



Sackville Rivers Association  
P.O Box 45071  
Lower Sackville, NS  
B4E 2Z6

August 19, 2020

Ms. Kathleen Fralic  
Engagement Lead  
Planning & Development, HRM  
[Regionalplan@halifax.ca](mailto:Regionalplan@halifax.ca)

**Re: Protecting proposed Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park in the Regional Plan**

Dear Ms. Fralic,

I am writing to bring attention to an important ecological area requiring protection in the context of the Regional Plan review and the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN). A serious error was made over a decade ago when a large area of this park was changed from P-park zoning to Urban Settlement. Its ecological unity had not similarly changed. It remained, and remains, an interdependent unit needing preservation.

The Sackville Rivers Association (SRA) is a founding member of the 27-member group comprising the Sandy-Lake – Sackville River Regional Park (SL-SRRP) Coalition. We fully support the efforts of SL-SRRP to ensure protection for the ecological unit which is the Sandy Lake-Sackville River watershed, including its submission to the RP+10 review: (<https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>).

**Preserving and restoring habitat**

- The forest supports a full suite of Old Forest Species and fully 22 of 23 vertebrates associated with structural features of old Acadian forests have been found.
- The report, *Avian Species at Risk Surveys of the proposed Sandy Lake- Sackville River Regional Park*, cites 20 such species as “Species of Interest” to Federal and Provincial conservation bodies. This includes 14 species-at-risk (9 terrestrial, 5 aquatic, counting the American Eel which the SRA continues to identify, and Atlantic Salmon).

- This wildlife survey also shows the area is uncommonly rich and diverse in flora and fauna that require policies to protect them. (<http://sandylake.org/avian-and-species-at-risk/>)
- The entire area is interconnected from an ecological perspective. Recent studies by scientists and park planners indicate any further development within the Sandy Lake/Marsh Lake watershed will negatively impact the existing park assets through to the Sackville River, and will affect flooding conditions along the river, including the Bedford floodplains.
- After more than 32 years, and through the efforts of our Sackville River Association, Atlantic Salmon are returning to the watershed. In fact, salmon are now being found in Sandy Lake. This is a significant conservation success. The headwaters of Sandy Lake need protection, or else we risk impacting all the good work that has taken place downstream.

**The global crisis of biodiversity loss is happening, and we can do something about it.**

Sandy Lake and Sackville River are an exceptionally biodiverse area, across many taxonomic groups. More than 200 species having been identified in the area, including rare birds, reptiles, fish, and forest types. Wildlife needs our help right now. We have an opportunity at Sandy Lake and Sackville River to protect wildlife habitat AND maintain wildlife corridors to facilitate the movement of flora and fauna around the landscape.

**Time is running out for Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park.**

Since 1971, Sandy Lake and the Sackville River have been identified in city planning documents as an outstanding place for a park, both from an ecological and recreational perspective. More than 1,000 acres is protected at Sandy Lake and Jack Lack, but the vision for the park has not yet been achieved. Study after study has shown we need a bigger Regional Park (an additional 1800 acres to the north and west) at Sandy Lake – Sackville River to keep the area wild and sustainable.

An application for Secondary Planning for lands immediately west of Sandy Lake has been filed by at least one developer. This creates a new urgency for us to find solutions that protect the Sandy Lake-Sackville River watershed.

**The SRA supports the RP+10 submission of the SL-SRRP Coalition (April 24, 2020). We ask that:**

- **The SL-SRRP be expanded by 1,800 acres (refer to Map 1 in the SL-SRRP submission). Research the SL-SRRP boundary in the RP+10 process so that new boundaries based on science are established to encompass all remaining essential watershed to be protected and managed as a regional park for all time. That would mean finding “win-win” solutions that serve both the community and present landowners needs.**
- **the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN) be included in its entirety in the RP+10.**

- **All requests in Sections A, B and C of the SL-SRRP Coalition submission be addressed and implemented within the RP+10 review.**

***Conservation work still to be achieved***


We are thankful HRM has shown leadership with the recent passing of HalifACT and for the HGNP Map 5 amendment to the Regional Plan's conservation design development agreement.

HRM's acquisition of 160 acres next to Marsh Lake for the park in 2015 gives us some assurance the city indeed wants to expand and secure the park area.

We support the Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park Coalition in its call to expand the Regional Park by additional 1,800 acres. This area includes important wildlife linkages identified in the Halifax Green Network Plan. We can't lose this rare opportunity to secure some of the few remaining wildlife corridors to the Chebucto Peninsula, identified in the Halifax Green Network Plan. We also support the Coalition's request to have the Halifax Green Network Plan be included in its entirety in the Regional Plan.

We look to the RP+10 to expand the existing boundary to protect and enhance the existing watershed for all time.

Sincerely,



Walter N. Regan  
President  
Sackville Rivers Association

cc: Mayor Mike Savage, HRM Council members, Leah Perrin of HRM Planning, Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition