

## The Blue Mountain NEWS



Photo: Heather L.

June 2021 Edition 12

### FROM THE BOARD

Summer is here and the days are perfect for hiking and being outside. We've been busy on many fronts over the last few months despite the pandemic. We've been advocating, registering new members, planning fundraising and of course working with other like-minded organizations to build a strong coalition of support for BMBCL wilderness.

This month's newsletter highlights several Friends of BMBCL initiatives. We have a call out for Board Nominations and are hoping many new people step forward. We share some of our advocacy initiatives along with the planning updates. We are also looking to add to our membership. Joining is free so watch your email in the coming weeks as we look to our current members to help spread the word.



We want to thank [District 12 Councillor, Iona Stoddard](#), for supporting our group with a financial contribution. As COVID restrictions eased, Councillor Stoddard joined Board members for a hike in the Timberlea area. We are grateful for her interest in seeing these lands firsthand.

Finally, we can't stress enough the importance of safety when visiting the BMBCL wilderness area. BMBCL doesn't have easy access making it very difficult to respond to any emergency including injury or fire. Below we offer suggestions on what to do and who to call. So take a second and read on.

We want everyone to enjoy this unique and beautiful wilderness in the heart of Halifax. We hope you all have a safe summer. There is a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel and we look forward to reconnecting in September.

### DON'T IGNORE IT, REPORT IT

We've all come across damage and destruction in the wilderness area. It could be living trees cut down for a fire, fires or fire pits in a dangerous location, abandoned tents or tarps or motor bikes tearing along paths just to name a few. We might envision the old-fashioned "park ranger" or trail monitors hiking around protecting the wilderness from this type of destruction or dangers, but the reality is there are not enough resources to cover the protected areas in Nova Scotia. So, **what can you do to help?**

1. **Don't put yourself at risk by challenging offenders;** but, if fellow hikers are open to education on what they should be



doing perhaps share a few tips.

2. **If you come across smoldering remains of a fire, call 911**  
During the dry months, it only takes a little hot ember for a fire to get out of control.
3. **Report violations to the Department of Lands & Forestry.** If you witness something happening or come across it after the fact, report it. You can report by phone (1-800-565-2224) to a 24-hour report line or through an online report that can be found by clicking [Nova Scotia Natural Resources Offences](#). Remember, if reports are not made, then people are inclined to believe violations are not occurring. Resources are only made available when statistics demonstrate the need.

Finally, always check the fire restrictions for backyard burning or camping/hiking fires. Visit [www.novascotia.ca/burnsafe/](http://www.novascotia.ca/burnsafe/) to get the most up to date daily information.



## BOARD NOMINATIONS

Friends of BMBCL is looking to expand its Board of Directors. Three executive positions are open Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Committee Chair positions are also open. If you have Board experience great; but if you don't that's ok. We are looking to have a diverse board that reflects our dynamic and diverse community.

This is a great opportunity to make a difference in Halifax and get to know people.

We hope you will get in touch with us at [bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com](mailto:bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com) to let us know of your interest and for more information.



## WORKING WITH OTTAWA

Advocating on the federal level continued this spring. Board members had Zoom meetings with all Members of Parliament who represent areas of Halifax Regional Municipality.

An encouraging meeting was held with Geoff Regan, MP for Halifax West. He is a long-time supporter of the regional wilderness park, which is entirely within his Halifax West riding. Geoff was joined by Darren Fisher (MP Dartmouth-Cole Harbour), Andy Fillmore (MP Halifax) and Darrel Samson (MP Sackville- Preston-Chezzetcook). All four MPs are familiar with the BMBCL area and recognize the tremendous opportunity we have to create a major urban wilderness park within our city.



We also met with Minister Bernadette Jordan, (MP South Shore-St.Margarets) and Sean Fraser (MP Central Nova). We introduced the goals and aspirations of the Friends of BMBCL and we were very encouraged to learn more about the federal commitment to wilderness protection that was included in the [federal budget](#) and in the fall Speech from the Throne.

Part of the budget announcements included \$200 million over three years to support natural infrastructure, such as parks and trails. It also included a commitment of \$2.3 billion over five years to address the biodiversity crisis, and help the Federal government meet its ambitious target of preserving 25% of land and inland waters by 2025.

The Speech from the Throne referenced national urban parks as a new initiative. While this is very early days for a new program, we are heartened to see the funding in this budget and the commitment to protecting urban wilderness. We have been in contact with responsible senior staff with Parks Canada and are encouraged that BMBCL is already on their radar as a possible candidate area.

Could this be the start of planning an urban national park? We hope so.

## FRIENDS OF BMBCL GO TO CITY'S



## PLANNING COMMITTEE

On April 15, 2021, BMBCL board members presented to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee. The goal was to encourage Halifax to move faster with the establishment of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park. The regional park idea was formally introduced 15 years ago in the 2006 Regional Plan.



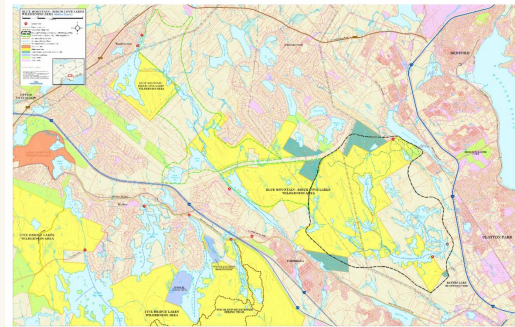
For Friends of BMBCL, park creation means consulting with the public about what the park concept is to be—a wilderness park like the current state, more recreational facilities or a hybrid of the two. Establishing a clear concept would involve identifying areas within the park that should be protected, where recreational development should occur and access opportunities should be provided. Friends also argued there is a strong need for dedicated resources and a project timeline in keeping with other major HRM projects.

Friends expressed concern regarding a staff Information Report presented last year because it advised that the establishment of the park would happen only as subdivision applications were received. This is problematic as it takes decision-making regarding an overall park plan away from the City and ties progress to specific locations and time frames determined by adjoining property developers.

To see the presentation click the link and start at the 7 minute mark. [Presentation to Council Committee](#)

## HIGHWAY 113 UPDATE

Let's start with good news—the proposed Hwy 113 is still not on the Department of Transportation & Active Transit's 5-year list for road development. The bad news—the highway is not officially cancelled.



The Premier now has to make a decision. During the Friends presentation to the HRM Community Planning & Economic Development Committee, Councillor Lovelace advised that she had "asked the Premier to set aside the 113 TIR lands ....". She also noted

concern with what would happen to the park if the proposed Hwy 113 were to cut off the northern section from the larger southern section. The topic was also raised by Friends' Board members during a brief conversation with the Premier on April 22, 2021 during the protected land announcement at Maskwa.

Hopefully, the request to NOT spend \$110 million on a project will be seen as a breath of fresh air for the Premier.

## MORE LAND ADDED TO BMBCL WILDERNESS PARK

On April 22, Premier Rankin and the Minister of the Environment Keith Irving announced plans to preserve another 61 areas of land across Nova Scotia, including 35 acres of the BMBCL Wilderness Park. This acreage was recently released from a lease of crown land to Maskwa, opening up this opportunity to add to the wilderness park.

Public consultations will now be planned. Stay tuned for details as we will be looking for members to voice support for the land preservation.

[Click here to read the full announcement.](#)



## JOIN FRIENDS OF BMBCL

Friends of BMBCL is looking to add more members over the summer. The goal is to have 1000 members by the end of the year and have a stronger voice for advocacy work. Watch your email over the coming days for a special post. We hope you will share it with friends and on your



Photo: S. d'Entremont

## JOIN FRIENDS OF BLUE MOUNTAIN BIRCH COVE LAKES

Lend your voice to preserving this rare and unique wilderness  
in the heart of Halifax Regional Municipality

Visit [www.bluemountainfriends.ca](http://www.bluemountainfriends.ca) to join today

social media and encourage everyone to join. For us, the more the merrier.

To join, just click [Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness](#)

**CONTACT US:** Let us know what you think. Send comments or pictures to [bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com](mailto:bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com)

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



Newsletter Ed: C. McKellar