



St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association

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

August 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Re: Protecting Sandy Lake and Sackville River in the Regional Plan**

Dear Ms. Fralic,

The St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association was elated that HRM Regional Council has chosen to [provide funding to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust to protect more than 500 acres at Blue Mountain Birch Coves Lakes](#). We are excited that HRM has made a commitment to preserving our wilderness areas, and working towards balancing natural areas and development.

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 (HGNP). Preserving HRM as a place to live with nature is part of why HRM has continued to experience record growth for many years, as people are drawn to living close to nature. Preserving our natural areas for recreation and ecological conservation has significant economic benefits. A report from Dalhousie University's College of Sustainability) show that the Proposed Ingram River Wilderness Area could bring as much as 33 million dollars in annual benefits in ecosystem services alone to the province. If we want to continue this success and preserve this trademark quality and economic engine for generations to come, we have work to do to ensure the preservation of Sandy Lake and the Sackville River watershed in the Regional Plan.

The Sandy-Lake—Sackville River Regional Park (SL-SRRP) Coalition, which includes the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association (SMBSA), comprises 27 member groups. SMBSA fully supports the efforts of SL-SRRP to ensure protection for the ecological unit of the Sandy Lake-Sackville River watershed, including its submission to the RP+10 review (<https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>).

SMBSA works hard as a valued partner in our communities, working together with other groups to take active roles in creating and supporting a sustainable, thriving Bay for current and future generations. We take our stewardship role seriously, and consider involvement with all communities associated with our purpose to be a key success factor in our efforts to educate, inform and advocate for sustainability in the Bay. As communities, we are all connected. The preservation of neighbouring wilderness areas helps preserve our ecology in St. Margaret's Bay.

We understand how interconnected the entire area is from an ecological perspective. Recent studies by scientists and park planners indicate any further development in 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.

### **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.

### **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's 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 in the RP+10 review.*

The St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association is committed to both active conservation activities, and to promoting the value of conservation. We are working hard to restore the Ingram and Indian Rivers, which are in the proposed Ingram River Wilderness Area. This work employs many summer students working under the supervision of and alongside our Stewardship Coordinator to work on reversing up to century-old alterations caused by forestry and other industrial activities. This work has already begun to yield exciting results, with fish species returning to these areas after their access is restored by our work.

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

We are thankful HRM has shown leadership with the recent passing of HalifACT and with 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,

*Nick*

Nick Horne, Chair  
St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association

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