

Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park is at risk from housing development



Sandy Lake, image by Skyline Studio

It is remarkable that we still have large, wild places like Sandy Lake (Bedford) and the Sackville River so close to Halifax's urban centre. However, **the province has just put Sandy Lake-Sackville River at serious and immediate risk. It is fast-tracked for housing development by the provincial-municipal Task Force on Housing:** <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20220325005>

The rich and diverse Sandy Lake Regional Park has been planned since 1971, when it was chosen by a municipal-provincial-federal program as an exceptional ecological unit for both wilderness protection and recreation, worthy of preserving for all time.



So far, 1,000 acres of the area is protected as Sandy Lake Regional Park (light green area in adjacent map), but housing development in the remaining 1,800 acres of wilderness threatens to damage the existing park. The area provides citizens with excellent opportunities to reconnect with nature and lead healthy lifestyles through swimming, hiking, dog walking, snowshoeing, and more. It is home to over 99 nesting bird species, 15 species at risk, including wild Atlantic Salmon, and more, all nestled among some of Nova Scotia's last remaining old growth Acadian forests.

The Sandy Lake – Sackville River area shows up in multiple studies as a key area for wildlife corridors and is invaluable as an intact, interconnected wild area that help with the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

A 2013 clear-cut of 300 acres near Sandy Lake showed how sensitive the lake’s water quality is. More roads and houses in the lake’s watershed would devastate lake water quality, bringing habitat degradation and flooding downstream, potentially increasing beach closings at Sandy Lake beach due to algae blooms.



Old growth forest at Sandy Lake, photo by David Patriquin

The Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition has formed to finally protect the remaining land and water that stretches from the Hammonds Plains Road to the Sackville River, long identified for protection as a park (well beyond what is now protected) for future generations, before it is too late.

But in March 2022, the provincial-municipal Task Force on Housing picked the Sandy Lake – Sackville River area as one of its locations to fast-track for housing development. How could such a mistake be made? Yes, HRM needs more houses. But in an area needed to protect this precious Regional Park!?

We ask you to please stand up for Sandy Lake and Sackville River! Please do all you can to generate a clear message to the Province. Like the secret Owl’s Head Provincial Park decision, this is wrong!

Send a message to the provincial authorities who made this decision, and ask that the Sandy Lake “special planning area” be removed from their housing development list and protected as park.

Form letter you can send, directed to key decision-makers: <https://ecologyaction.ca/save-sandylake>

Where to find your MLA contact info: <https://nslegislature.ca/members/profiles>

Provincial-municipal Task Force on Housing: housingtaskforce@novascotia.ca

Honorable Minister John Lohr, Municipal Affairs and Housing: dmamin@novascotia.ca

Mike Savage, Mayor of Halifax Regional Municipality: mayor@halifax.ca

Kelly Denty, HRM Executive Director of Planning and Development, Task Force panel member: dentyk@halifax.ca

Peter Duncan, Director of Infrastructure Planning at HRM Task Force panel member: duncanp@halifax.ca

Tip: decision-makers always pay more attention to personalized emails.

Learn more from our websites and join Friends of Sandy Lake to receive more news at:

SL-SR Regional Park Coalition website: www.sandylakecoalition.ca

SLCA Website: www.sandylake.org

Dr. Patriquin’s studies of Sandy Lake and area website: www.sandylakebedford.ca