



Sandy Lake Conservation Association

115 Farmers Dairy Lane, Bedford, B4B 2C9

www.sandylake.org

www.sandylakebedford.ca

August 7 2020

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

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). A serious error was made some time ago when a large area of this park was changed from P-park zoning to Urban Settlement. The ecological unity had not similarly changed. It remained/remains an interdependent unit needing preservation.

The Sandy Lake Conservation Association (SLCA) 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

The entire area is interconnected from an ecological perspective. Fish and foxes do not recognize property lines drawn by humans. 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 14 species-at-risk (9 terrestrial, 5 aquatic, counting the American Eel which was not found during the species study but has been recently seen by members of our organization).
- 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

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.

In particular, Clayton Developments offered to our group and 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 were more than dismayed that the city did not see the importance of this win-win opportunity for all. An opportunity like that comes along rarely.

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 (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 HGPN 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,



Bruce Sarty
Co-President, Sandy Lake Conservation Association

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