

Park Land Acquisition at Sandy Lake to February, 2023

At Sandy Lake, there is a strong history of park land acquisition by the municipality and city. Attached is a map of all city-owned park land up to 2023, to our knowledge.

c. 1974, Mrs. Pender (of Pender sawmills) offered a gift of ~500 acres west of Sandy Lake if the park would be named in her late husband's honour. Ira Settle, County Warden, reportedly wanted the taxes from the Twin City Dairy's proposed move to Sandy Lake instead, and vetoed the 3-way vote (city, municipality, Province). In 1986 she offered to sell the same lands to Bedford. Again, she was turned down. (They became Armco's 550 acres, and now Clayton's. Armco clear-cut 300 acres in 2013.) It is unfortunate this acquisition was not acted upon.

In 1983, although the Province decided not to proceed with any of the 7 regional parks, the local areas decided to do it themselves. Mayor Cosman championed the park idea still, but Bedford Council rezoned the area for development. To preserve the area in hopes that a park plan would evolve eventually, Sept 26, 1983, Council passed the zoning bylaw to restrict any new construction to a minimum 5-acre lot on a publicly serviced road that is publicly serviced as of October 1991. This zoning protected the lake from in-fill development ever since, however developers began to buy land.

Bedford continued to purchase land around Sandy Lake toward this future park purpose:

1985, July 22, a 50/50 Province and Town purchase of \$700,000 worth of land from McCulloch and Co. 236 acres for Sandy Lake Park (not sure which parcel), and 61 for Admirals Cove Park.

1992, 6 acres given to Bedford by Farmers Dairy specifically for public parkland, March 9. The 6 acres included the roadway and the unused underground pipe to the lake, and a covenant required that the land be used only for public parkland, no buildings, and no travel over the lands or parking or motor vehicles of any kind.

1986 CMHC gave ~1000 acres Jack Lake to the province. The public housing development they were planning for Jack Lake would not happen because of the need for 2 expensive highway interchanges and for extensive mitigations required to prevent environmental damage to Jack, Sandy and Marsh lakes. (Jack Lake Environmental Report, 1986)

In the 2006 First Regional Plan, Sandy Lake is listed as Urban Settlement area. The Province gave the ~1000 acres, minus 50 acres for a proposed prison, at Jack Lake to the municipality. A successful lobby by Sackville Rivers Association and others made the Jack Lake lands a Regional Park. It remains identified as park today, but is not being managed as an active park. The 50 acres set aside for the prison were later given to the city for the park.

2013, the city gave/traded Sobeys/Crombie 50 acres of the Jack Lake lands (across from the BMO) to protect Morris Pond. Thus, the city unfortunately traded out park land to protect other park land without the community knowing.

At the September 15, 2014 meeting of North West Community Council, a petition was received from the Sandy Lake Conservation Association requesting 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, and directing community efforts for the park into the Halifax Green Network Plan.

2015 Oct HRM purchased 160 acres from Armc. Most developers' lands west of Sandy Lake were not included in the staff conceptual map, only the 160 to be acquired. Also, private residents' properties were also excluded.

"In keeping with the Regional Plan, the Marsh Lake lands are highly desired for regional park purposes..." "...This land will serve as a positive move to protect and preserve high value ecological lands associated with the Sackville River Corridor." (Item No. 8.1 Halifax Regional Council, Oct 6, 2015)

The map created for that 160-acre acquisition, known as the 2015 Conceptual Map, is understood to be the map in use in 2018-on for considerations for land acquisition. The community is concerned because it was drawn for a specific purpose and the ecologically important lands west of Sandy and Marsh Lakes are not included in the map.

2018, an internal report discusses future acquisitions for the park.

2019, Sandy Lake is a line item along with Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes in the city's Capital Projects Budget. Ongoing.

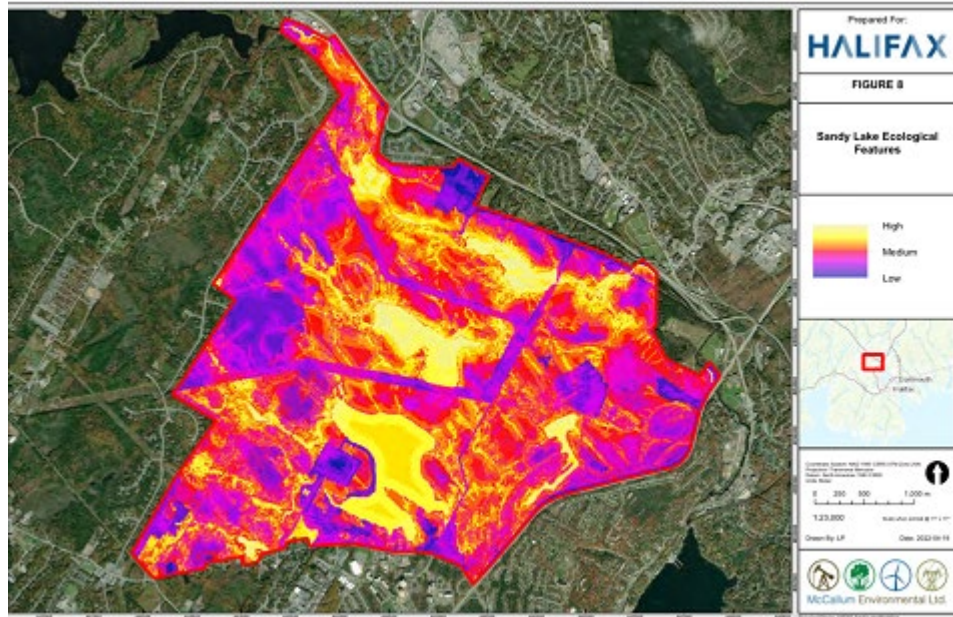
Fall, 2021, SLCA learns through public records that the city has purchased empty lot 48 Smith's Road.

June 13 2022, a SLCA member discovers map showing Shaw (Clayton) now owns both Bergman and Bowlin strips that run from Sandy Lake through Marsh Lake and all the way to Sackville River. They run alongside the Barrett strip that was recently purchased by the city. Councillor Blackburn learns from staff that the Shaw purchase is a surprise to Council and staff. That the city lawyers had been in final stages of purchasing the Bergman and Bowlin strips. Shaw suddenly purchased them for 2 ½ times the amount the city had offered. Councillor Outhit reportedly speaks to Clayton immediately after learning this news and reports that Clayton supports expansion of the park and that he is convinced Shaw bought them to donate to the park. (See map of park land below)

July 8, 2022, McCallum's "boundary study" was released. It is named the **Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment**.

- The heatmap outlines the ecological values in the area, although the old growth trees have not all been included.
 - The report does not identify a park boundary. This was the main point of this study as far as we were concerned. However, **it provides guidance for what are the valuable lands needing acquisition in order to preserve the park's natural assets.**
 - 100 m buffer around watercourses, and 50 m buffer around wetlands could adequately protect the watershed.
 - There is stated protection for wildlife corridors and old growth forests but no specifics.
 - the highest scoring areas in McCallum's analysis (shown in bright yellow) are associated with lakes, streams, wetlands and riparian areas, and are all over the study area. Definitely not just in the existing park boundary, since the lakes, streams, wetlands and riparian areas are all over the study area.
 - Note that McCallum states at least twice that *"The medium (orange) values represent areas of mature forest and habitat that are important to avian species at risk as well as important corridor areas and should also be considered for park and development planning"* and *"Areas beyond the concentrations of medium to high valued ecological condition may still be important for consideration and possible protection as supporting lands for the continued integrity of the areas of high ecological/environmental values. These lands may also have an important role for broader landscape and ecological connectivity, which also needs to be addressed."* (P. 34 of their report under Summary & Recommendations, paragraphs 2 and 3). It is not just the highest scoring areas that are worthy of protection.

- City Council followed up with a motion amendment to strengthen the intent by adding “at least”: *“Based on the Ecological Features Assessment, important areas to be protected will be at least the suggested widths for corridors, as well as riparian and watercourse buffers and old growth and mature forest.”*
- The Coalition and SLCA are requesting that the city acquire more park land based on the McCallum values heatmap in order to preserve the park’s ecological values.



McCallum heatmap

- Sept 2022, Coalition learns 11 acres between Marsh Lake and DND boundary were acquired by the city sometime in the year.



Map of park land at Sandy Lake-Sackville River as of 2023

