



Friends of
BLUE MOUNTAIN -
BIRCH COVE LAKES

The Blue Mountain NEWS

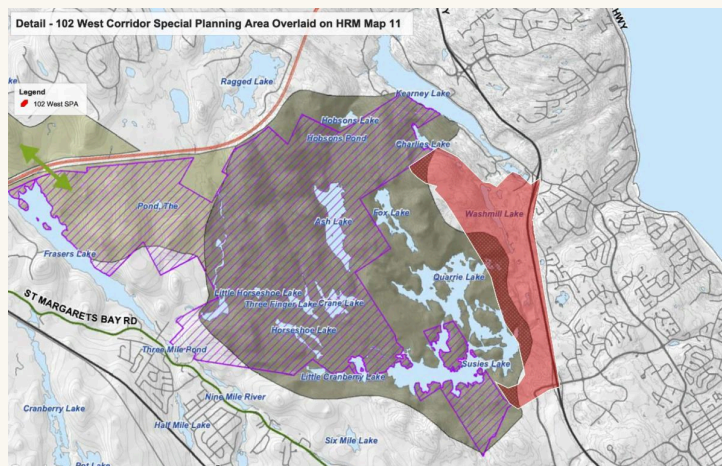


Photo: A. Wenning

Vol. 26 Winter 2025

HIGHWAY 102 CORRIDOR SPECIAL PLANNING AREA THREATENS FUTURE PARK

On January 13, 2026, HRM's EngageHalifax.ca website was updated to indicate the first phase of public engagement was complete. A "What We Heard" report will be published on this website in early 2026. Residents may continue to submit correspondence to the lead planner, Ross Grant (grantro@halifax.ca), throughout the project as the internal review process is ongoing.



Friends continues to highlight that the Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area directly overlaps the eastern margin of the BMBCL's 'conceptual park area'. This conceptual park area was initially set out in HRM's 2006 regional plan and reaffirmed in the 2014 regional plan update. The area of overlap includes the Birch Cove Lakes (primarily Susies, Quarry and Fox lakes) and their southern and eastern shorelines.

The proposed development, projected to bring in a population of 40,000, poses a severe and irreversible threat to the ecological integrity and natural character of the proposed park. Such large-scale urbanization would fall short of both public expectations. Allowing this development to proceed would permanently compromise the area's future as a natural sanctuary for current and future generations.

We continue to advocate that the National Urban Park planning process should take priority over development in this area and that the aspirational park boundary, which Friends has consistently called for, be utilized in a land acquisition process. The BMBCL candidate, the leading contender for designation east of Toronto, is a nationally-significant urban park opportunity situated in the heart of HRM.

We urge members and supporters to continue submitting their opinions to HRM throughout the SPA planning process.

HRM SUBURBAN PLANNING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPEN

Public engagement for the Suburban Plan is underway. Once again, this is the time to speak up! This plan will guide growth and development in HRM's suburban areas for the next decade and beyond.

Much of HRM's critical green and blue spaces are in the suburban area. These areas filter our air and water; store carbon; act as a natural barrier for floods and fires and connect our open spaces to one another.

These areas are also under the greatest pressure from development and urban sprawl.

How can you learn about the plan and have a say?

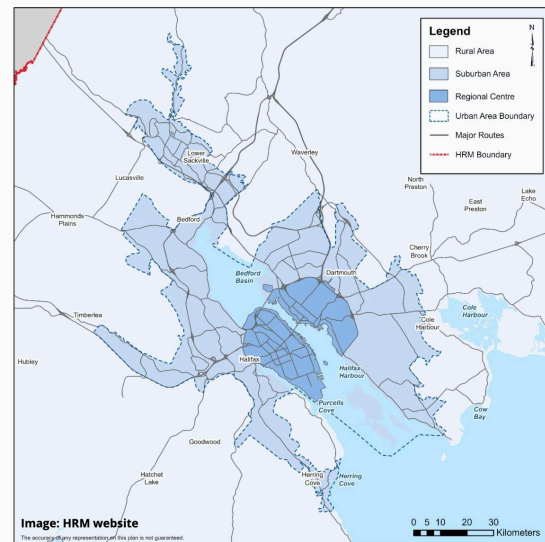
- Sign up for the Suburban Plan newsletter
- Email feedback to suburbanplan@halifax.ca
- Take HRM's public survey
- Add comments to the interactive map
- Attend kickoff open houses throughout February 2026

You can find all of this at <https://engagehalifax.ca/suburban-plan>

When you are engaging online or in person, look to Our HRM Alliance or Ecology Action Centre social media channels for key points. They have put together useful key messages. We want the Suburban Plan to include:

- Strong protection for wildlife corridors
- Growth focused on density, brownfield sites and land-based infill
- Development within the Urban Service Boundary
- Prioritizing affordable housing opportunities
- Reliable transit and active transportation
- Walkable access to essential services like groceries, childcare and health
- Support for local businesses in the communities they serve
- Public access to thriving natural spaces

Engaging with planners and elected officials is more important now than ever before.



STEWARDSHIP IN BMBCL

Friends of BMBCL has again applied to the Province to continue stewardship work in the wilderness area. Our volunteer Trail Stewards help maintain the trail system, monitor park visitor activities, and provide education on appropriate trail use. They also collect waste and may be asked to assist with trail rehabilitation.

Friends is putting out a call to encourage anyone interested in becoming a steward to reach out to Frank Wormald, Stewardship Chair, stewardship@bluemountainfriends.ca



UNDERSTANDING OUR HIKES submitted by Margot Metcalfe, Hike Leader

Did you know Friends of BMBCL offer a wide variety of hikes? We offer slower hikes, faster hikes, shorter hikes, longer hikes - and everything in between hikes. There really is something for everyone. So, how do you decide which hike is best for you?

The best way is to visit our schedule and read the hike descriptions. Our well-trained Hike Leaders make every effort to describe hikes concisely and simply. Slower and faster hikes will be noted in the description, along with the length of the hike and the time in which it is anticipated to be completed.



Special notes are often included. For example, the write-up about the hike around Charlie's Lake notes a lot of up-and-down terrain. This hike can be a little more difficult for folks who find hills challenging. All the hike descriptions mention rocky surfaces and slippery roots. If you are a frequent hiker, you know immediately what this means. However, if you enjoy walking through city streets or on the wide trails in Point Pleasant Park, you may not realize the implications. Rocks and roots mean that every step on your hike will gently challenge your balance. This imposes extra demands on your body and mind. There's a gift to this - it's good exercise for both! It's also more tiring than walking on a flat surface. If you are used to walking four kilometers in the city, you might find a two-kilometre hike at a medium pace just as tiring.



Our Hike Leaders also describe unique aspects to each hike description. For example, the Susies Lake Flagpole Hill Hike notes there is one point where we must climb up and down a rock face with the assistance of a rope. Hike Leaders are there to assist and, occasionally, depending upon weather and other circumstances, they may offer an alternate route.

Similarly, the Three Lakes Loop hike includes a warning about the possibility of wet feet. Waterproof hiking boots and a change of socks are among the possible preparations one might make for this hike.

These descriptions help hikers choose the type of fun/challenge they want to have on any given day.

We usually travel with several Hike Leaders so that there is always someone available to assist or to bring someone out if needed. To reassure you, all our Hike Leaders have first aid training, and several have wilderness first aid training.

Lastly, our winter hikes include a message "Ice cleats may be needed depending on conditions". Ice cleats or crampons are accessories that attach to boots and have rounded spikes or tabs on them. They're used to keep hikers from slipping on ice. The best ones attach over the top of boots, not simply around the bottom. These are a handy item to have on hand anytime and can be used even in Point Pleasant Park. In deep icy conditions, our winter hikes will not proceed.

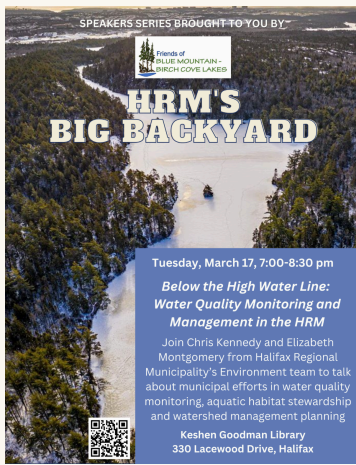
BMBCL Wilderness Area is an exquisite, unique wilderness in the heart of Halifax and is worth exploring all year round. If you have any concerns, start with one of our slower hikes, such as the Charlie's Lake Lookoff hike. This is a shorter hike, just over one kilometer in, and then retracing the same route on the way out. It is deliberately slow, allowing people to begin to understand the terrain of the wilderness area.

Visit our website, bluemountainfriends.ca, to learn about the wilderness area, or go directly to our hike schedule to register. Registration is always required. Knowing all this, we hope you will join us on a hike. There really is #somuchtoloveinbmbcl.

Hike Schedule and Registration

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends is already looking forward to spring and has some dates to add to your calendar. More details will be shared closer to the time.



Volunteer Appreciation
 Sunday, April 19, 2026
 1:30 - 3:30 PM
 Maskwa Aquatic Club

Friends of BMBCL AGM
 Wednesday, June 10, 2026
 7:00 PM
 Maskwa Aquatic Club

Friends Speakers Series:
HRM's Big Backyard
 Tuesday, March 17, 2026
Below the High Water Line:
Water Quality Monitoring and
Management in the HRM
 7:00 PM
 Keshen Goodman Library
 330 Lacewood Drive

LOOKING FOR A FEW FRIENDS

Friends of BMBCL is seeking a few new board members and key volunteers. We are in particular need of two key roles.

- Recording Secretary. This involves taking minutes at our monthly board meeting and circulating board materials.
- Event planner(s). This involves working with volunteers to plan the AGM, Volunteer Appreciation, the Big Backyard Speaker Series, and other ad hoc events throughout the year.



Please contact Mary Ann McGrath, Chair of Friends of BMBCL, at chair@bluemountainfriends.ca or Mary Ellen Hamilton, Volunteer Chair, volunteer@bluemountainfriends.ca

NATURE NOVA SCOTIA'S WOMEN'S DAY TALK WITH HOPE SWINIMER

Nature Nova Scotia continually organizes and supports engaging events throughout the province. One great event is just around the corner.

On Sunday, March 8th, Nature Nova Scotia is hosting a women-only talk with the amazing Hope Swinimer of Hope for Wildlife, whose years-long championing for black bear conservation in Nova Scotia has culminated in the new Build for Bears campaign, Nova Scotia's first bear rehabilitation facility.



This online talk, Black Bear Rehabilitation, is open to all woman-identifying nature lovers. Hop over to Nature Nova Scotia to learn more. Registration opening soon! Visit [Nature Nova Scotia](https://www.naturenovascotia.ca) for more information.

FRIENDS OF FRIENDS: HIKE NOVA SCOTIA

Hike Nova Scotia has been a long-time supporter of Friends of BMBCL. Hike Nova Scotia is also a non-profit organization whose mandate is to encourage and promote hiking culture throughout Nova Scotia.

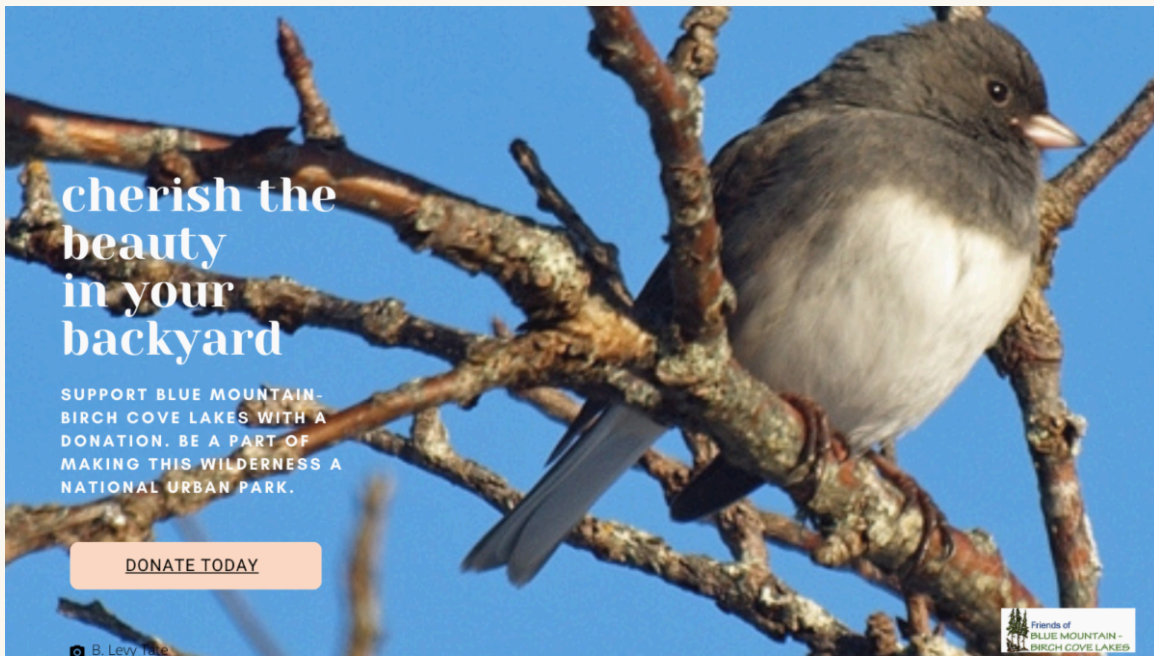
They encourage anyone to hike, walk, or snowshoe and support those who work to maintain or build trails.

Hike NS offers a variety of events, including the seasonal Guided Hike & Walk Series, the annual Hiking Summit, Outdoor Council of Canada courses, the Hiker Challenge program, the NS Walks program, Walking in the Footsteps in Mi'kmaq communities, and Leave No Trace Education. They are home to the Nova Scotia Chapter of the International Appalachian Trail.



Along with these outdoor opportunities, their Trail Builder Network supports volunteers and staff from many trail groups, including First Nations and municipalities that build and maintain hiking trails. They also take on an advocacy role by engaging in policy development on hiking issues and striving to keep many of Nova Scotia's wilderness areas protected.

Joining Hike Nova Scotia is a great way to lend your voice to supporting hiking and walking in the province. It also offers discounts on Hike NS events and courses, and provides discounts and perks at various NS businesses and organizations. There are paid and free membership options. [Learn more and join here.](#)



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](#).



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