



Friends of
BLUE MOUNTAIN -
BIRCH COVE LAKES

The Blue Mountain NEWS

Photo: HalifaxTrails.ca

Vol. 28 Fall 2026

We're Not There Yet: Work to Establish A National Urban Park Continues — A Message from Our Chair

Over the past several months, we have closely watched Halifax Regional Municipality advance planning for the Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area, and we continue to stay in contact with Parks Canada as it works to establish a national urban park. For Friends of Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes, this is not simply another planning exercise. Today's decisions will fundamentally shape the future of one of the Halifax region's most important remaining wilderness landscapes.

Late this summer, HRM updated its *What We Heard* report to include *Appendix B: Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area Feedback Log*. We welcome the addition of the comments residents and participants submitted. Most of those comments express concerns about the potential impacts on the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes wilderness. We remain concerned that the report continues to underplay public concern about the extensive impacts of development on wildlife habitat, wetlands, water quality, traffic, infrastructure costs, and, most importantly, the future of this irreplaceable natural landscape.

For Friends, these concerns reinforce something we have been saying for a while: the lands within and surrounding the SPA cannot be planned in isolation from the future of the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park.

The proposed planning area overlaps with lands that have long been identified as important to the broader park vision. These lands are not simply vacant spaces waiting for development. They form part of a larger ecological landscape—one that connects forests, lakes, wetlands and wildlife habitat and provides opportunities for people to experience nature close to home.

We recognize that Halifax is growing. We recognize the need for housing, transportation and economic opportunity. But growth does not have to mean sacrificing the natural systems that make our region such a remarkable place to live. Good planning means looking beyond the immediate opportunity to develop land and asking what kind of community we want to leave for the next generation.

That is why Friends continues to call on HRM to take a much more comprehensive approach to the Highway 102 planning process—one that fully considers the proposed national urban park, protects important ecological connections, and ensures that decisions about development are made with the long-term public interest firmly in mind.

Friends of Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes will continue to speak up, ask to participate in the planning process and work with our members and partners to protect this extraordinary landscape. Our organization was built on a simple belief: nature needs friends.

The decisions made by all levels of government in the months ahead will have consequences that extend far beyond the current planning cycle. We urge decision-makers to choose long-term vision over short-

term pressure, conservation over fragmentation, and a future in which Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes remains a thriving natural landscape for generations to come.

Thank you to everyone who continues to speak up, write letters, attend meetings, share information, volunteer, donate and bring others into this effort.

PRESENTATION TO HRM'S CPED COMMITTEE

On September 17th, Dale Smith, with support from CARP NS and Friends of BMBCL, made a presentation to HRM's Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee. The Committee is a smaller group of councillors that examines issues involving how Halifax grows, develops, and supports its communities and economy before those issues go to Regional Council.

Dale spoke about the overlap between the lands identified as being of interest for a future Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park and the Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area and urged council to engage in meaningful collaborative planning of the NUP with the adjacent Special Planning Area.

The lands within the Special Planning Area are not simply vacant land. They form part of a larger landscape of forests, wetlands, lakes, wildlife habitat and natural corridors that are important to the ecological integrity and future protection of BMBCL. As planning for the Highway 102 West Corridor moves forward, decisions being made today could affect the size, connectivity and ecological integrity of a future national urban park for generations to come.

The next day, AllNovaScotia reported the city has abandoned plans to acquire the privately owned lands inside the conceptual BMBCL park boundary. John Traves, the municipal solicitor, is quoted saying, "There is no conceptual park as it relates to those private lands at this point....Council has moved on from that...There is no plan to acquire those lands."

Whether or not the lands can be acquired, for Friends and supporters, it is imperative that the planning process is transparent.



HRM WATERSHED SURVEY: TAKE THE SURVEY, YOUR VOICE MATTERS

The Halifax Regional Municipality is working to develop watershed management plans for the Nine Mile River and Dartmouth Lakes watersheds. This pilot project will produce plans that define the current state of each watershed, identify knowledge gaps, propose goals for future states, and set steps toward achieving them.

A watershed is an area of land where all water that falls and flows to the river or a lake system. With the Nine Mile River watershed, it acts as a primary environmental foundation for the BMBCL area by containing most of its headwaters, interconnecting lakes, and natural water systems. Rain and snowmelt flow through wetlands, streams, rivers, and lakes, connecting these ecosystems.

Water does not stop at a boundary. What happens across the watershed can affect water quality, water quantity, wetlands, wildlife habitat and the health of the lakes within BMBCL. That means protecting the Nine Mile River watershed is also about protecting the ecological health and integrity of Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes.

We want you to speak up for BMBCL. Take a few minutes to complete the survey and help shape the future management of these important watersheds. [Click here to learn about the survey and to participate.](#)

Healthy watersheds mean healthy lakes. Healthy lakes mean a healthier Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes.



SPECIAL PLANNING AREA PUBLIC FEEDBACK REPORT UPDATED

Late this summer, HRM updated its What We Heard report to include Appendix B: Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area Feedback Log—a significant addition that provides somewhat of a fuller

picture of what participants told the municipality.

We welcome the addition of the comments residents and participants submitted, as they accurately document the actual concerns advanced regarding potential impacts of the proposed development on the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes wilderness. The extent and level of concern raised in those comments clearly is underplayed in the rather bland corresponding summary provided by HRM.

We remain concerned that the report continues to downplays the extent of public concern and dismisses the need for HRM to take these voices seriously as it considers the area's future.

You can access the report [here](#).

HIGHWAY 102 WEST CORRIDOR SPECIAL PLANNING AREA

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

HALIFAX

Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1155, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3V 2G5

halifax.ca

FALL FOR BMBCL! 🍁

Fall is a great time of year to hike throughout Nova Scotia. Here in Halifax, BMBCL is beautiful this time of year. Friends has planned several fall hikes. Our guided hikes are for those who might want to explore the woods but would feel more comfortable in a group with others leading the way. Spaces are limited and registration is required. To see the full list of scheduled hikes, [click here](#).

Also follow us on Instagram and Facebook for up-to-date notices about individual hikes.



HIKE THE GREENBELT SERIES

Hike the Greenbelt is a series run by the Ecology Action Centre, in partnership with Our HRM Alliance. Join us to explore local trails across key parts of our Halifax Green Network that are under severe pressure from irresponsible development.

Explore globally rare ecosystems, traditional Wabanaki forests and habitat for rare and endangered species in the heart of HRM. Connect with nature and community, learn some plant ID tips and discover how you can take action to conserve key green and blue spaces in our municipality.

This fall, EAC and Our HRM are offering:

- **Sandy Lake Hike** – Oct. 17, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- **Hiking the McIntosh Run** – Oct. 18, 2 - 5 p.m.
- **Hike to Fox Lake Lookout** – Oct. 24, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Reserve your spot, [click here](#) or visit ecologyaction.ca



WHAT A SUMMER! A LOOK BACK AT FRIENDS IN ACTION

Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes had a busy summer! We had the pleasure of connecting with our community at the Friends of Clayton Park BBQ, taking part in the Bridgewalk on the Macdonald Bridge, and enjoying Agricola Street's Open Street Sunday. Each event was a chance to meet new people, share our passion for Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, and build support to protect this incredible urban wilderness and make it a national urban park.

And the work doesn't stop when summer ends. Now is the time to get involved, stay informed, spread the word, and help us build a strong community voice for the future of BMBCL. Together, we can make sure this wilderness remains protected for generations to come.



Agricola Street Open Sunday



Clayton Park BBQ



McDonald Bridge Walk

HRM BIG BACKYARD SERIES RETURNS

We're thrilled to announce that our Big Backyard Speaker Series is returning for its fourth year! We're busy working behind the scenes to put together another great lineup of inspiring speakers and fascinating conversations about nature, conservation, wilderness and our incredible HRM Big Backyard. We'll announce our first speaker of the season soon—we're just putting the finishing touches on the details BUT mark November 3rd in your calendar. Stay tuned!

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram so you'll be among the first to hear the big announcement. The Big Backyard Speaker Series is back—and we can't wait to see you there!



SO MANY THANK YOUS

💙👏 Thank you to councillors Janet Steele, Kathryn Morse, and Jean St-Amand, all of whom supported Friends with a donation. Thank you.

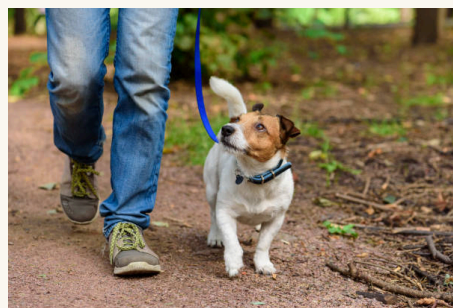
💙👏 Thank you to HRM for capital funding. We received support through the Community Grants Program. We will use this funding to create a portable BMBCL model to support our education and advocacy efforts.

💙👏 Thank you to a local female- and gender-diverse cycling group for a special donation. They donated on behalf of Jillian Ramsay, who led the group on a hike into BMBCL and helped make new friends with BMBCL.



HIKING WITH OUR FURRY COMPANIONS

For many of us, sharing an outdoor adventure with our four-legged friends is one of the best parts of hiking and walking. We love watching them run and romp. Many of us like to let them off leash so they can have a grand time, but the most important thing we can do is keep them under control, especially around wildlife. Keeping our dog on a leash is one of the most effective ways to respect wildlife, protect our pet, and help prevent dangerous encounters.



A CBC News-cited study analyzed 326 reported human–bear conflicts involving dogs between 1901 and 2023 and found that dogs initiated 54% of conflicts. The study also found that people with off-leash dogs were 4.5 times more likely to be injured than those with leashed dogs, and that off-leash dogs were involved in more bear encounters.

Although BMBCCL has no reported encounters between dogs and black bears or other wildlife such as coyotes, it is still important to follow good hiking practices with pets.

Following Leave No Trace Principle #6: Respect Wildlife means keeping your dog under control, knowing the risks, and giving wildlife the space it needs, is important. When we choose to adventure with our dogs responsibly, we help protect wildlife, ourselves and our furry companions.

Leave No Trace has a wonderful tip page about hiking with pets while following the principles of Leave No Trace. [Click here to read more.](#)

GOT A LITTLE TIME TO SPARE? WE'D LOVE YOUR HELP

Friends is looking for volunteers to lend a hand at our information booths at events throughout the year. We would also love some help with administrative tasks.

We know everyone is busy these days, but we would be so grateful to have a little extra help.

If you're interested, drop an email to volunteer@bluemountainfriends.ca



BACKPACKERS BAZAAR COMIN' UP

Need some low-cost, used outdoor clothing or gear to help equip you for outdoor adventures? Or maybe you have some used outdoor clothing and gear that needs a new home? Hike NS is hosting the Backpackers Bazaar.

Date: Saturday, October 24th

Time: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location: St. Margaret of Scotland Anglican Church Hall (3751 Robie St., Halifax)



[Click here to learn how you can sell, buy or donate at the Backpackers Bazaar.](#)



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.](#)



