

# Why Expand Sandy Lake Sackville River Regional Park by 1800 acres? January 2022

The Sandy Lake Sackville River Regional Park is currently one thousand acres. It has been recognized for five decades, provincially and municipally and in multiple reports and studies, to be a special landscape worth protecting, but the final ~1800 acres have never been saved.

In 1971, P.B. Dean identified the Sandy Lake to Sackville River area as one of seven “jewels in the crown” - areas that are "Unique in the Halifax Dartmouth area or important on a regional or provincial scale - priority areas to be protected for their ecological richness and for community education and recreation."

In 2006, HRM created Sandy Lake/Jack Lake Regional Park, leaving over 1800 acres of the originally identified lands in private ownership and not protected. Housing development, on a parallel path, will happen if action is not taken.

Citizens are working to save this irreplaceable natural area. The city acquired 160 acres in 2015 and has more in mind. A developer who owns ~550 of the 1800 acres was willing to trade, but by summer 2021, the city did not step up.

## **Why expand the park by the further 1800 acres?**

The area is a long-recognized unique ecological unit. Sandy and Marsh lakes are bordered by rich drumlins that support magnificent mixed, multi-aged Acadian Forest with striking "pit and mound" topography and significant old-growth stands, some trees over 200 years old. Less than 1% of NS forests are old growth. A variety of significant natural elements exist all in one place - The 3 lakes are examples of diverse yet related ecologies - one a big marsh, one a deep "blue lake" (Most in this part of NS are "tea lakes") and the third a boreal forest lake. The lands and waters west and north of Sandy Lake are species-rich, including rare species including wild Atlantic Salmon and American Eel, and important turtle and moose habitat. Recent studies show their ecological value remains intact today, with eleven habitats and at least 15 Species at Risk.

Watershed protection: The watershed west of the lakes is slated for housing development. Instead, we must protect this area where most of the surface waters enter the system. Dirty water already enters there. Damaging organics and salts need to be reversed rather than added to. To understand why in more detail, refer to the observations at [www.sandylakebedford.ca](http://www.sandylakebedford.ca) and see the attached, **Map 1**. Also read A Tale of Two Lakes, featuring Oathill Lake and Sandy Lake, at [https://11722e7d-8c8c-4838-969e-bee1181ed9f8.filesusr.com/ugd/66e517\\_ba066d91cdbe47f887d1b3028ed57e6e.pdf?index=true](https://11722e7d-8c8c-4838-969e-bee1181ed9f8.filesusr.com/ugd/66e517_ba066d91cdbe47f887d1b3028ed57e6e.pdf?index=true)

The Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN) identifies Sandy Lake's rich lands and waters as important to the welfare of the Sackville River system, one of HRM's five major natural corridors identified in the Green Network Plan. See attached, **Map 2**. Also, the area contains at least 3 important wildlife corridors plus “stepping stone” links that connect the mainland to the Chebucto Peninsula which is of primary importance to the Green Network Plan.

Outdoor Recreation: “The objectives for Regional Parks are to preserve significant natural or cultural resources, and to be large enough to support both ecosystem protection and human enjoyment at the same time.” The area proposed for Sandy Lake Sackville River Regional Park is already used unofficially by citizens for multi-recreational purposes through a network of existing trails, for birdwatching, dog-walking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, paddling, fishing, to name a few. **Map 3**, attached, shows the integration between Conservation and Recreation. The west side is needed primarily for conservation. The east side for conservation and recreation.

Sandy Lake is a popular location for research for schools, universities and community. Since the 1970s, aquatic studies point to deterioration in oxygenation and increased salt loading of Sandy Lake related to urbanization and some clearcutting. Significant further settlement within the Sandy Lake watershed would make the lake inhospitable to the migratory fish, reduce wildlife diversity, as well as increase flooding downstream in the Sackville River flood plain.

What of the disturbed land to the west of Sandy Lake? It is already a young Acadian Forest with vigorous regeneration of the full suite of Acadian Forest species that is already protecting the lakes and rivers as the ecological system re-establishes itself. Park planners can make educational use of it as a living example of how Acadian Forests recreate themselves. The three main tributaries flow across this essential land. By letting the 300 acres heal, they will heal the watershed so it can once again help maintain water quality in the lake for wild Atlantic Salmon, other fishes and wildlife, and will benefit the watershed all the way to the Bedford Basin.

# In a nutshell: why we need to protect lands on the west side of Sandy Lake

<http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2019/01/19/in-a-nutshell-why-we-need-to-protect-lands-on-the-west-side-of-sandy-lake/#more-2410>

Posted on January 19, 2019 by admin: Dr. David Patriquin

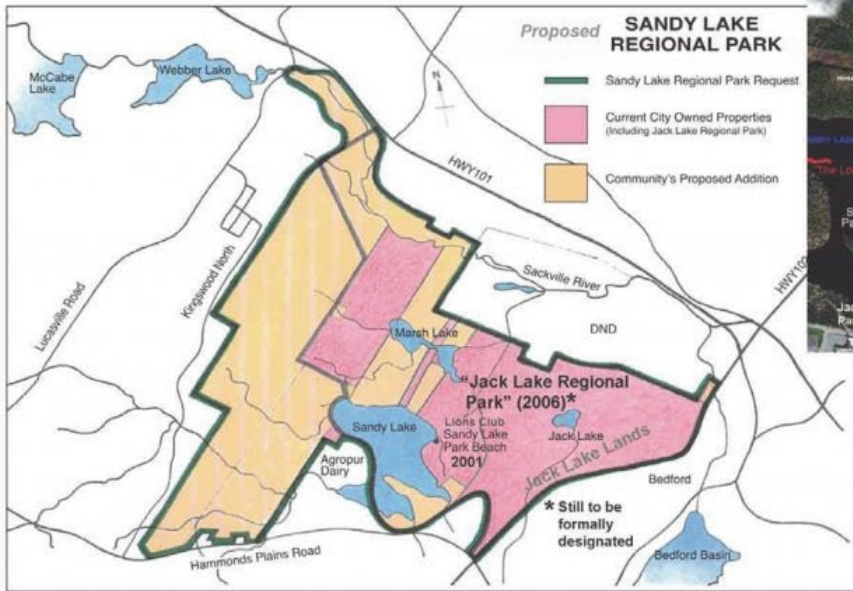
(These slides are taken from or modified from slides that were in Dr. David Patriquin's *presentation to the SRA on Dec 6, 2018*.

View the slides/audio for more explanation of it all: <http://goo.gl/ipYCR2>

We already have ~1000 acres protected, most of it on the east side of Sandy Lake. So why did Walter Regan ask at the Dec 6, 2018 presentation: "Why do we need those lands on the west side?" (I am pretty sure Walter knew the answer.)

The following slides/maps explain it all "in a nutshell":

Map 1



- Jack Lake Lands:**
- Many trails, multiple uses all seasons; mostly informally managed
- Sandy Lake Beach Park:**
- Formally managed; swimming, paddling, fishing

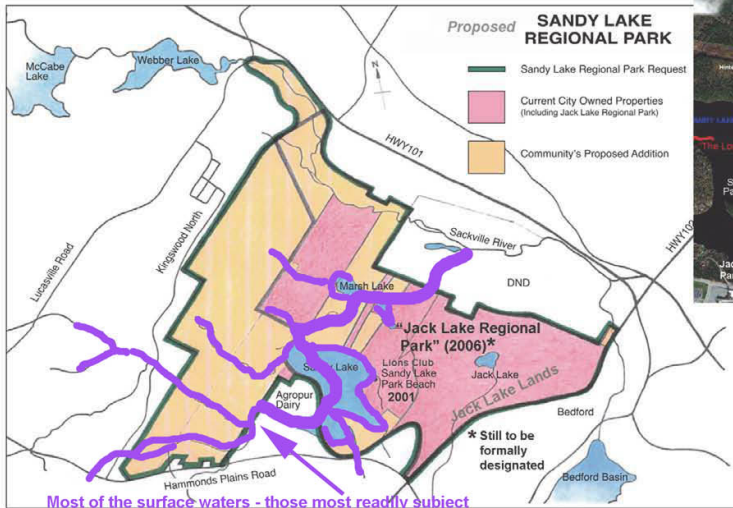
The proposed SLRP embodies more of the original concept of a Regional Park at Sandy Lake, which was for parkland around the lake, not to one side of it, and that of the 1979 MAPC plan which would "include more area on all sides, from the Sackville River to the Hammonds Plains Road and from the Bedford Rifle Range west toward the Lucasville Road (including buffers and flood plains)."

## Major reasons to expand the Park

### #1 - Historical

- Protection of the Sandy Lake to Sackville River watercourse for migratory fish, reptiles, amphibians, waterfowl, otters... water quality/aquatic recreation; reduce downstream flooding
- Provide a forested wildlife corridor connecting lands of the Chebucto Peninsula with central and eastern mainland

Map 2



Most of the surface waters - those most readily subject to salt and organic pollution - entering Sandy Lake are on the west side of the lake where a large development is planned. Already these waters are the major source of pollutants entering Sandy Lake

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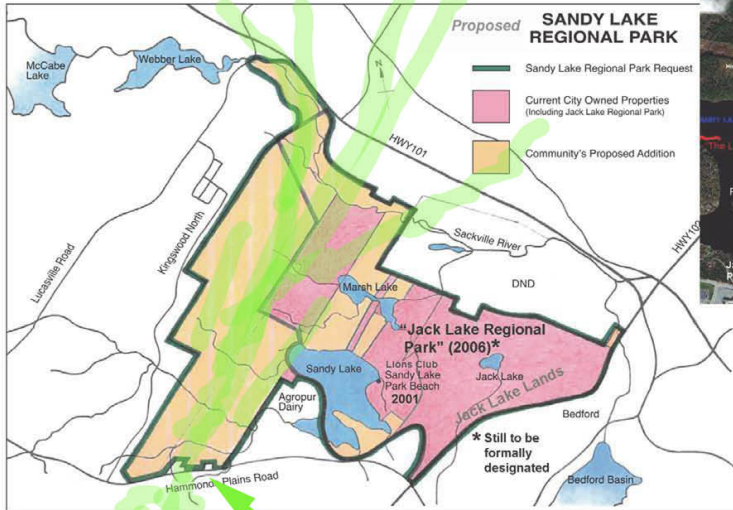
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- Many trails, multiple uses all seasons; mostly informally managed

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**Major reasons to expand the Park**

- Historical
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Map 3



CHEBUCTO PENINSULA

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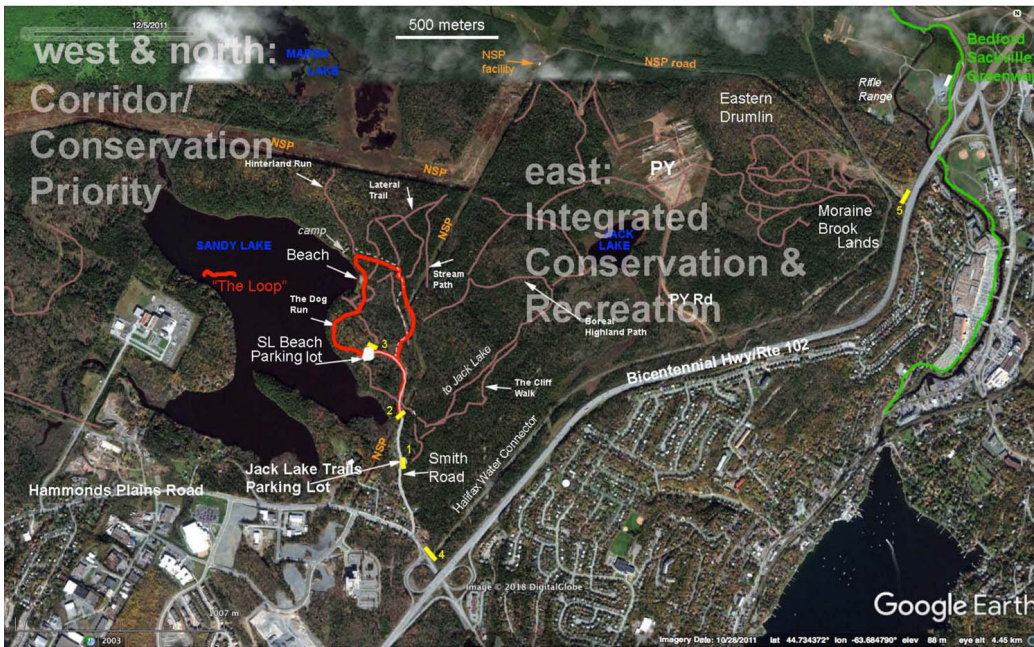
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- Historical
- Protection of the Sandy Lake to Sackville River watercourse for migratory fish, reptiles, amphibians, waterfowl, otters... water quality/aquatic recreation; reduce downstream flooding
- #3 - Provide a forested wildlife corridor connecting lands of the Chebucto Peninsula with central and eastern mainland**

**Map 4: Putting it all together: Conservation Priority on west side**



**Mixed Recreation and Conservation on east side  
(where recreational activities are currently focussed)**

A couple of related questions:

(i) OK, but what about the clearcuts of the West Side – Isn't it already too late?

(ii) OK, but with some development already in place at the upper part of the corridor, isn't it already too late?

My answers to both questions: NO. I will explain in subsequent posts.

I should have added "The Big Picture". Here it is:

**SANDY LAKE & ENVIRONS/PROPOSED SANDY LAKE REGIONAL PARK**

Services	Major Assets	Components
<p><b>Conservation of Regional Biodiversity &amp; Ecosystem Services</b></p>	<p><b>FORESTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diverse forest types/ All major tree species of the Acadian Forest</li> <li>- ~50% multi-aged OG Forests</li> <li>- Wildlife Habitat, e.g. bear, bobcat, goshawk, pileated woodpecker, parula warbler</li> <li>- Connectivity Chebucto Peninsula to central &amp; eastern Mainland</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SURFACE WATERS</b> (streams, lakes wetlands)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water storage</li> <li>- Stratified lake pH=6.5</li> <li>- Seagoing Fish incl salmon</li> <li>- Frogs and Turtles +++</li> <li>- Otter, beaver...waterfowl</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social &amp; Health benefits</b></p>	<p><b>WILDLAND RECREATION</b> close to high density residential areas/new developments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Power lines, Logging roads</li> <li>- Many trails, Hfx Water Road</li> <li>- "Amphitheatre"/The Yard</li> <li>- Sandy Lake Beach Park</li> <li>- Diverse activities: Mt biking, Hiking, motorized bikes, skiing, swimming, fishing, forest bathing, dog-walking</li> </ul>