



Nova Scotia Salmon Association
c/o Mike Crosby, President
107 Farmers Dairy Lane
Bedford, NS B4B 2C9

Ms. Kathleen Fralic
Engagement Lead
Planning & Development, HRM
Regionalplan@halifax.ca

July 15, 2020

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

Dear Ms. Fralic,

I write today to bring further attention to an important ecological area requiring protection in the context of the Regional Plan review and the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN).

The Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) is one of 27 member groups 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

We understand how interconnected the entire area is 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.

- 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 13 species-at-risk (4 aquatic, 9 terrestrial).
- 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/>)
- After more than 35 years, and through the efforts of the Sackville River Association, Atlantic Salmon are returning to the watershed. In fact, salmon are now being found in Sandy Lake. A significant conservation success.

Now is a crucial decision-making point

We understand an application for Secondary Planning for lands immediately west of Sandy Lake is imminent by at least one developer. This creates a new urgency for us to find solutions that protect the Sandy Lake-Sackville River watershed.

It is our understanding that Clayton Developments confirmed with HRM by email in 2018 that they would be willing to trade to protect the watershed if HRM would propose viable options. While there are other ways to acquire land to protect this area, we and the SL-SRRP see a trade as a potential solution that could still serve as a 'win-win' for all sides.

At this time, 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 (HGNP) 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 look to the RP+10 to expand the existing boundary to protect and enhance the existing watershed for all time.

Sincerely,

Mike Crosby

Mike Crosby
President, NSSA

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