



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the proposed park called “*Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes*”?

The proposed park is named after its two most prominent and well-known natural features. Blue Mountain is situated in the north-central sector of the park area and, at 140 meters, is understood to be the highest point in Halifax. The view from the summit overlooks the proposed wilderness of the park area and extends as far as the bridge structures spanning Halifax Harbour and as the waters of Shad Bay. Birch Cove Lakes (include Susies and Quarry Lakes) are situated in the southeastern sector of the conceptual park area and, situated being relatively close to urban Halifax, historically have been the most-visited destination in the BMBCL area.

What is the area of the BMBCL?

The conceptual BMBCL candidate national urban park area is set within an approximately 12,000-acre area of undeveloped forest and lake country area and surrounding adjoining private subdivisions, all generally encompassed by Highways 102 and 103 and the Hammonds Plains Road. The aspirational park proposal extends approximately 13 kilometres from the northwest (Coxs Lake area) southeastward to the Birch Cove Lakes area. The area is subject to change with future land acquisitions.

How many acres of land have been preserved to date?

To date, approximately 5600 acres have been secured for park-establishment or conservation purposes. Land securement has been accomplished through the efforts of the Province of Nova Scotia, the Regional Municipality of Halifax and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The existing candidate park area is subject to change, subject to future land acquisition within the referenced 12,000-acre area.

What are the major natural characteristics of the proposed park area?

The proposed park area overlies a rugged natural landscape occupied by Acadian-Wabanaki forest and 2 primary watersheds (Nine Mile River and Kearney Lake) with 22 interconnected lakes/ponds. These natural features have long been popular amongst both hikers and canoeists. The area has been described as a “mini-Kejimikujik” (i.e. national park) situated on the urban-suburban fringe of Halifax.

How is Parks Canada involved in BMBCL?

Parks Canada launched the National Urban Park Program in August 2021, with the goal of creating 15 new urban parks across Canada. The BMBCL areas was identified as one of six possible candidates for early establishment. Based on initial studies, BMBCL has been recognized as having achieved official candidate national urban park status in May 2023. Parks Canada has since described Halifax’s BMBCL area as one of the three leading candidates for designation. The National Urban Park will be a partnership between Parks Canada, Province of NS, HRM, First Nations and Nova Scotia Nature Trust, representing current and traditional land-owners (collectively referred to as the ‘Partners’).

How are HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia involved in BMBCL?

HRM Regional Council first formally approved the BMBCL regional park proposal in its initial regional plan (2006). In 2021, HRM and Parks Canada entered into a collaboration agreement to work toward the designation of the area under the National Urban Parks Program. HRM is one of the land-owners and Regional Council has consistently supported the BMBCL park proposal in concept. The Province of NS is the principal land-owner and has designated their land as protected under the *Wilderness Protection Act* in support of the proposed Park.

Where does responsibility for establishment and management of the BMBCL NUP rest?

Responsibility for park planning and establishment rests with a six-member partnership group, including Parks Canada, HRM, NS Environment, the NS Nature Trust and two representatives of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (KMK and Sipekne'katik). Progress has been delayed due to the complexity of this arrangement, consequent lack of clarity around respective roles, and the absence of an approved park establishment plan. HRM, the Province and other Partners have partnered with Parks Canada to do various studies in the proposed Park including a Trail Plan, Species at Risk, etc. These completed studies have not yet been released to the public.

What is the Annapolis lawsuit?

The dispute started in 2017 when the Annapolis Group claimed HRM effectively expropriated land in Blue Mountain-Birch Cove area for park use. The Annapolis Case is currently ongoing. The lands that surround the Birch Cove Lakes were proposed to be acquired by HRM for inclusion in the park as far back as 2006 but negotiations have yet to be successful. Friends of BMBCL are extremely concerned about the trial and the continued chill it has placed on the progress of plans to establish this area as a National Urban Park.

What about the Special Planning Area?

The Province at the request of HRM, declared lands on the west side of Hwy 102, at Susies and Quarry Lakes, to be designated a Special Planning Area. Friends has made submissions to the HRM Planning Team and will continue to follow all updates from HRM as well as in-person meetings. Major concerns are the apparent lack of planning for an appropriate interface between the Protected Lands and the Development site, including adequate buffers from the lakes' shores. This SPA is projected to add 40,000 + people to the area between Bayers Lake and Kearney Lake Road – over 3 times the population of Truro! We have serious concerns about loss/damage to habitat, water quality, ground water protection and natural connectivity. Stay tuned for updates.

Where can I go to access the park?

The only official public access to the park area is provided from 270 Brookline Drive (off Larry Uteck Drive), via an approximately 60-space parking lot that links with a trail along the southwest side of Black Duck Brook. Other popular access points are the Bayers Lake Business Area (behind Kent), Colins Road (via Belle Street off Larry Uteck Drive), Maskwa Aquatic Club (via Saskatoon Drive off Kearney Lake Road), and Anahid Drive or Lakeshore Drive (in Kingswood Subdivision).

Visitors to the proposed park area need to realize that businesses and private citizens can get frustrated with inappropriate parking. Please be aware and respectful of private property interests where you park.

Other than in the Brookline Drive-Black Duck Brook area, trails in the BMBCL area are not managed. Most of these trails have become established over time through informal use or private citizen initiative, long before regional park or national urban park status was proposed. Friends of BMBCL's volunteer trail stewards monitor these trails and, when possible, attempt to do basic repairs, primarily for safety reasons only. Friends of BMBCL offers free hikes that provide an introduction to the unofficial trail system.

What do Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes do?

Many people have been working for more than 40 years to save this near-urban wilderness. Friends of BMBCL was created in 2018 to help focus efforts on creating one of Canada's largest urban wilderness parks. We are a registered non-profit, and there is no fee to join. Just go online and sign up. We are always thrilled to have new members. Our activities include park creation advocacy, input to park planning, guiding hikes, stewardship, events for education and information, and communications. Check our website and **join!** Visit <http://www.bluemountainfriends.ca/> or scan our QR code. Our committees are always looking for active volunteers.