



Newsletter: Friends of Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Update for July 7 2021

Hello Friends of Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park,

Good news

Marsh Lake, true to its name, is a lake with a marsh around the margin, partly surrounded by Sandy Lake Regional Park. Marsh Lake was selected as one of Ducks Unlimited Canada's Treasured Wetlands for 2021, and is a focus of public attention this summer as an amazing wetland from an educational point of view.

Come to the Sandy Lake Beach the afternoon of **Monday, July 12th from 12pm to 3:30pm** for a Citizen Science Bioblitz with displays about Marsh Lake's natural assets and guided nature walks to Marsh Lake hosted by Ducks Unlimited and partners. Sign up for a guided walk or learn more about the event here: <https://fb.me/e/1hgP8Opc2>

More Good News

Dr. David Patriquin has spent countless hours exploring and documenting the natural wonders of Sandy Lake and the ecosystems that surround it. He also contributed to advocating the growth of the park through his role on the Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition. An outdoor appreciation ceremony happened at Sandy Lake on June 21 2021, the first day of summer, to honor David. He was thanked by representatives of the Sandy Lake Conservation Association and Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition for his years of study to help us better understand the outstanding natural assets of the Sandy Lake - Sackville River area. He received a walking stick made by a Sandy Lake beaver and SLCA members, certificates of appreciation, and had a marsh named "David's Marsh" after him. Thank you, David! See the

[summary report](#) of his ongoing work about the area. In the photo below Dr. David Patriquin is 4th from the left.



CALL TO ACTION

Efforts to preserve the valuable natural assets of the Sandy Lake - Sackville River area are multiple and ongoing, but the Regional Plan Review (2021) is a singular event that has the ability to change the area's future for better, or worse.

We need people who care to tell HRM how important it is to save this regional treasure from a current proposal that would devastate the area through allowing a new housing development. Everyone can have a say on this topic during the current Regional Plan Review.

The last version of the Regional Plan (2014) proposed the area next to Sandy Lake both as an expanded Regional Park, and as a "growth centre" to place a large housing development. It is not possible to do both. In the Regional Plan Review consultation documents released by HRM **Sandy Lake is still listed for**

development. A developer has asked for “secondary planning” through the Regional Plan Review, which if granted would allow the development of a housing sub-division on the west side of Sandy Lake.

It is very important that many voices speak up now for Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park.

We need to show that many people want to see the area preserved instead of developed. Councillors and planners are hearing a lot from our Coalition Steering Committee, but they also need to hear from individuals and other groups who value the area too.

The Coalition Steering Committee has been preparing main points to submit to the Regional Plan Review. They are

1. We request that the HRM delay the decision on secondary planning in the Sandy Lake area until the next Regional Plan Review in 5 years time in order to allow time for several important studies to be completed and considered, listed here:
 - a. Conduct an independent ecological (not planning/housing) study of the park boundary needed to preserve the natural assets of the Regional Park.
 - b. Conduct an independent floodplain study of the Sandy Lake watershed including how it relates to the rest of the Sackville River watershed. This would include detailed wetland delineation and before and after models.
 - c. Incorporate the Wildlife Corridors Charrette Report into the Halifax Green Network Plan, and bring this Plan into the Regional Plan.
2. We ask that the requests in the Coalition's first submission to the Regional Plan Review be addressed.

HRM keeps presenting the notion that the lands around Sandy Lake are developable. However, we continue to point out that:

- Studies in the 1970s and since identified the area as important ecologically to preserve as a unit in the form of a park. Current studies are finding this is still the case.
- Watersheds are units, and what happens in the upper reaches of the watershed affects its downstream components. Developing next to Sandy Lake risks damaging the entire system, including increasing risk of flooding in Sackville and Bedford.
- To be responsible, and to adhere to the Halifax Green Network Plan, much biological study has to happen before making a decision about development.

- When Sandy Lake was put on the list for development, and when it was zoned away from park land in 1982, none of the important ecological info was considered. Only the housing-needs-yardstick was used.

The Regional Plan's public consultation process is a crucial process. Hope for protecting this place lies mainly in changing the Regional Plan – not an easy task. To do this we must convince Council and planners that this is important to do.

Please do what you can to get numbers of citizens to make councillors aware of the interest in preserving this ecological unit for the good of all. Yes, the city needs more housing, but Sandy Lake is a terrible place to put it. There is only one Sandy Lake - Sackville River – no one can build more of this unique natural place. We must preserve what is here, now.

Please submit your personal and your groups' support for Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park to the Regional Plan Review public process which ends **July 16th**. You can send your comment directly to staff working on the review at regionalplan@halifax.ca. Please also copy your comments to your Regional Councillor. They should hear about what their constituents want for the future of our shared city.

Let us know if you need help or information from us. There is also a session being hosted by the Our HRM Alliance about how to engage with the Regional Plan Review. The session is July 8 from 12pm to 1pm (register here for the session).

Thank You

Sincerely,

Karen Robinson

for the Steering Committee of the Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park Coalition.

Steering Committee members:

Karen Robinson, Co-chair of SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for Sandy Lake Conservation Association

Walter Regan, Co-chair of SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for the Sackville Rivers Association

Mary Ellen Donovan, SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Society

Karen McKendry, SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for the Ecology Action Centre

Ray Plourde, SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for the Ecology Action Centre

Harry Ward, SL-SRRP Coalition Steering Committee and rep. for Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust



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