



July 8, 2020

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

**Re: Letter of Support for Sandy lake – Sackville River Regional Park, Halifax
Regional Plan Review 2020**

Dear Ms. Fralic:

The Board of the St. Margaret's Bay Area Rails to Trails Association would like to offer its formal support for the full protection of Sandy Lake – Sackville River area as a park, consistent with its identification, decades ago as an ecological gem that was to be preserved as a park. The fact that this designation has not been respected, and that behind closed doors, more than 50% of the area has been designated for development is appalling.

The members of the St. Margaret's Bay Area Rails to Trails Association recognize the vital importance of parks and protected areas. During this pandemic, our trail has proved crucial to the health and mental well being of our community. Similarly, the proximity of Sandy Lake – Sackville River to major settled areas in the Bedford, Sackville and Halifax areas allows it to be a source of healthy outdoor activities for a significant number of Haligonians.

The land around Sandy Lake has some fine old wooded areas, the shore serves as a hatching area for several turtle species and significant botanical discoveries have been made in the forests. The considerable work that went into planning the Halifax Green Belt clearly recognized Sandy Lake as a crucial link, assuring connectivity between the Chebucto Peninsula and inland areas. This careful work should be respected, not thrown under the bus as so many carefully thought out planning exercises seem to be in our city. The fact that this area was designated as an ecological gem in 1971 should speak volumes. Such areas need to be protected and not turned into high-end developments.

The members of the Margaret's Bay Area Rails to Trails Association recognize the importance of preserving an important outdoor recreational area for Halifax residents, and most importantly, of maintaining the ecological and environmental integrity of this outstanding ecological area situated so close to a major urban center. We firmly support the efforts of the Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition.

Sincerely,

Susan Bethune and Denise Hicks, Co-Chairs St. Margaret's Bay Area Rails to Trails Association