

Excerpts from August 2015 staff report, Off-site Parkland Dedication Request – Marsh Lake Lands, Bedford

<http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/151006ca81i.pdf>

Planners close to the drafting of the Conceptual Map of 2015 have told us that the city's rationale for acquiring the 160 acres, which is contained in that 2015 report, can be applied directly to the importance of acquiring the rest of the lands west of the lakes now. Those lands are critical to the health of the watershed and were part of the 1971 and 1979 concepts, with land all around Sandy and Marsh Lakes being within the park as park lands or protected as important buffering areas.

Rationale From the August 2015 staff report, Off-site Parkland Dedication Request – Marsh Lake Lands, Bedford

“Staff has been assembling lands at Marsh Lake since 1999, first following direction set out in the former Town of Bedford's MPS policy and then in the 2006 Regional Plan. If these lands were currently available for sale on the open market, staff would be recommending to Regional Council, independent of this request, that they be purchased using the funding from the Park Land Reserve account.

...Conclusion

In keeping with the policies of the Regional Plan, the Marsh Lake lands are highly desired for regional park purposes.

...COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the September 15, 2014 meeting of North West Community Council, a petition was received from the Sandy Lake Conservation Association supporting that the Municipality expand the park lands surrounding Marsh Lake and Sandy Lake to create a regional park and wilderness area. Staff responded with an Information Report to Community Council indicating that planning and land acquisitions for the Regional Park were continuing.”

“The subject lands at Marsh Lake are immediately adjacent to municipal lands being assembled for Jacks Lake Regional Park. The Jacks Lake Regional Park is identified in the Halifax Regional Plan as one of six (6) regional parks to be created over the life of the plan. The park's focus is to:

- 1) provide a Regional Near Urban Wilderness Park adjacent to the Bedford /Sackville Area;*
- 2) protect representational Acadian Inland forest habitats;*
- 3) provide water quality protection of Sandy Lake, Jacks Lake and Marsh Lake;*
- 4) provide access to and protect the ecology of the Sackville River; and*
- 5) provide continuity of a wilderness corridor along the Sackville River stretching from the 102 highway at Bedford to the Pockwock Municipal Watershed.*

Staff have conducted field work on the Armco Marsh Lake lands and assessed them in terms of the above objectives. The Armco lands:

- *add 160 acres of desirable forested recreation lands to the Jacks Lake Regional Park land assembly. The lands help create a loop trail around Marsh Lake and have the potential to provide low impact access to undeveloped sections of the Sackville River with desirable aesthetic value;*
- *host a variety of successional Acadian forest types including complexes and ages which are near to being classed as rare old growth forest as well as former industrial forest;*
- *offer a buffer to Marsh Lake from future development, helping to protect water quality and habitat within the Sackville River watershed;*
- *extend from Marsh Lake to the banks of the Sackville River and add another ½ km of shoreline protection for the watercourse;*
- *protect habitat presently functioning as an un-official wildlife corridor extending from the Bicentennial Highway at Bedford along the Sackville River to Hants County. This corridor's viability is presently ensured by public ownership of the lands associated with Jacks Lake Regional Park, the Dept, of National Defence Rifle Range, the former Sackville Landfill and the Pockwock/Tomahawk Watershed lands. The Halifax Green Network Plan, currently underway, will be recommending that this corridor be one of several key wilderness corridors penetrating into the urban area to be incorporated into land use and park planning.*

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This land will serve as a positive move to protect and preserve high value ecological lands associated with the Sackville River Corridor.”

* * *