

Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park

A magnificent expanse of old forest, lakes, wetlands and streams located between the thriving communities of Bedford, Sackville, Kingswood and Hammonds Plains. The park would conserve Old Forests, 14 Species-at-Risk, protect the Sackville River flood plain and support a wide range of outdoor recreational activities. Citizens have worked since before the 1970s to protect this area.

Unfinished business:

Help us expand the existing park by 1800 acres to protect this irreplaceable natural area. There will likely never be another chance to preserve this stunning area for the long-term benefit of the entire city and province.

"I view Sandy Lake and environs as they were viewed in 1971: an asset to all of Halifax municipality, indeed to the whole province. I see it as a very special place, complementing not replicating other major natural assets of Halifax."

David Patriquin, Naturalist/Trails volunteer

Where is it?



The proposed **Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park** is 2800 acres (1133 ha) of near pristine landscape that stretches from the Hammonds Plains Road to the Sackville River. It encompasses much of the Sandy Lake watershed (a large sub-watershed of the Sackville River watershed) and includes the watercourse from Sandy Lake, through Marsh lake and into the Sackville River; and Jack Lake on the Papermill Lake watershed.

A Brief History

The area has been recognized for nearly five decades, provincially, municipally and locally, and in multiple reports and studies, to be a special landscape worth protecting. Community efforts plus some twists of fate have allowed these lands to remain largely in good condition, and other twists of fate have caused protective processes to fall short.

In 1971, the Sandy Lake area was selected as one of seven unique "jewels in the crown" of Halifax region – priority areas to be protected for their ecological richness and for community education and recreation. Plans were developed for a Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park.

In 2006 the HRM-owned Jack Lake lands together with the Lions Club Beach on Sandy Lake were identified as lands for the Jack Lake/Sandy Lake Regional Park which is still to be formally designated.



Proposed Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park boundary



Municipal Land ownership



Those lands have their own special attributes and should remain protected, but about 1800 acres of the critical Sandy Lake to Sackville River corridor remain unprotected. Recently, planners and scientists have identified a new boundary for a comprehensive Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park which would protect "all still available and important land required to protect critical environmental components of the Park" and include land required for proper public access to the Park.

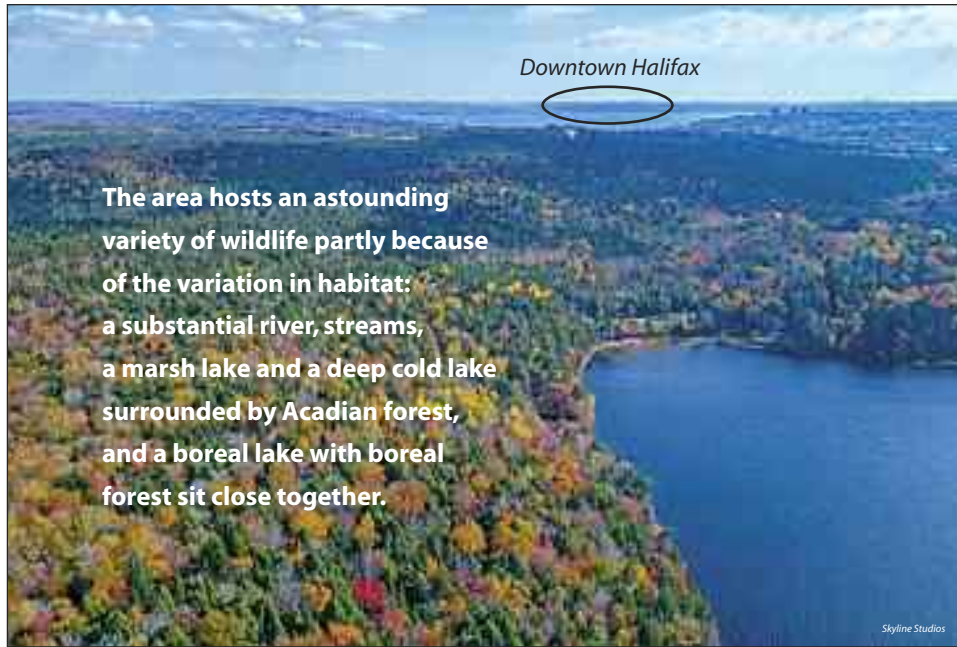


1000 of the 2800 acres are already under park protection. Action is needed now to save this special, wild place.

Ecological Values

- **The Sandy Lake watershed**, a large sub-watershed of the Sackville River watershed, hosts seagoing American eel, Atlantic salmon, gaspereau and speckled trout. The integrity of this system is critical to the Sackville Rivers Association's efforts to revive salmon in the Sackville River system, a major watershed and natural corridor identified in the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN).





The area hosts an astounding variety of wildlife partly because of the variation in habitat: a substantial river, streams, a marsh lake and a deep cold lake surrounded by Acadian forest, and a boreal lake with boreal forest sit close together.

Downtown Halifax



Time is running out: A recreation, wildlife and old forest park for all and forever.

Recreation, Education, Research

The area of the proposed **Sandy lake -Sackville Proposed Regional Park** is already used, mostly informally, by citizens of HRM for multi-recreational purposes through a network of existing trails. Currently, a wide variety of outdoor activities take place on these lands, including mountain biking, birdwatching, swimming, paddling, fishing, dog-walking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, to name a few. It is a popular area for educational activities and research for schools, universities and community.

Major Challenges

Housing development is planned in the area of the Sandy Lake Wildlife Corridor and 7 of the smaller corridors. It is also the area where the most surface water enters Sandy Lake. Salt content of the lake is currently increasing and oxygen content of the deepest waters is decreasing. Oxygen is important for salmonids and to prevent rapid eutrophication. Housing development would destroy critical habitat and connectivity, could increase flooding in the Bedford area, and could push the lake over the edge, when we need to 'walk it backwards' to its previous healthier state. It is not too late. Unplanned trail development and motorized vehicle use within the SL-SRRP currently is highly destructive of habitat and wildlife.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

Unless action is taken otherwise, the park goals will be overtaken. We need concerted action from HRM to ensure that this jewel will be preserved for generations to come. Contact HRM to let them know you care.

- **The wetlands** bordering Sandy Lake and Marsh Lake and along much of Peverill's Brook leading to the Sackville River host a complex, healthy ecosystem that includes large populations of amphibians and reptiles (including 3 turtle species at risk) and many waterfowl.
- **Magnificent mixed, multi-aged Acadian forest** with significant old-growth stands, occur on the rich drumlins by Sandy and Marsh Lakes; some trees are over 200 years old, and there is a striking "pit and mound" topography. Old growth forests, now very rare in NS, house species that younger forests do not.
- **Wildlife:** Common species range from the mighty black bear and osprey to the tiny ruby-throated hummingbird and peeper frogs. Loons, otters, frogs and snapping turtles inhabit the lakes, and the woodlands are home to bobcats, barred owls, warblers, wood turtles, deer, ermine, fox, mink. This forest supports a full suite of Old Forest Species; 22 of 23 vertebrates associated with structural features of old Acadian forests

have been recorded. 117 avian species have been observed; 99 species breed in the proposed **Sandy Lake -Sackville River Regional Park**. The area hosts 20 vertebrate species as Species of Interest to Federal and Provincial conservation bodies including 14 Species-at-Risk.

- **Landscape Connectivity** The proposed park would protect two major wildlife corridors. The Sandy Lake Wildlife Corridor is an important connector for wildlife to the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lake Wilderness Area and between the Chebucto Peninsula and the greater NS mainland. The Sackville River Wildlife Corridor is especially important for aquatic species and provides important breeding habitat for Species at Risk, such as the Common Snapping Turtle and the Wood Turtle. The Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry considers the proposed **Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park** "important mainland moose habitat." There are at least a dozen smaller corridors containing important riparian and/or wetland habitats.

Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition members:

- Sandy Lake Conservation Association
- Sackville Rivers Association
- Agropur Cooperative Dairy Bedford Plant
- Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Rails to Trails
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Nova Scotia Chapter
- Canoe/Kayak Nova Scotia
- CARP Nova Scotia Chapter
- Ecology Action Centre
- Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust
- Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Society
- Friends of McNabs Island Society
- Friends of Nature
- Halifax North West Trails Association
- Kingswood Ratepayers Association
- Lucasville Community Association
- Lucasville Greenway Society
- McIntosh Run Watershed Association
- Mountain Bike Halifax
- Nova Scotia Bird Society
- Nova Scotia Salmon Association
- Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society
- St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association
- The Halifax Field Naturalists
- The Neighbourhood Association of Uplands Park
- The Turtle Patrol
- Trips By Transit
- WRWEO / The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail

Discover how you can support this effort: www.sandylakebedford.ca & www.sandylake.org & www.sandylakecoalition.ca

Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Submission to the Halifax Regional Plan Review 2020: <https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>

Avian Species Report: <http://sandylake.org> & avian-and-species-at-risk/

Park Planning Study: <http://sandylake.org/sandy-lake-sackville-river-regional-park-2020-planning-study-2/>

Join Friends of Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park, email: sandylakecampaign@gmail.com
 Face Book: Sandy Lake Conservation Association
 Twitter: @sandylake_park

