



August 26, 2020

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

Dear Kathleen Fralic,

I am writing to express the support of the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization for protecting the area of the proposed Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park (SL-SRRP), as expressed in the April 24th submission to the RP+10 review by the SL-SRRP Coalition. WRWEO is one of the founding members of the 27 member SL-SRRP Coalition. <https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>

The Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization, amongst other activities, built (2005) and maintains The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail. It was built with the intention of introducing people to the surrounding wilderness area so that they would support efforts to protect it. The effort, along with those of many other organizations, was successful and in 2011, The Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area was protected under Nova Scotia's Wilderness Protection Act.

There are two major reasons for our support of the proposed Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park:

- (i) Population and outdoor recreation continue to grow in HRM, while greenspace declines. We have experienced greatly increased use of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail over the last 5 years and already we are at or over our capacity to accommodate this use. The Jack Lake lands within the proposed Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park lie between major growth areas and have extensive informal trails currently. Many of them are old logging roads through magnificent forests and would require little modification and maintenance to accommodate much more use than they receive currently.
- (ii) The lands west of Sandy Lake within the proposed SL-SRRP are part of an existing wildlife corridor important for connectivity between the lands of the Chebucto Peninsula and the greater mainland, as identified in a recent report (Appendix G in

the submission from the SL-SRRP Coalition). The Halifax Green Network Plan highlighted the need to ensure such connectivity, although not this particular corridor apparently because parts of it south of Hammonds Plains Road are now committed to development (Halifax Bedford West). Regardless, even if partially fragmented in that way, as the Green Network Plan says in section 4.1.3.1 “...maintain the largest possible remnant patches and encourage best management practices in intervening areas to provide opportunities for wildlife movement between patches.” It is still worth retaining the lands west of Sandy Lake in their natural state as “stepping stones”. They might be considered analogous to the ferry system between Halifax and Dartmouth, not carrying as much as the bridges, but still vital for many people.

Some of the lands west of Sandy Lake within the proposed SL-SRRP were clearcut in 2013 and developers want to place high density housing there, which would clearly be incompatible with their wildlife habitat and corridor functions. Also the SL-SRRP Coalition envisages a walking trail into this area with trailheads in Sackville and off of Hammonds Plains Road (view Appendix L in the submission from the SL-SRRP Coalition).

Thus for the sake of both wildlife and healthy outdoor recreation well into the future, it is urgent to incorporate measures that will protect the integrity of the lands of the proposed SL-SRRP in the Regional Plan.

Sincerely,



Paul Berry,
Chair, Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization/The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail
www.wrweo.ca

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