations that share our concerns. We want to make informed and reasonable comments, but we will not shy away from identifying any shortcomings that undermine the integrity of the Wilderness Area or the long-promised National Urban Park.

## MORE CALLS FOR NATIONAL URBAN PARK

Friends is excited to see other voices joining the movement to designate the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) area as a national urban park.

A recent article titled "Let's Make the Urban National Park Happen!" published by **Parkview News** on April 5, 2025, highlights the importance of establishing a national urban park in Halifax, Nova Scotia, specifically within the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area.

The author, John Moore, reflects on Halifax's historical development and points to past initiatives where community involvement led to significant urban improvements, such as the transformation of the waterfront and the establishment of the Oval skating facility. He draws parallels to the current opportunity, suggesting that just as these projects enhanced the city's appeal and functionality, creating a national urban park would provide residents and visitors with a substantial natural space amid urban growth.

Moore emphasizes the increasing urban density in Halifax and the corresponding need for accessible green spaces. He advocates for the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area to be designated as a national urban park, offering a sanctuary for nature enthusiasts and a counterbalance to urban expansion. The article serves as a call to action, urging community members and leaders to support the initiative and ensure the preservation of natural spaces for future generations. [Click here to read the full article.](#)



**CARP has expressed strong support for establishing the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area as a national urban park.** In their article titled "Creating a National Urban Park in Halifax," published on January 23, 2025, they highlight the importance of this initiative in enhancing urban green spaces, promoting biodiversity, and improving community well-being. CARP believes that designating this area as a national urban park will provide accessible natural spaces for residents, support ecological connectivity, and aid in the conservation of at-risk species.



The article emphasizes the potential benefits of creating a national urban park in Halifax, advocating for its designation to enrich the city's natural heritage. It would also offer opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking trails suitable for all skill levels, canoeing, overnight wilderness camping in accordance with Leave No Trace guidelines, as well as snowshoeing and ice skating during the winter months. [Click here to read the full article](#)

## 2025 AGM SET FOR JUNE 4

Friends of BMBCL will host our 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, June 4 from 7:00pm until 8:30 pm at Maskwa Aquatic Club, 91 Saskatoon Drive, Halifax.

Jillian Ramsay, EAC's Sustainable Cities Coordinator and John Spears, Wild 10K coordinator, will be guest speakers.

We're looking for new board members. The Events role is open. If you are interested or would like more information, please email [chair@bluemountainfriends.ca](mailto:chair@bluemountainfriends.ca)

We look forward to connecting with members to share updates on important topics related to the protection and stewardship of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes.





# WILD LAKES 10K & ECO-ENDURANCE CHALLENGE HUGE SUCCESS

by Wendy McDonald

Maskwa Aquatic Club and Saskatoon Drive was a hive of activity on Sunday, May 4th as folks gathered to participate or support the Urban Trail Runners, Eco-Endurance Challenge (E2C) participants. Halifax Search and Rescue attended with a full team throughout the day.

The 10 km wilderness race and E2C routes were mapped out over the past year by volunteers spending many hours in the wilderness, both passing 5 lakes, up and down on single track rugged trails and adjacent wildlands. Volunteers from the Friends of Blue Mountain were standing by at various sites to make sure the correct 10km route was followed and as a safety measure.



Jason White from Beechville, clocking in at 59.55, and Christine Angelidis of Dartmouth at 1:15 were the winners! The 31 Wild Lakes 10K participants all returned safely, some taking 3 hours for this challenging course. The black flies chased them out!

The day continued with E2C teams and 132 participants of all ages. This navigation/Rogaine-like race started as a Halifax Search & Rescue training course over 20 years ago but was on COVID hiatus. Urban Trail Racing partnered with the HSAR E2C committee to bring this back to our wonderful wilderness area. The re-launched event includes categories for map & compass only, or GPS, Search and Rescue only (with Map & Compass), and a family category that included lots of Scout and Cub troops. Many participants were new to the area and had 1 hour to review the map to decide the course they would take to collect as many points as possible, while ensuring they returned before the cut-off time. They all enjoyed the day, scoring points along the way as they clipped the flags, navigating long distances over a selection of control points throughout the wilderness area. Christine was back on the course in the afternoon to join another personal challenge.

The Search and Rescue team had a long day, waiting in the parking lot until the last participants were back at homebase. They are a necessary part of our region, participating in searches or rescues throughout the year. When you next venture into this area, stay safe so you do not need to call out the rescue team! And maybe even consider participating next year! We look forward to welcoming them all back!

## WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Every once in a while, we all need to take a moment and give each other a pat on the back. Last month, Friends of BMBCL volunteers from across HRM came together to reconnect and celebrate all that we are doing. It was a heartfelt thank-you for the countless volunteer hours contributed by hike leaders, trail stewards, board members, and committee members, both past and present.



To all our volunteers that couldn't join us in April, we'll find another time. Until then, thank you for your continued support to make BMBCL a national urban park.

## SPRING GUIDED HIKES

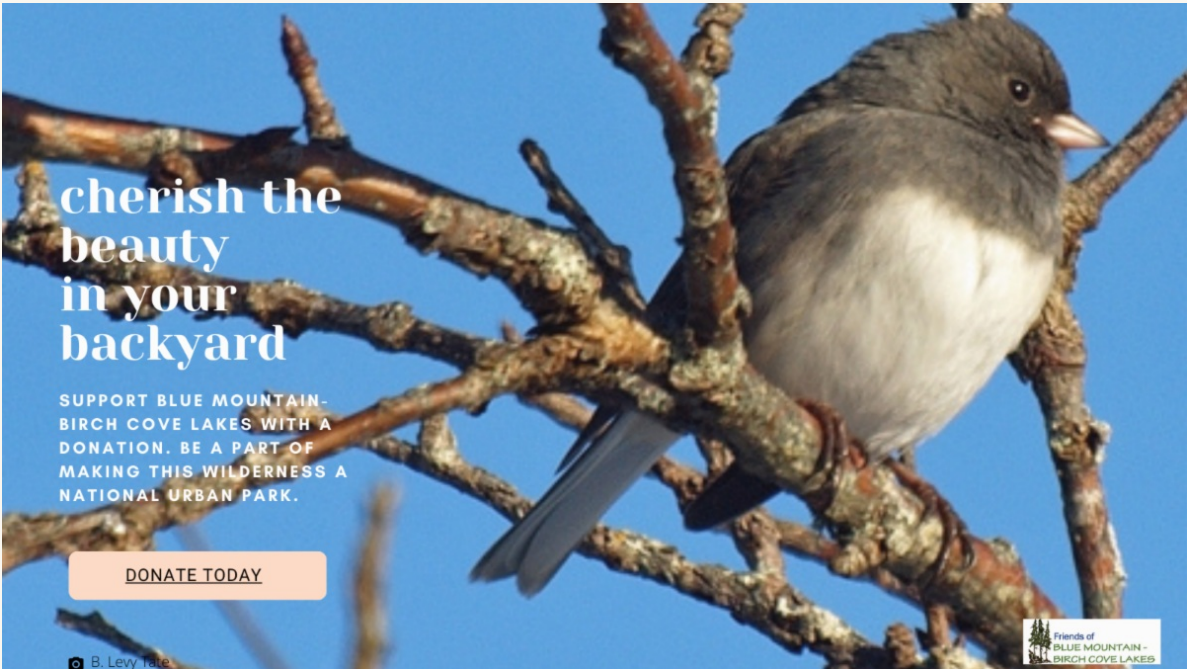
If you are looking to explore Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes but are unsure where to start, the Friends' Guided Hike series is a great place. Trained leaders lead hikes and visit many places in the wilderness area.

A few hikes are just around the corner.

- Lakeshore to Hobsons Lake 6 km June 7, 2025 9:30 am
- Triple L 9.2 km June 14, 2025 9:00 am
- Charlies Lake Loop 3.5 km June 28, 2025 9:30 am




Hike Schedule and Registration



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 B. Levy foto



**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](#).



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