

## **TIME LINE of SANDY LAKE - SACKVILLE RIVER (Marsh/Jack Lake) Regional Park**

### **1971 to February 12 2026**

#### **1971**

1971, April, P.B. Dean, Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service entitled Natural Environment Survey: A Description of the Intrinsic Values in the Natural Environment around Greater Halifax –Dartmouth. Identified 7 important natural areas to preserve as Regional Parks.

1971, December, MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Committee) Recreation Work Group Report. A joint project of the Province and municipalities and with Federal biologists, proposed 7 Regional Parks for Hfx-Dartmouth. (McNab Island, Long Lake, Chain Lake watershed, Hemlock Ravine, **Marsh and Sandy Lakes, Sackville Flood Plain**, Admiral Cove, Lake Williams & Lake Charles canal complex, Cole Harbour). Jack Lake area belonged to CMHC and was slated for a publicly-owned housing development.

#### **1972**

1972, 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists purchased McLellan property for a school site. (Peninsula has old growth White Pine)

1972 MAPC Water Quality Survey for Selected Metropolitan Lakes. Description of lake and water quality.

#### **1973**

1973, Peerless Subdivision and Atlantic Acres Business Park are begun. Verge's Marsh at base of Bluewater Road is infilled. Area still floods the road.

#### **1974**

c.1974, Mrs. Pender (Pender sawmills) offered 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. (changed to Farmers Dairy Co-op, now Agropur) (These lands eventually became Armoyan lands then Clayton lands)

1974, Twin Cities Dairy clear-cut the 50 acres the plant now sits on and created the huge infill necessary to build the road from Hammonds Plains Road. This infill turned the lake deeply muddy for at least two years. (Secchi disc readings rarely showed water visibility deeper than 18 inches.) There were two large pipes. The first pipe to draw water from the lake runs directly beneath 115 Farmer's Dairy Lane driveway. The second pipe was to run from the dairy across the land to the west of that road down the shore to the lake. The trees were cleared for this pipe but it was never laid.

The one to pump water up to the dairy was for use in processing and the other to dump the foul water back into the lake after cleaning the processing tanks. This would have flooded the lake and Sackville River with milky water. Concerned landowners on and near the lake formed the Sandy Lake Area Ratepayers Association (SLARA) and began press coverage, published a newsletter, and hired ecologists from Dalhousie Biology Dr. Peter Ogden, Dalhousie's main environmentalist, to study the effects of the road construction over the brook and the proposed pumping of waste into the waterway. He sampled and made the case for the negative implications of this plan. Mayor Francine Cosman and the Bedford councillors got fired up, the press got interested. These efforts coincided with a general dawning of public awareness regarding the environment and, in the end the dairy curtailed the planned pumping of watery waste into the lake and established holding/treatment ponds that you can see beside the dairy road. When the enormity of the long-term effects of their actions surfaced, the dairy readily modified their plans to accommodate best practices of the day

and are good corporate neighbours ever since. Mind you those holding ponds filled with dairy effluent stank to high heaven and it took some years to have that problem solved.

This was the birth of the Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association and the beginning of their drive to preserve the lake and its environs. So many years ago, and the environmental threat continues, unbelievably.

1974, 7th Day Adventists' school opens.

## 1975

1975, A Halifax landfill was proposed for 110 acres of Jack Lake lands. Two years of public protest stopped it. So, Jack Lake area (owned by CMHC) was slated for a public residential development.

**1975 Halifax-Dartmouth Regional Development Plan.** The parks were embedded in the Regional Plan. It defines and separates regional parks and development areas and has a map of the region, including the same 7 proposed regional parks: Hemlock Ravine, Schubencadie Canal system, McNab's island, Admirals Cove, Cole Harbour/Lawrencetown Beach, Long Lake/Chain Lake, and the **Marsh and Sandy Lakes, Sackville Flood Plain.**

## 1976

**1976,** Twin Cities Dairy moves from Windsor St. Built between 1974 – 1976. (Farmer's Co-operative Dairy Limited was created in 1983) As mentioned, the plan to dump dairy residue into the lake is stopped by lake residents, but the large pipe is still there. Two treatment ponds are built along the dairy road.

**1976,** Water for Twin Cities Dairy goes to the dairy as part of Peerless Subdivision construction.

## 1979

**1979,** Bedford becomes a town (Mayor Francene Cosman 1979-1982, Keith Roberts 1982-88, Peter Christie 1988-91, Peter Kelly 1991-95. HRM amalgamation April 1996)

During the building of the dairy, one result of the increased awareness of the uniqueness of Sandy Lake and area was the realization that the shoreline and woodlands surrounding the lake still remained, for the most part, untouched. To try and protect this recreational potential from development Bedford Mayor Francine Cosman made presentations to the city and the province to support protecting Sandy Lake as a regional park.

**1979,** July, Hfx Dart MAPC Regional Parks Report, by Parks Advisory Group, **releases the conceptual park plan** for the 7 proposed Regional Parks – the same as in 1971 but with more detail (the conceptual plan included activities that would be suitable where) and **Marsh and Sandy Lakes, Sackville Flood Plain's park name is changed to Sackville River Regional Park.** It includes Sandy, Marsh and Sackville River corridor as before, but **with a protective buffer around the area. Also, the boundaries and conceptual maps contain half of Jack Lake as part of the buffer area.**

## 1981

1981, August, Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association forms. (D Sarty, Grantor...)

1981, Aug 24, Bedford Town Council minutes: Residents group formed to consider park boundaries issues around lake residents' land. Minutes acknowledge need for improved communications between NS Dept. of Municipal affairs, Bedford, and lake residents. Lake residents concerned that no one was answering their questions, such as, "If my property is within the park boundary can I will it to my heirs?"

1981, Oct 19, public meeting on Regional Park boundaries. Some lake residents voiced concerns over losing control over their property rights if their land falls within the park boundary. Meeting was recorded. Residents reported their questions were never answered.

1981, Oct 26, Bedford Town Council minutes: Report on public meeting, decision to create a typed transcript of it, councillor frustrated at the length of time it is taking to settle this Regional Park issue. Mayor to request from Municipal Affairs asking what action is planned since the public meeting.

1981, Dec. 14, Bedford Town Council minutes: Twin Cities Dairy is removed from the proposed park boundary.

## 1982

1982, Jan 11, Bedford Town Council minutes: another request to go from Mayor to request from Municipal Affairs asking what action is planned since the public meeting.

1982, Jan 18, Public hearings for proposed Municipal Development Plan. **Pender lawyer proposes the Pender land be acquired for the park**, this time requests town and province take steps to reimburse Mrs. Pender for her lands lying within the proposed park, or rezone for industrial. **CMHC requests Jack Lake lands remain outside new Secondary Development Plan** as they plan to develop them as first-class residential. **Giles family requests their lands be left outside park boundary and voices opposition about the new zoning regulation for RR** (5 acres on public road, with road built prior to October 9, 1991). **Authorities clarify there is no plan to expropriate lands for the park. Sandy Lake Ratepayers Assoc. (Granter) expresses concerns about future control of pollution and lake protection.**

1982, March 9, Special town Council. Report on Public Hearing on Sandy Lake Regional Park. Same as at proposed Municipal Dev. Plan hearing, except that Prof. Granter of SL Ratepayers Assoc. said **members of this lake association accept the principle of their properties being inside the park boundary. They would like the right to bequeath to next of kin, right to sell at market value, opportunity to negotiate access roads, assurance that they will not be harassed to sell at any time. (These were also outlined in the group's briefs of Aug 1981 and Oct 1981)** Municipal affairs had not communicated with the town yet. Councillor Legree said Sackville River Assoc suggests changing the park to McCabe and Webber Lakes. **The minutes are hard to understand, but it looks like a motion to rezone the Sandy Lake park lands away from P (park) to Secondary Development passed.** (There is an amendment map inserted in the 1982 Zoning Bylaws and Municipal Development Plan showing the Sandy Lake, Marsh and Sackville river corridor were all changed from P-1 Park to SDA Secondary Development Area). **Submission from Academy: the school did not mind being within the park. Passed motion to remove Giles and Brown property from park boundary on Town's Regional park plan and request that Province do the same from their Regional Park plan. In discussion: Is Town still interested in having a Regional Park if Province still wants to proceed, now that the town rezoned the lands?**

1982, Aug, 16, Bedford Town Council minutes: **Province chooses to keep park boundaries etc. as originally outlined.** Giles and Brown families' position is "the same as it has been for the past 7 years". Motion passes to ask Province to approve Municipal Plan with the boundary amendments, plus.

**1982 September Town Council passes Zoning Bylaws and Municipal Development Plan. Sandy Lake area changed from Park to Secondary Development Area** (SDA, or urban Settlement = no permit to build unless five acres on a public road that existed prior to Oct 9, 1991. Also see 2016 Halifax land use Bylaw Bedford). (Unclear why it also appears as being passed in Sept 1983. See below. In a way, this zoning has protected the lake from development ever since because it prevented in-fill. **The community believed this to be a solution to protect the lake. However, the change in zoning opened the area up to interest from developers for future larger housing development.)**

1982 (Date unclear) Halifax-Dartmouth Regional Development Plan states concerns about urban sprawl, and a **shift from “development at any cost” toward quality of life**. Metro is not harmed by industrial revolution, has clean lakes and clean air. Page 20-21 describes Regional Parks using similar descriptive words as in the 2014 RP. **The seven proposed regional parks are again listed, along with several minor parks. Text lists “Flood plain around Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake, and the Sackville River”, and maps show its Regional Park designation. However, one map, an amendment map, shows them as Amended Urban Mix designation. Contains Planning Act Statutes of 1969 and amendments of 1975.**

1982, Sept 29, Special Session Bedford Town Council minutes: SL Ratepayers Assoc (D. Sarty and Grantor, established 1981, 50 members, with goal to establish landowner rights within the park and environmental concerns, and thanks Town for their efforts to work with the Province over boundaries.)

### 1983

1983, March 28, **Changes in the Planning Act; Province removes the Regional Park designation. Withdraws from regional park-creating plan city-wide.**

1983, Sept 26. Mayor Cosman champions the park idea still. As begun in 1982, **to preserve the area from development in hopes that a park plan would evolve eventually, the zoning bylaw was passed to restrict any new construction to a minimum 5-acre lot on a publicly serviced road that exists prior to Oct 9, 1991. This zoning has protected the lake from in-fill development ever since. Bedford continued to purchase land around Sandy Lake toward this future park purpose. (examples: see 1985, July 22, town and Province jointly funded purchase of 236 acres, and 1992, 6 acres deeded from Farmers Dairy specifically for public parkland, plus attached map from 2013 Municipal Planning Strategy for Bedford.)**

1983, Water quality study of Sandy Lake. (seeking this document)

1983, Sept 26, Town is proceeding with a Detailed Area Study of Sandy Lake area and will stay in touch with SL Ratepayers Assoc.

### 1985

1985, July 22, Bedford Town Council minutes: Proposes purchase of land at Sandy Lake and Admirals Cove Park. 50/50 Province and Town purchase \$700,000 worth of land from McCulloch and Co. 236 acres for Sandy Lake (where?), 61 at Admirals Cove Park.

### 1986

1986, June 23, Bedford Town Council minutes: Prof. Granter requests rezoning a piece as public road to develop his property. It is sent on to staff for consideration.

July 1986 Sandy Lake Park Master Plan is released. It has a focus on recreation primarily. Ecological values are included as well, but appear secondary to human recreation regarding those ecological values.

1986, Sept., *Jack Lake Environmental Evaluation Final Report*. CMHC and NS Dept. of Housing. Preparation for housing development on Jack Lake land assembly. Refers multiple times to the **coming Sandy Lake Regional Park** and also refers to it as “the Town’s park land on Sandy Lake” (included Sandy and Marsh and Sackville River) They did flora and fauna studies of Jack Lake area. Contains extensive recommendations on how to mitigate environmental damage when doing the Jack Lake housing development.

1986, October 20, Bedford Town Council minutes: Granter applies to develop his 5 acres on Sandy Lake. It is not on public road. Council denies motion to change that bylaw and denies the application for subdivision.

~1986 **CMHC gives ~ 1000 acres around Jack Lake to the province.** The public housing development apparently did not happen largely because of the need for at least one expensive highway interchange and for detailed mitigations to prevent environmental damage to Jack, Sandy, and Marsh lakes.

## **1987**

1987 Aug news clip park boundaries amendments coming

1987 Oct news clip Oct park boundaries public meeting. (3 hours, ending in a councillor's suggestion to remove Sandy Lake from the Regional Parks plan, that the town would be better off negotiating with CMHC and NS Housing Commission than having province buy out residents of Giles Rd. This is confusing - didn't the 1982 similar disagreements at public meetings already remove Sandy Lake at the town council level? Need clarification.)

## **1988**

1988, Feb 29, Bedford Town Council minutes: 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Lands, Sandy Lake MPS plan amendment to hold public meeting re a plan to change Regional Park Designation of the church owned lands on the Generalized Future Land use Map to Secondary Development Area and to include special care facilities on the area.

1988, May 16 Bedford Town Council minutes: Changes to 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Lands approved. Mention of a Sandy Lake Park plan which may be the newly anticipated Lions Club Beach Park.

1988, Sept 19, Bedford Town Council minutes: 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist church (49 acres) receives its development designation in return for access to the new Sandy Lake Park (Lions Club) and green buffers.

## **1990**

Over the 1990's Kingswood South was developed below Hammonds Plains Road. (Kingswood North developed ~2006-2010)

1990, April 23, Reconvened session Bedford Town Council minutes: Recreation Advisory Commission requests "environmental study of the Sandy Lake watershed area" before use of the Bluewater Lot is developed. And change Lot 1-E from park to Industrial. No decision.

1990, August 14, Sandy Lake Area Residents Association requests Town to request Dept. of Environment to examine situation prior to Town issuing permit to business suspected to cause potential environmental problems. Invalid.

## **1992**

1992, **March 9, 6 acres including roadway and underground pipe to lake are gifted from Farmers dairy to Bedford with a covenant requiring that the land only be used for public parkland. There are to be no buildings on it, and there is to be no travel over the lands or parking or motor vehicles of any kind.**

## **1994**

1994, Nov. 22, Bedford Town Council minutes: \$8,000 to \$10,000 approved for survey of Smith's Road for Lions Park.

1994, Rhea Dawn Mahar thesis, *Towards the Identification of Environmentally Sensitive Areas for Environmental Management: A Case Study in the Sackville River Watershed, Nova Scotia.* Sandy Lake is rated as the second most valuable Environmentally Sensitive Area between Bedford Basin and Mt Uniacke. The Sackville River quarry 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **1995**

1995, April 11, Bedford Town Council minutes: Tender call of Topographic and Boundary survey for Lions Club Park.

1995, Sandy Lake Vegetation Survey and Trail Design, for the Town of Bedford to aid in and complete the trail design and layout for the area, conducted in April by Basic Elements Ecological Enterprises. (seeking this document)

## 1996

1996 April, Halifax Amalgamation

Late 1990's prison proposal. Province kept 50 acres when 1000 Jack Lake acres were turned over to the municipality. (for proposed prison, community learned later). Date is unclear when a Forensic prison slated for Jack Lake lands. 50 acres were cleared. Bedford public protests so prison went to Burnside. Province gave Jack Lake lands to city for park. See 2006 for Jack Lake lands becoming park in RP.

## 2001

2001, March 22, HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY: Approval of phase 1 of Lions Club Park. (roadway, parking. Phase 2 will be washrooms) Promised Sandy Lake Area Residents Association (SLARA) a public hearing. Katharine Mott from SLARA thanked them for comprehensive review to date and promised hearing. Lions voiced concerns since they have been working on this since 1986. Public meeting will go ahead. Walter Regan/SRA supports full environmental study.

2001, November 21, Bedford Lions Club presents HRM with a \$50,000 cheque, their first installment toward the promised \$150,000. The municipality and Province have each also pledged to contribute \$150,000 toward the park, for a total of \$450,000.

2001-2002, 6 reports by Dalhousie University DalTech and NSCAD Environmental Planning (for new Sandy Lake Watershed Association - SLWA):

1. Issues of Urban and Rural Fringe
2. Sandy Lake Community Profile
3. Suggestions for managing Development
4. Environmental Inventory of Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake and Jack Lake
5. "A Water Quality Analysis", Dalhousie team under Dr. Bill Hart
6. Policy Review and Recommendations (document location unknown)

**Also, SLWA works successfully to protect the lake and wildlife from possible harm: Prevent the adding of sand to the shoreline at the new Lion's Club park's sand beach expansion and prevents destruction of protective berm along beach and aquatic breeding area, prevents motorized boat launch, prevents cutting of large area of old growth Acadian forest for septic field by successfully proposing Park's Canada trailhead toilet system.**

## 2004

**2004 Bedford municipal Planning Environmental policies** ~2004 Town of Bedford Municipal Planning Strategy Environmental Policies:

*"Policy E-18:*

*It shall be the intention of Town Council to identify the Sackville River as a conservation corridor because of its importance as a salmon fish habitat and its significance as a natural amenity to the community, and to work towards improving the quality of water in the Sackville River, in cooperation with appropriate agencies.*

#### *Regional Watersheds*

##### *Policy E-19:*

*It shall be the intention of Town Council to enter into an inter-municipal planning strategy or to seek coordination of municipal planning strategy policies with adjacent municipalities in order to establish site construction and land use practice standards within regional watersheds, specifically the Sackville River, Kearney Lake, Sandy Lake, Rocky Lake, Marsh Lank, Paper Mill Lake and Anderson Lake watersheds, to protect regional water resources.*

##### *Policy E-20:*

*It shall be the intention of Town Council upon the adoption of this plan to undertake an in-depth environmental study of the Sandy Lake watershed which will include input from the N.S. Department of Environment as well as area residents, and shall examine present water quality, watershed land use practices increased rates of sedimentation, and the development of a recovery and protection program for Sandy Lake if warranted by the study.”*

2004 Bedford West development Subwatershed Management Plan

## **2006**

2006, March, Highway 113 NS Dept of Transportation and Public Works report for the Class 1 Environmental Assessment for the possible future 9.9-km 4-lane, class 100 highway between Highway 103 and Bedford/Highway 102. P. 19 states *“The plan indicates Hammonds Plains Road and Beaver Bank Road are at their traffic volume thresholds and prescribes growth controls to keep traffic loading from worsening. It is recognized, however, a position like that is not supportable unless we can say a solution to resolve the issue is available, even if we argue that, if not currently affordable to the municipality. **In the case of Hammonds Plains Road, we are aware of no realistic solution to the traffic loading situation on Hammonds Plains Road other than Highway 113. If a future road corridor is not preserved, all practical options for opening lands along Hammonds Plains Road for development will be lost forever.”***

[https://novascotia.ca/nse/ea/highway113/Hwy113\\_main\\_report.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/nse/ea/highway113/Hwy113_main_report.pdf)

(Building projects are continuing along Hammonds Plains Road and the Province’s current plan is to add another 6K housing units at Sandy Lake = at least 6K additional cars on Hammonds Plains Rd at rush hour daily. The proposed Highway 113 is undesirable because it would bisect Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park. This leads to the sensible conclusion that 1800 acres at Sandy Lake should be saved for the Regional Park, not for adding to the traffic issues.)

**2006 First Regional Plan.** Sandy Lake listed as urban settlement area. Regional Plan identifies six areas for future growth (housing) in HRM: Bedford South, Morris-Russell Lake, Bedford West, Port Wallis, Sandy Lake and Highway 102 west corridor adjacent to Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Park.

2006 - Successful lobby to make the newly traded ~1000 acres of Jack Lake lands a Regional Park. Still listed so today, but not being managed as an active park.

2006-2010 Kingswood North is built west of Sandy Lake. Developers are land-banking.

## **2009**

Developers submit applications for developing Sandy Lake west.

CBCL Cost of Servicing Study to proceed.

Oversized sewer pipe proposal by developer. (RP still calls for park at SL, so community unaware.)

## 2011

**2011 HRM Municipal Strategy, with 1996 amendments: Despite the 1983 changes to the province's regional park designation plan, "Town council shall continue working towards the establishment of major town parks at Admiral's Cove, Sandy Lake, and within the Waterfront Development Area (Policy P-6. Policies P-8 and P-9 indicate Town Council's intentions to designate future parkland within the Jack Lake Assembly as per the concept plan contained in the 1986 Jack Lake Environmental Evaluation Final Report and any updated report or revised concept plan..." p.126**

**"With changes in the Planning Act in 1983, which eliminated the provision for regional park designations, the focus of the Town became to acquire large parcels of unique sites in the Town which had been identified as future regional parks. Efforts were directed to acquiring lands in the Sandy Lake area and in Admiral's Cove. While interest still remains in acquiring parcels of land in these areas, the future development of existing open space is now seen as a higher priority than the acquisition of additional open space. Exceptions to this would be land acquired in relation to subdivision development, land for neighbourhood parks, specialized land for linkages or unique sites, and Sandy Lake." P.128**

**"To provide funding for the development of parkland, the second Town Council adopted a policy which provided for the establishment of a special capital reserve fund. ...one quarter of the deed transfer tax shall be placed in the capital section of a special reserve fund." P.128**

Note that p. 125 states, "Residential growth demands and Paper Mill Lake environmental concerns dictate that Sandy Lake should be developed within the next several years." (Confusing: This could be easily misunderstood to mean "developed" for housing, but the heading for this section is "PARKS & RECREATION")

## 2012

~ **2012/2013**, the city gives Sobeys/Crombie 50 acres of the Jack Lake lands (~across from the BMO) as a trade to protect Moirs Mill Pond. Park land traded to protect other park land. Community unaware.

**2012, July 3**, Council agrees to \$2.1 million financing deal for enlarged sewer line for future Armco suburban development at sandy Lake. Council votes 17-6 in favour. Armco will pay \$1million. Originally Armco was willing to pay all or almost all, in exchange for no environmental requirements and no public process in their proposed Sandy Lake development. A memorandum of Understanding was made between Armco and Halifax Water for Armco to contribute \$1mil of the \$3.1mil estimated cost of upsizing the wastewater pipes of Bedford West to accommodate possible future development at Sandy Lake. Item 5 of the MOU states, **"Armco shall make the above-noted upfront payment recognizing and accepting that the decision to approve a secondary planning strategy for all or a portion of the Sandy Lake lands is ultimately in the sole discretion of HRM Regional Council."** Community is unaware of all this.

**July 3, Council Report, Wastewater Oversizing for Future Development of Sandy Lake Lands. "HRM is not a party to the proposed Armco-HWRD contract. As such, the terms and conditions do not commit a future council to any planning approvals in either Bedford West or the Sandy Lake lands." p.1**

**2012** order for Sandy Lake Watershed Study (Current Sandy Lake Conservation Association was not in existence yet. Community unaware of many things happening because no one knew the previous organization members had either moved away or retired from 30+ years of working to protect the lake.)

## 2013

**2013** June to August, Armco clear cuts trees off 300 acres Sandy Lake west without forestry or development approval. Originally it was thought to be 200 acres.

**2013 July – Aug.** SLCA forms, and contacts Armco multiple times, meets with Councillor, MLA, SRA/Walter Regan... Fact finding re: regulations regarding tree cutting on private land (virtually none, although other cities do have tree-protection bylaws), learn Sandy Lake Regional Park had fallen “off the table”, and that previous SL community groups had been inactive for some time. Councillor Outhit has no knowledge that a regional park was ever planned for this area and says no staff he has talked to recall any such plan. SLCA directs him to older staff for confirmation, and SLCA finds excitement among them at the prospect that this special area may still be protected.

**2013 July,** D Donnelly, Our HRM Alliance Compensation Opinion. Legal opinion – landowners who buy land on spec have no legal right to expect compensation if it doesn't work out. (SLCA unaware of this until 2016)

**2013 July 10,** Sandy Lake Conservation Assoc. (SLCA) attend Goetz Brook RP+5 open house. Learn Sandy Lake zoned Urban Settlement since 2006 Regional Plan, meaning it is to be considered for “possible development” sometime in the future. This does not mean it WILL be developed, but an evaluation process will be done to determine best use and costs. We learn the staff and community advisory committee reps believe landowners at Sandy Lake want housing development of the lake (! “Landowners” = developers who own land there. No one was asking other landowners' opinion.)

**2013 Aug 22,** Last resort community protest at roadside to stop tree cutting. (Citizens from Granter Rd, Hammonds Plains Rd, Farmers Dairy Lane, Giles Road, Councillor Matt Whitman, and EAC. Media coverage.)

**2013 Sept 19,** SLCA meets with Armoyan who agrees to “stoppage and cleanup”. Offers residents to be on selection committee for in company chosen to design development, will work together. (More trees were cut in the “clean-up”. Isolated stands were removed to community's dismay, but not close to the lake at least.)

## 2014

**2014 RP+5.** Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake, Sackville River still Urban Settlement. Jack Lake is open space, regional park. The new regional plan has changed from all previous ones. **The development portion of the plan is heading toward allowing development on lands outside the Jack Lake regional park boundaries. Intent is stated to determine new boundaries for Jack Lake Regional Park. The parks section of the Regional Plan still states lands to be acquired for park at Sandy Lake.**

**2014 Nov.** AECOM Sandy Lake Watershed study final version.

SLCA formal **response to AECOM Watershed report** with professional assistance by Dalhousie professor/researcher.

**2014, Nov 17** NW Community Council, SLCA and community submit **petition for park reinstatement.** NWCC decision directs the community to include the subject of the petition in the greenbelt process.

## 2015

**2015,** January, Halifax Municipal Strategy for Bedford. The wording is exactly the same as in 2011 version, but the pages are 122-125. “...shall continue working towards the establishment of major parks at Admiral's Cove, Sandy Lake, and

within the Waterfront Development Area (Policy P-6)" ...Policies P-8 and P-9 indicate Town Council's intentions to designate future parkland within the Jack Lake assembly..."

**..." the future development of existing open space is now seen as a higher priority than the acquisition of additional open space. Exceptions to this would be land acquired in relation to subdivision development, land for neighbourhood parks, specialized land for linkages or unique sites, and Sandy Lake."**

**Stated RP goals for a park in Sandy Lake area are different from the RP's development goals. There is a conflict.**

**2015**, Feb. AECOM Watershed Study of Sandy Lake accepted by NW Comm Council. SLCA report is later added to the HRM website with AECOM report.

**2015**, Aug, proposal for purchase of 160 acres Armco land beside Marsh Lake. Deferred.

**2015** Oct HRM purchase of 160 acres from Armoyan. Strong proposal from staff for Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake, Jack Lake and part of Sackville river to be reserved for park. Developers lands west of Sandy Lake are not included in the staff conceptual map, and private residents' properties are also excluded from park area. **"In keeping with the Regional Plan, the Marsh Lake lands are highly desired for regional park purposes...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...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)

**2015**, Our HRM Alliance, Sandy Lake part of Hike the Greenbelt program, blog post.

**2015** Armco sells west Sandy Lake ~550 acres (including clear cut 300 acres) to Clayton Developments who begins land-banking in the area. SLCA discouraged from meeting with Clayton by Councillor Outhit. No reason given.

## **2016**

**2016**, Feb, Groups session with O2 on Green Network study. Community is concerned that Sandy Lake and area is not yet "on the map" of various GN value maps.

SLCA sends detailed follow-up letter to O2 and city planning department, and it is well received. They appear to now have an interest in this area. The Province's environment maps are known to be very poor.

**2016**, March, O2 public meeting, unveils Green Network study. A city parks staff person showed SLCA members on map 23 that Sandy Lake has a high value now as one of few natural links for "connectivity" of the Chebucto Peninsula to the rest of NS, in particular to Pockwock region. Connectivity of the Chebucto Peninsula is a priority in green network plan. Staff person says that the barriers from Hammonds Plains Rd and Kearney Lake Rd "pose a problem, but staff is interested in exploring options".

Nov 13, 2016 SLCA met w Richard Harvey and Councillor Outhit. RH very interested. Calls Sandy Lake "Unfinished business." Asked for all the historical documents we can provide and also our #1 and #2 option maps for our envisioned park.

**2016** Bedford Land Use Bylaw (1983 5-acre Bylaw that to build must have 5 acres on road that was publicly serviced by Oct 1991 is the ongoing bylaw.) Also, archaeological sites identified on west Sandy Lake lands (Clayton lands).

**2016** Sandy Lake championed by Our HRM Alliance as one of 3 top areas to be preserved, along with Purcell's Cove Backlands and Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes.

## **2017**

2017, March 10, SLCA sends detailed historical reports from the 1971 Dean Report-on to Richard Harvey as requested. Also, the SLCA Map A and Map B options for regional park expansion.

2017, April SLCA and SRA write formal request for park, including Request/Ask map, and arranges meetings with NW Comm Council members. But cancel when Councillor Outhit asks SLCA to give him a couple weeks to review the request documents. SLCA plans stall after no response comes.

2017, June Dr. David Patriquin begins visiting/documenting Sandy Lake and environs. Dr. P expressed being too busy for two years to look at SL, but would take a quick look that week end. He expressed being "gobsmacked" by what he found, and returned 27 times that summer/fall with various experts (water, old forest, lichen, fungus experts, etc) His surveys continue to date.

2017, June, Clarence Stevens begins extensive review of birds. Finds species list virtually unchanged from the past. Rich wildlife. Even Barred Owls and Oven Birds in the forest. Reported moose tracks.

2017, June 12, Sandy Lake Conservation Association and Sackville Rivers Association send joint submission to the Halifax Green Network Plan implementation public process.

2017, October, Drone footage taken of Sandy Lake and area by Skyline Studios.

2017 – 2018 SLCA and SRA begin creating Sandy Lake Regional Park Coalition. The Turtle Patrol and Halifax Field Naturalists and Agropur Dairy are the first to join. Sandy Lake is one of only 3 lakes in HRM that still have snapping turtles of the 22 that traditionally had them. K Robinson and D Patriquin elected Coalition co-chairs.

2017 - 2018 Exit 3 is upgraded to help relieve traffic on the Hammonds Plains Road. Community learned later that Clayton and Armour Group paid for the design and the Province paid for the construction.

## **2018**

January 12, 2018, follow up meeting w Richard Harvey and Councillor Outhit. Ben Sivak attended as new Green Network Plan head. No progress evident since meeting of Nov 2016, despite the comment that the historical and scientific reports and information we provided since that meeting were extremely valuable. SLCA expressed upset because the city didn't pursue the cottage lot that came up for sale, and also didn't tell us they weren't. The city should have told us they were not perusing it. Had we known we would have bought it ourselves. The councillor asks why we would want to do that. Mike and Karen reply, "to protect it for the park because it is important". (Note that the price was \$30K then and it has sold several times since and was last on the market for over \$125K.) To get the city's support, RH suggests we could send 1500 letters as BMBCL did to get attention, and also suggests we could meet with Clayton ourselves. We express interest in doing that. On that suggestion Councillor Outhit becomes obviously uncomfortable, turns red and suggests we wait to hear from him before doing something like that. SLCA expresses concern that the 15-acre plot beside Giles Rd should be purchased by the city to avoid a potentially disastrous situation for the park because the piece is owned by a developer. Mr. Sivak says we could discuss that within the Secondary Planning process for the development of west Sandy Lake lands as it will include all neighbouring lands. That is no help. No solution. SLCA President comments that this meeting was not worth the money we spent for parking.

January 17, 2018 HRM releases 2018-19 multi-year parks and Recreation acquisition report. Sandy Lake is not in it. Why?

January 22, 2018 SLCA president sends letter to Mayor and Council praising them for BMBCL announcement.

January 28, 2018 SLCA Park Committee letter to Mayor and Council backing and expanding on SLCA president's letter of support for the BMBCL purchase, and stating our Sandy Lake Park request, providing initial information and requesting their support for this park expansion as well. Need to gain attention for parks and Recreation acquisition budget.

March 7, 2018 Op-Ed article in Chronicle Herald: Green Network Plan Op-Ed featuring Sandy Lake. Two days later Councillor Outhit (CO) calls SLCA Park Committee Chair/one of article's authors. The Councillor is very angry at article and specifically the SLCA rep, yelling. SLCA rep's husband can hear him yelling from across the room. He says Clayton had seen article and contacted him about their plans to build – CO asserts secondary planning application is now coming 2 years earlier than planned and it is our fault. CO loudly asserts this article ruins his (never-before-expressed to any in SLCA) plan to wait quietly and hope that so many restrictions would be placed on the development that the developer would decide not to build. Why was SLCA not informed of this plan before in meetings since 2013? SLCA keeps being told to do nothing, to wait.

April 22, 2018 Earth Day launch of Sandy Lake Regional Park Coalition (SLRPC) at walk guided by Bob Guscott. (Three councillors attended: Craig, Outhit, Whitman. Ms. Blackburn sent regrets over conflicting events)

June 1, 2018 SLCA first meeting with Clayton reps Kevin Neatt and Richard Butts. Mr. Butts "not thrilled" to be faced with doing this for another community, but is willing to work with us and the city to protect the lake/park by trading for other developable lands. Wishes we'd met with them sooner, but at least they are still in the paper stage. Suggests we get organized, find a champion in city hall, get city support, find a win-win with them all. Until then, Clayton will proceed with plans to develop.

June 15, 2018 KR/SLCA sends email summary of meeting with Clayton to local councillors and requests support. Councillor Outhit responds with an email: *"I will remain your contact with HRM Council, Development, Parks, and Park Planning. There is no role for my Community Council colleagues at this time, but it is going to be a very long, frustrating and of possibly expensive process. Your association has my support for its vision to expand the existing park, but some of your actions have already made my role more difficult and also have resulted in Clayton expediting their requests for Secondary Planning. Clayton has made it very clear to me and to HRM that they are not a willing seller of their land. HRM will soon make it clear that it will not trade one piece of park land for another piece of park land. In my opinion, we are potentially at an impasse that will require a lengthy period of negotiation, creativity and planning. When appropriate, I will update my colleagues, and I will continually update you and the group."* This went to SLCA, local councillors and both Clayton reps. SLCA at a loss for what to do now.

*(Note: In all of this, the SLCA reps are: a chartered accountant, a respected businessman and president of NS Salmon Association, a CEO of a national charity and consultant to provincial and federal governments, and a former NS Deputy Minister of Tourism and one of Canada's 100 most powerful women in 2014.)*

June, 2018 Halifax Green Network Plan is released. Sandy Lake identified w at least 3 important wildlife corridors that link the mainland to the Chebucto Peninsula. It is also important to the health of the Sackville River system. However, it is an area of overlapping values. That is, it is a valuable ecological area that is also slated for housing development.

June, 2018 SLCA pamphlet released

June, 2018 HRM Flooding Study (National Disaster Mitigation Program) Base of Bluewater Road is one of three areas listed as needing mitigation for significant flooding.

August 14, 2018 Halifax Green Network Plan is passed unanimously by Halifax City Council

August 14, 2018 Sackville River Floodplain Study Phase 2: W. Alexander replies to question that the city must not be planning to develop Sandy Lake area for 100 years because it was not included in the scope of this study.

September 17, 2018, SLCA and Councillor Outhit chance meeting at BMO centre. SLCA is poised to meet with lake landowners to identify possible sellers. CO proposes a coordinated approach - wait. First time SLCA learns Clayton had asked to trade Jack Lake lands for Sandy Lake lands. (We learn later, in December, they had sent a letter to the city months before SLCA met with them, asking that the city trade for the Jack Lake lands. They did not mention that in our meeting with them.) We agree with CO it is not right to "trade parkland for parkland". He says again that the city "can't buy land that is not for sale", which is puzzling since SLCA knows Clayton does not want to sell. We need the city to look for a trade though. We explain Clayton told us not to expect to hear them say publicly what they advised us to do in our meeting, but is willing to trade.

Twice CO said for us to do what we think we should and he will do what he thinks he should do, and we will stay in communication. He seemed not clear about Sandy Lake's place in the Green Network Plan.

October 16-18 2018 In-camera report requested and passed in Council – SLCA has no details, but to expect result in February 2019. SLCA grateful to CO who also requests this be kept to ourselves until it comes out in February.

October 23 2018, SLCA and Clayton set a second meeting date for Nov 1 or 2nd. Unexpected SLCA family events, reschedule.

Oct 23 to Nov 5 SLCA and RH, CO and city staff resolve issues over hunters and hunting blind photographed by SLCA member in Marsh Lake area. City posts signs alerting hunters where parkland starts. They are allowed to hunt on private land but cannot carry a gun across park land. SLCA posts signs at park entrances "Caution: Hunters in the Area"

Nov 5, 2018 to 23rd Neatt and KR emailed questions and answers. Reconfirmed Clayton does not want to sell and are willing to trade. They have not identified any land they are interested in other than original Jack Lake request. It is up to the city to present options.

November 2018, Richard Harvey confirms the city's currently-owned areas at Sandy/Jack/Marsh lakes are all designated park land, including the newly acquired 160 acres. Also, he clarifies PID questions, Marsh Lake is owned by CMHC and the prison area is likely owned by the province. (2019 we learn prison lands are owned by the city and marsh Lake by the province.)

November 12, 2018, Karen and Councillor Outhit meeting at Sunnyside to exchange details of SLCA/Clayton meeting, reasons for SLCA 1000-acre request (Watershed fragility, Green Network connectivity, natural recreation, plus), to clear up misunderstandings, and chart a way forward. CO repeats he can't buy land that isn't for sale. K restates Clayton is willing to trade and asks will he request staff to look for possible trades/options? No, he will not ask staff to look for land trades for 3 years. (why 3 years?) **"You won't get 1000 acres". "I am the only one who can be your champion in city hall because it is on my territory." Did not appear to realize it is a regional park request, that two of 4 other NWCC councillors also have territory in the proposed regional park.** Will read the GNP information K left with him. SLCA is to do as we see fit and he will proceed his way. CO insisted he understands how watersheds work. CO offered to work to communicate better and coordinate.

November 20, 2018, SLCA attempted setting another meeting date w Clayton. Was offered Dec 14<sup>th</sup>. Snafu again within SLCA. canceled attempt. Plan to meet January. Kevin Neatt reconfirmed they are still willing to trade. They have acquired nearly 600 acres and more coming. They have no need to identify possible trades but have not applied for secondary planning.

November 23, 2018, Our HRM Alliance meeting to plan action to have Green Network Plan implemented by city. Sandy Lake still one of top 3 areas to be protected. Competing layers of value leave it vulnerable but the wildlife corridors for connectivity to Chebucto Peninsula and Sackville River corridor are strong.

December 11, 2018, Sandy Lake Regional Park Coalition Steering Committee (now with 18 group members including Agropur, and with several more unofficially partnering, and more coming) meets to organize.

December 17, 2018, CO informs us of letter from Director of Planning to SL developers (Clayton only or all?) saying the city sees no need for more housing at Sandy Lake for at least another 15 years. SLCA not allowed to see the letter's wording or to whom it went - SLCA shocked at being accused of not believing CO that the letter exists. We refer to it as "the Denty letter".

## 2019

January 21, 2019 Coalition sends letter to Mayor and Council requesting that part of the \$7million allocated in the budget for park land acquisition be spent to acquire land at Sandy Lake/Sackville River park. Also reintroduces the rationale for protecting this area for all time.

January 21, 2019 Coalition requests meeting w Mayor Savage. April 24th selected. Mayor's office invites CO who invites R Harvey and Director of Planning. Coalition requests the other councillors with jurisdiction also be included. Request declined. Coalition asks CO to have them included. Request declined.

Between February 2 and February 13: emails between KR and CO attempt clarity but somehow do not connect. Must be read to be deciphered.

February 13: Phone meeting between K Neatt of Clayton and KR as rep of SLCA/Coalition. Why it begins negatively KR does not know, but call ends on better terms. KN angry about SLCA partners re development. Misconceptions dispelled. Neatt reconfirms willingness to trade and mentions Jack Lake lands are the only area identified by them to date. KR agrees w CO/city no trade of park for park. Neatt reviews and reconfirms his email of June 14 2018 still stands, saying it is *"to encourage the city. That if the city really wants to get behind this and really thinks these are special lands, & how about X, Y, Z, then sure."*

April, 2019: Upon request by SLCA, the city posts "No Motorized Vehicles" sign at entrance to Jack lake area. Motocross vehicles had found the area, adding to the damage already being done by ATVs. Signs vandalized within 2 weeks.

April 24, am, SL-SRRP Coalition's Regan, Robinson and Patriquin meet with Mayor Savage and Director Denty. (CO and RH didn't arrive) Mr. Mayor strongly supports greening of the city and says he would like to do this. Was unaware of this area (although we have sent several letters etc. to his office and Council since 2013) and will discuss with CO. (That this is a regional issue, not local Bedford seems still not clear). We can meet again.

April 24, pm, Mayor speaks at press conference announcing purchase of Barrett and Armco land for Blue Mt Birch Cove Lakes.

May 9, 2019: New name Coalition will use: **Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park** better describes actual lands and waters. Coalition has 23 member groups. Learned that city staff have direction to buy land at BMBCL but not at Sandy Lake. Work to have city recognize values at SL-SRRP apparently not succeeding yet, but work continues. Friends of Sandy Lake is growing, community awareness growing.

May 16, 2019, W. Regan, H Ward, K. Robinson meet with Lands and Forestry Minister Rankin and 6 staff, including Deputy Min. Towers. We are seeking a follow up meeting to develop a process that better fits this situation for finding a

trade. Discuss possible 3-way trade options, possible ecological evaluation and protection of SL-SR, to transfer prison 50 acres to HRM. A staff person was assigned to follow up on these with us. The coalition submission and documents are to be circulated in the department.

May 17, 2019, SRA sends a letter to the Fed Min of Environment requesting the DND rifle range 500 acres be considered for OECM wilderness protection under the federal 17% goal, as was done at Manitoba's Shilo Base. She replies they will assess the area for consideration.

Spring, Summer 2019: Increase in ATV and motorbike use of trails causing significant trail damage. City posts 2 “no motorized vehicles” signs, but they are vandalized within days. SLCA and city parks begin ongoing cooperation to stop the damage.

August 21, 2019: \$1-million federal commitment to the Halifax Wilderness Park project, which will conserve 153 hectares in the Purcells Cove Backlands surrounding Colpitts Lake and bordering Williams Lake.

Summer, cottage lot owner cuts 150 small trees along the old woods path/road to the cottage lots and repairs the path so vehicles can use it. By-Law T-600 protects public trees. He had general permission to cut a few branches. Overstepped. Parks looking into it.

Ongoing meetings w councillors, MLAs, MPs Geoff Regan, Samson. MPs helping w rifle range and CMHC.

Late August, 2019, Sandy Lake closes for about 24 hours due to an algae bloom that turned out to be non-hazardous.

September 2019: Clayton purchases 28 acres on Hammonds Plains Rd for 3.7 million. SLCA knew it was coming since June 2018 meeting w Clayton reps – were asked not to mention it. Important land for their road access plans.

September, K Robinson invited to join Our HRM Alliance Steering Committee.

September, a Salmon grilse jumped in Sandy Lake, 20 ft offshore – Fisher reports caught and returned 9 smolt in the last 2 years.

September 24, public hearing to add the HGNP Map 5 amendment to a planning section of the RP passes council unanimously.

October, 2019, Lands and Forestry determined **prison lands belong to city**, and a large part of Marsh Lake belongs to CMHC. (Incorrect. Geoff Regan assists us for the following year and discovers deeds were not registered when Marsh Lake was given to Dept of Municipal Affairs)

October, Patriquin reports recent deep-water tests at Sandy Lake indicate marginal O2 levels. Very sensitive to tipping over the edge.

October, Series of emails Robinson, Neatt, CO. It is the first time anyone mentioned this: CO says that a formal letter requesting a trade was supposed to come from the developers to the city. SLCA would have asked for one in the beginning – Why would Clayton’s initial email saying they would trade, that 4 local councillors plus Clayton CEO and SLCA reps were copied on, not be enough to start things?

For 2nd year, city parks division posted “no hunting” signs around park and partnered with SLCA to post/educate on line.

Nov 7, Patriquin and Robinson present to Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee. Are told things are “going on behind the scenes”

November 2019: Coalition works with MP Geoff Regan on several aspects including CMHC lands within park and OCEM Federal 17% wilderness goals for neighbouring DND lands, similar to Shilo base, Manitoba.

Nov 18, Letter to Canada Lands Co. Chris Miller re Anderson Lands. No reply.

Nov 26, W. Regan, Robinson, McPhee meet w Dept of Env. Very supportive. Will assist with several points.

Dec 12, 2019 Letter to CMHC asking for 50 acres at Marsh Lake for the park.

December, 2019, City Capital Projects Budget contains line item for acquiring property at Sandy Lake and BMBCL.

## **2020**

Jan 15, 2020, Meetings w. Nature Conservancy of Canada. NCC very aware of quality at Sandy Lake. *"Compelling case at SL-SRRP. Conditions for success are here. Convince staff/city to do whatever it takes to acquire the watershed. Meet w developers. The highest, best use for this property for the citizens of HRM is parkland."*

Jan 16, phone meeting city planner & Robinson. City and CMHC in discussions re: Marsh Lake. City is using the 2015 Conceptual Map as the boundary for SL-SRRP. KR informs PI it was drawn only to acquire the 160 acres, not to be a real boundary. PI: Get "light shone on that" with a staff report request. Staff can not work on land outside that boundary.

Jan 20, Shaw Wilderness launch event. Clayton's rep. says to Walter re: Sandy Lake, "You'll get some but you won't get it all."

Jan 23, SLCA reps Robinson and Sarty meet w. W George of city parks to discuss where city might put No Motorized Vehicles signs. WG advises park perimeter. Police will assist w enforcement because By-Law P-600 says no motorized vehicles in city parks.

Jan 25, professional park planner's report arrives. New request is 1800 acres including important ecological areas and to add park access. Johnson's Brook watershed is essential to the health of Sandy Lake and Sackville River system. Clayton owns 550 acres. 390 owned by United Gulf Developments and 103 by numbered co, important bits owned by 4 other developers.

Jan 27, Phonecall btw W Regan and Counc. Outhit. CO mentions a deal being discussed with Clayton re: 200 acres beside Sandy Lake. When WR requested more detail, CO voiced WR was doubting his word and said he would have Clayton's Mr Neatt call WR to confirm. Within minutes Mr. Neatt called WR and confirmed that they were discussing 200 acres. Mr Neatt did not say anything about trades not being on the table still, but he did confirm discussing 200 acres w Mr. Outhit. Again, no details were given.

Jan 29, Karen M makes presentation on budget at City Hall. CO stops her in City Hall foyer after budget speech, saying he is discussing w. Clayton a deal re: 200 acres beside Sandy Lake – something about the right to build high density on Hammonds Plains Rd. That our activities could ruin the deal he is working on with Clayton. No details again.

Feb 14, 2020, Coalition's Valentines Awareness Campaign. Ends Feb 14 with delivery of hand made valentines to Councillors Blackburn, Mason, Russell. Also, over 350 electronic valentines went to each. Fine meetings with each, except Councillor Outhit refuses to meet, refuses his valentines, accuses reps of questioning his honesty and integrity in the meeting w. Counc. Mason (this did not happen in any way), and "washes his hands of" our group for asking the 3 others if they can tell us anything about the 200-acre discussions we heard from CO the city is engaged in. CO denies telling Walter R and Karen M about these 200-acre deal discussions.

Feb 24, 2020, RP+10 Regional Plan review announced. Clayton request for Sandy Lake Secondary Planning process is in Schedule D. We later learn in a June meeting with Clayton reps that they did not intend that their letter sent in 2017 to the city be taken as a formal request for secondary planning (sp), and this item in Schedule D was a surprise to them. However, they were intending to apply for sp in the summer 2020.

March 14, 2020, *Avian and Species at Risk Surveys of the Proposed Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park*, Prepared by Natural Wonders Consulting Firm. The 3-year Species of Interest survey includes ground-truthing of wildlife corridors large and small, and a map of remaining links to BMBCL provided. In total, there are 11 habitats and 15 Species-At-Risk in the proposed SL-SRRP! Dr. Patriquin asks, "Is there any other equivalent area in HRM?"

<http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/species-lists/avian-sar-report/>

March 24, 2020, SL-SRRPCoalition letter goes to Mayor Savage updating since April 2019 meeting: Includes Planner's report, 3-year bird report, and an alert to 2015 Conceptual Map being used by the city for unintended purpose – Requests city have an independent scientific/biological study done to identify appropriate park boundary instead.

March 27, 2020 Letter to Mayor Savage in response to three events on Jan 27 and 29. The letter expresses concern over a possible mistake: Requests details and clarity whether city is discussing trading 200 acres beside Sandy Lake for the right to develop high density on Hammonds Plains Rd, requests that the public be included in discussions if they are happening, and points out the planner's and scientists' reports indicate the remaining 200-300 acres would not be enough to adequately protect the park's existing assets. The letter also thanks city for the Oct 2018 in-camera plan. However, we continue to be told nothing about other than "things are going on behind the scenes". We understand it has to do with actions to expand SL-SRRP, but we have not been told what that means exactly.

April 24, 2020, Sandy Lake-Sackville River Reg Pk Coalition (SL-SRRPC) submits the first of its Regional Plan review submissions. <https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission> It provides historical, biological and community information along with the rationale for reverting to the plan to protect the entire park (The questionable value to protecting some and building housing on the rest) and requests that:

1. That the SL-SRRP be expanded by additional 1,800 acres (see Map 1). The SL-SRRP boundary be researched in the RP+10 process so that new boundaries based on science are established to encompass all remaining essential watershed to be protected and managed as a regional park for all time. That would mean finding "win-win" solutions that serve both the community and present landowners needs.
2. That the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN) be included in its entirety in the RP+10.
3. That the requests in sections A, B, and C be addressed within the RP+10 review and implemented.

June 5, 2020, Clayton's M Hanusiak and K Neatt meet with Crosby and Robinson of the Sandy Lake Conservation Association to outline their plans for development and request community support. They state not having applied for secondary planning in the RP's Schedule D, but suggest their 2017 letter suggesting to the city that it might be time to start looking at development at SL might have been taken as a request for secondary planning. **They reaffirmed the company was willing to trade if SLCA had succeeded in interesting the city in identifying a trade. However now, after 2 years, they are moving on with development plans.** A trade of some sort for backlands may still be possible, along with an 80-acre gift along Sandy Lake and the dairy property, if the city will allow secondary planning and high-density development of the ~200 acres beside Hammonds Plains Road. They strongly expressed no interest in ever developing the "backlands" (west of Sandy Lake). They call the area along Hammonds Plain Road "Bedford West Annex". Community reps were asked to keep details of the plan quiet until after SP is applied for in the summer (which was honoured, as requested, until Secondary Planning was submitted to the city.) That we would know when the submission happens because Clayton always does so publicly, and SLCA would get the map and details at that time. SLCA and

partners are eager to look closely at this proposal in case it could save the overall ecological system of the area, depending on water quality protections and corridor protections.

July 2020, four breeding Painted Turtles are deliberately run over near Marsh Lake. SLCA and allies work behind the scenes with City Parks and Halifax Police in our ongoing cooperative work to discourage vehicle use inside the park (By-law P-600 prevents unauthorized vehicle use in city parks, but is hard to enforce). However, media requests have to be responded to when some unknown sources alerted media. As we had feared, public awareness has a double edge, and there is a marked increase in sport vehicle usage over the entire season. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> summer out of four the loon couple did not succeed in raising young. The young were reported drowned by boat wakes according to lake dweller's who watch them.

Turtle death coverage: CBC TV Interview: <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/176341203563>

The CBC on-line report July 13 2020: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/painted-turtles-killed-sandy-lake-park-1.5647901>

The Sheldon MacLeod 95.7 news radio interview: Select Show 1pm (July 14) ... starts at the 3:10 (three minute 10 second) mark: <https://www.news957.com/audio/the-sheldon-macleod-show-2/>

An "Abbreviated Transcript" of the interview is here: <http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2020/07/14/four-breeding-age-female-painted-turtles-were-deliberately-run-over-near-marsh-lake/>

Turtle article, Halifax Today: [https://www.halifaxtoday.ca/local-news/turtle-patrol-president-believes-someone-intentionally-ran-over-four-turtles-in-bedford-park-2563299?utm\\_source=Email&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=Email](https://www.halifaxtoday.ca/local-news/turtle-patrol-president-believes-someone-intentionally-ran-over-four-turtles-in-bedford-park-2563299?utm_source=Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Email)

May 8, 2020, the small cottage lot in-holding (one of two beside the Sandy Lake Beach) is again on the market.

June 2020, the derelict cottage on the other lot is removed by order of the city.

July 20, 2020, Clayton Development applies for Secondary Planning of Sandy Lake lands. (Note: We do not have access to this document.)

Throughout the summer and fall SL-SRRPC continues to seek facts to inform our position re: possibly merging some development with watershed and corridor protection. However, the overarching barrier to a decision rests in our request to have the city do an independent scientific study to determine the park boundary needed to protect the park assets and the corridors of the HGPN, and to prevent further flooding on the Sackville River flood plain. Efforts increase to achieve that.

August 6, 2020, Claytons reps Hanusiak and Neatt meet with W Regan and K Robinson of SL-SRRPC. Their map is more refined than in June but again we were not able to have copies. We learned they had applied for Secondary Planning "a couple weeks ago" and now it is in the city's hands as to when the public may see the submission. Most points were the same as in June's meeting except the Sandy Lake area is now called Subarea 13 of Bedford West, it is clear that a traffic circle is in the map with an arrow indicating access into the "we have no plans to ever develop" grey area, and they divulged that the price they propose to sell the grey area (backlands) to the city for park land is post-development value of \$140K per acre. Given that the city has not been willing to date to entertain seeking a trade, which is usually a much less expensive option, it seems to us unlikely that the city will want to pay such a price. Until the city can determine with an independent scientific study exactly what park boundary is needed to protect the park assets, and the corridors, we must continue to work to protect all 1800 acres.

September, In April 2020, with assistance from MP Geoff Regan it is determined that deeds were not recorded that show CMHC had transferred Marsh Lake to the Province and then to Municipal Affairs and Housing in the '90s. By September the Minister of MA &H had a staff person are working on divesting the department of Marsh Lake and "putting it in the right place". Our group put parties in city hall and the Department in touch with each other and expressed that we see no central role for our group at this point, but we hope to be celebrating with all levels of government some time soon.

October 7, 2020, Steering Team meets with the city staff P. Duncan. Concerns over talk of housing deficit are thought to be largely to the pandemic and should straighten out afterward. We learn that only \$800K were spent of the funds allotted in the Armco deal for the upgrade to the wastewater pipes through Bedford West (to facilitate later development of Sandy Lake lands). He confirms that no biologists were involved in the 2006 decision to carry Sandy Lake into the RP as potential housing. We continue to search for confirmation of where the pipe ends currently.

October, 2020. Municipal Election. SL-SRRPC meets with several candidates and follows up with elected candidates. Councillor Outhit remains Bedford councillor by acclamation, but continues his silence toward the community group. Councillors finally recognize that three other area councillors have districts that contain proposed park land, land owned by developers, or are next door. Others are beginning to see this as a regional park of interest to all, as we have said all along.

November 6, 2020, Clayton's Neatt tells Walter R by phone that our request to meet is denied until we stop calling for protection of 1800 acres, and instead promote both development and park. (Until proper ecological boundary studies are done, we have to continue to request the full 1800 acres based on the planning study we commissioned and on the biological findings of scientists to date.)

November 6, 2020, letter received from Mr. Mayor on behalf of himself and Councillor Outhit in response to our 5+ letters to the mayor since September 2019 that have had no replies, and to our repeated requests of late asking for replies to our questions in those letters. The letter instructs us to ask any questions of Councillor Outhit. Apparently, Mr. Mayor is unaware that CO has chosen not to be our councillor since February 14<sup>th</sup>. We have been doing our best to work with other councillors and staff, and that is the reason for so many letters to Mayor and staff since February as we try to work without a councillor. None of our questions are answered in the letter.

Over the months we have emailed and sent several letters to Director Denty, Nalini Nadoo and others as well.

Nov 10, 2020, Nalini Naidoo replies by sending a copy of the Mayor's letter attached as a reply and sees no need to meet with us.

Nov 18, 2020, we receive a reply from Director Denty, "we are following the Regional Plan process" and they are reviewing the housing need. No mention of our request for the study to determine necessary park boundary to protect assets. Included is the city's account of BMBCL history, but with no guidance given for why this may be relevant to Sandy Lake-Sackville River.

November 22, 2020, the coalition is now 28 groups plus several unofficial partnering groups. A slow but constant letter campaign has gone on all summer and fall whereby each of the coalition groups sends its own letter in support of the April 24 RP+10 Regional Plan submission. These have been going to all councillors, Mayor, and key RP and HGPN staff.

November 25, 2020, Wildlife Corridor Design Charrette, under the auspices of the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, SL-SRRP Coalition takes part with approximately 30 people including local scientists, provincial government experts, Nova Scotia Nature Trust, CPAWS and wilderness protection leaders to undertake a wildlife corridor design charrette to build on the wildlife corridor work found in the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN). This takes advantage

of the incredible depth of knowledge of local groups and professionals engaged in wildlife protection work. The objective is to identify a continuous wildlife corridor option from the Chebucto Peninsula to the mainland area starting at the Herring Cove/Purcells Cove Backlands through the Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust lands, across Hwy 103 through the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park and then into the mainland through the Ingram River Conservation Area and the Sackville River - Sandy Lake regions.

December 3, 2020, Dr. Patriquin's informative video talk to Bedford Lions about How Lakes Work: Sandy Lake- Sackville River: [www.cutt.ly/ShAkAGM](http://www.cutt.ly/ShAkAGM)

## 2021

January 13, 2021, NS Environmental Network annual meeting with Minister of Environment Wilson. K Robinson represents SLCA and requests assistance to see Marsh Lake transferred from the province to the park, to seek possible options to save Sandy Lake with provincial land trade, and add Lewis Lake to the Provincial 13% wilderness protection program. He offers to get back to her soon. (That conversation happens, but nothing concrete comes of it regarding Sandy Lake)

February 2, 2021, Lewis Lake is announced in 13% program and public process begins.

Feb 4 2021, K Robinson and K McKendry present to the city's Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC). Request and give rationale for the city to conduct an independent ecology/science-based study(s) to determine the actual park boundary needed to protect the park's assets. Also to determine wildlife corridors through SL-SR to Chebucto Peninsula as outlined in HGNP. The talk starts at 5 minutes 30 seconds and ends at 33 minutes on this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We-HFvGiPoY&feature=youtu.be> February 10, 2021, Coalition Steering Committee and Community Association of Uplands Park meet to combine information on Upland Park Treatment Facility and possible affects on Sandy Lake. (Sources of info include AECOM report 2014, historical studies, & Dr. Patriquin's ongoing water testing.)

February 21, 2021, Steering Team meets with K Green's Regional Plan team including E. Lucic, online. We point out there is no park plan, no park boundary study, the 160-acre acquisition conceptual map of 2015 was not designed to be a park boundary plan and should not be treated as such, wildlife corridors need study and protection.... Staff replied that a boundary study could be done using existing studies (Dr Patriquin's for example) and we could possibly be part of the Terms of Reference drafting. They commit to discussing this with the Parks department.

March 1, 2021, Walter Regan becomes co-chair of the Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition after Dr. Patriquin steps away for personal reasons. Dr. P. will continue his scientific evaluations of the area. SLCA volunteers conduct monthly and annual water sampling of Sandy Lake and tributaries under Dr. P.s guidance.

March 2021, (see Nov 2020) Nova Scotia Crown Share and Legacy Trust Wildlife Corridor Charette Report <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/WildlifeCorridorCharretteReport.pdf> is released as a more in-depth exercise by government, university, and local experts in the areas between Timberlea, Five Bridges, Ingram River, Sackville River/Sandy Lake, Blue Mt Birch Cove Lakes, Purcells Cove Backlands and the Chebucto Peninsula. The exercise was to contribute greater depth of knowledge to the wildlife corridor work done in the Halifax Green Network Plan. (We continue to ask that it be attached to the Halifax Green Network Plan, which is still awaiting implementation.)

March 17, 2021, <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/local/a-guide-to-the-major-developments-that-will-transform-halifax-regional-municipality-564178/>

March 25, 2021, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia make an early announcement that Marsh Lake is a new Treasured Wetland in Nova Scotia. Marsh Lake, in the Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park, is the latest

TREASURED WETLAND designated by Ducks Unlimited Canada and the NS Dept. of Lands and Forestry and NS Environment and Climate Change. <https://www.facebook.com/twnovascotia/> This area is known for its ecological richness, as well as providing community education and recreation. The wetland around the lake is a healthy ecosystem with the rich flora and fauna of an extensive wetland, including waterfowl, barred owls, mink, fox, deer, otters, loons, osprey and many reptiles and amphibians, including 3 different species of turtles! Atlantic Salmon have returned to the lake thanks to the 30+ years of work by the Sackville Rivers Association. The area has old growth Acadian Forest stands with trees 200 years old. Old growth forests are rare in Nova Scotia, and are home to species that do not live in younger forests. Ducks Unlimited Canada in Atlantic Canada works to protect and restore this region's wetlands. These wetlands not only provide important habitat, but also filter our drinking and recreational water and help offset flooding and droughts, benefiting us all.

March 30, 2021, road-worthy jeeps were photographed in Sandy Lake Park in the evening. We learned they circumvent the NS Power gate on the 102. Trucks carrying OHVs do the same, and park out of sight behind the rise. There can be 50 to 100 vehicles parked and their OHVs unseen and illegally using the park at any given time.

April 27, 2021, Coalition Steering Team meets via Zoom with Mayor Savage, S. McKinley, and Councillors Blackburn and Outhit. The purpose of the meeting is to request that Councillor B serve as the liaison with Council instead of Councillor O, as he “washed his hands of our group” based on hearsay on February 14, 2020. We have effectively been without Council representation since then. After hearing from the councillors and our members, the Mayor allows the arrangement and begins immediately to discuss with Councillor Blackburn how to attain the needed boundary study.

May 20, 2021 the city releases the Themes and Directions Report as part of the Regional Plan review process. Our groups are concerned that despite strong statements about the importance of protecting environment, the Sandy Lake lands are still on track for housing development. <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/211214rc1519.pdf>

May 2021, Our HRM Alliance updates its Our Seven Solutions handbook and circulates it. This document was well respected by the city during the Halifax Green Network development process and since.

June 7, 2021, Halifax Water's Kenda sends us maps and information on the missing sewer pipe, however our question as to where the pipe end sits remains a mystery. (Many communications have taken place with Halifax Water and other city staff and councillors over time and the mystery remains) June 10, 2021, first on-line meeting of Sandy Lake area major stakeholders (“security committee”) to plan action to curb illegal activities in the park and neighbouring NSP and DND properties. (NS Power, Halifax Police, DND Rifle Range, SLCA, regrets city Parks.)

June 15, 2021, Steering Team attends on-line presentation and Q&A by K Green's Regional Plan team on the Themes and Directions Report.

June 21, 2021, the cottage lot is again for sale. \$100K this time.

June, 2021, Our HRM Alliance releases its response to the Themes and Directions report. Saying in part, “We strongly urge HRM to reconsider proposed actions concerning regional growth including moving forward with Secondary Planning for growth at Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes which should not occur until clear criteria for development are determined and ecological impacts of development have been understood. This is not the same as considering the environment at the neighbourhood-design level.”

June 29, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and the Province of Nova Scotia announce all four new Treasured Wetlands of Nova Scotia, including Marsh Lake. “Managed with the support of community partners, these sites have been recognized for their ecological, cultural, and societal importance. Today, citizens are encouraged

to explore and celebrate nature by visiting the following new Treasured Wetlands:

<https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2021/06/29/2255124/0/en/Ducks-Unlimited-Canada-and-the-Province-of-Nova-Scotia-announce-new-Treasured-Wetlands-of-Nova-Scotia.html>

June 29, 2021, Clayton applies to the city for Bedford West Subareas 1 and 12 to allow for high density build in the next part of the process. We are not provided a viewing or copies from either the developers or the city.

July 5, 2021, Ducks Unlimited Wetland Report was released. Reports and scores for WESP assessments completed at 6 sites in June – August 2020. Important area wetlands were identified, including Karen’s Brook, David’s Marsh and Walter’s Wetland. <https://sandylake.org/ducks-unlimited-wetland-assessment-report/>

July 16, 2021, Coalition submits second submission to the Regional Plan Review. The first was submitted on April 24, 2020. Both submissions are at: <https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>

July 18 or 19, 2021, about 25 road-worthy jeeps were photographed in Sandy Lake Park.

July 29 2021 media reports HRMs overall housing deficit at approximately 30,000 units...

July 29, 2021, on-site planning meeting Sandy Lake “security committee” viewed issues at 102 entrance, road, power plant, some to Smith’s road entrance, selected sign locations and text drafts. (NS power, DND, SLCA, Sackville Rivers Assoc, City Parks, Halifax Police)

August 3, 2021, Coalition Steering Team meets with K Greene’s Regional Plan staff for a second time. We request that the city delay decisions about proceeding with secondary planning west of Sandy Lake so that needed ecological and other studies can be done. (Boundary needed to preserve the park’s assets, wildlife corridor studies, floodplain studies and as Sandy Lake relates to Sackville River flooding)

August 17, 2021, Provincial election elects Tim Houston’s PC government. Redrawing of riding lines has put Sandy Lake/Sackville River regional Park, much of BMBCL, and the corridors between them in the new Bedford West riding. We begin communications with MLA Braedon Clark (Liberal).

August, 2021, the Wetlands and Water Officer at the Ecology Action Centre releases “Can a Lake Die? A Tale of Two Lakes”. The article explores seasonal lake mixing and general lake health by comparing Dartmouth’s Oathill Lake to Bedford’s Sandy Lake. [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)

September 7, 2021, David Barrett of Barrett Lumber, Beaverbank, confirms sale of 45 of his acres between Sandy Lake and Sackville River is sold to the city for the park. This is prime Acadian Forest and includes shorelines of sections of March Lake, Sandy Lake and the Sackville River. He expresses wanting to do some good for the community.

September 20, 2021, Federal election re-elects Liberal in another minority government. MP Geoff Regan (who has helped us a great deal) did not reoffer. Lena Metlege-Diab (Liberal) is the new MP. We reach out.

Sept 21, 2021, Sandy Lake Park “security committee” meets at Rifle Range. (DND, Halifax Police, RCMP, SLCA, City Parks, Halifax Water, NS Power) Scope of illegal activities in the park and adjacent properties is understood now, and the risk to the public entering the DND lands. Both have begun being addressed through this committee.

October 12, 2021, Sandy Lake Conservation Association Co-president and President of the NS Salmon Assoc., M. Crosby, passes away suddenly.

October 12, 2021, MP Darrell Samson goes for a guided walk at Sandy Lake, with accompanying discussions of Federal issues relating to the area (OECM program...)

October 13, 2021, City Councillor Sam Austin goes for a guided walk at Sandy Lake. He understands the issues and is open to our concerns.

Oct 20 2021, Nova Scotia's new PC government announces a regional transportation group and a **housing task force to "solve" the housing crisis**: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20211020001> Housing is under the jurisdiction of municipalities, and the municipalities were not consulted on this decision. The municipalities' processes seem painted as cumbersome and inept even, and that the province could do a better job. It causes quite a stir among municipalities and citizens who were working within the system. Our groups fear Sandy Lake's proposed development could be fast tracked by the province without the benefit of citizens' years of effort to have the municipality change the area's direction. Values have shifted toward environmental protection, and the Halifax Green Network Plan lists Sandy Lake as needing resolution for the two conflicting values: Regional Plan momentum toward using the area for housing vs. the decades-old recognition of the area's outstanding ecological value.

**Nov, 4, 2021, in an unrelated meeting with city engineers one of our Coalition Steering Team members asks the engineer if he knows where the upgraded Sandy Lake wastewater pipe ends, and learns \$800K was spent on upgrades to two pumphouses on or near Kearney Lake (we have the map) and upgrade in pipe size between them. So now we know the balance of the ~3Mil was not spent, and where the pipe ends – at a pump house at the top of Kearney Lake.**

November 5, 2021, Legislation creating the panel on housing announced:

[https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th\\_1st/3rd\\_read/b063.htm](https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/3rd_read/b063.htm)

Mandate letter of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: [https://novascotia.ca/exec\\_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-MAH-EMO-MR.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-MAH-EMO-MR.pdf)

November 9, 2021, Councillor Blackburn moves in Council that an independent biology-based study be done to determine the ecological boundary needed to make sound decisions to preserve the park assets. Three councillors try to second it. Councillor Outhit steps down momentarily as meeting chair in order to second the motion, and saying he had been planning to do this but was "scooped and that the scoop is very well done". He seconded it and asked Kelly Denty if there is any problem getting such a study done in 3 to 6 months since we need it fast. KD replied it would more likely take 2 years, but would look into it. Councillor Morse adds that in her previous work in the field and with the Nature Conservancy, it is possible to find well skilled independent consultants who are used to doing studies such as this, and that the winter timing is not so much an issue since so much work by reputable scientists has already been completed. She offers to help staff with this effort. The motion passes unanimously.

Over the next day, the Coalition Steering Team spreads the great news and gratitude to the Coalition and supporters who wrote letters and especially to Council and Councillor Blackburn in particular for the motion and for her assistance above the call of duty over these months.

Nov 25, 2021, PC Premier Tim Houston announces that former Liberal cabinet minister Geoff MacLellan will chair the newly created HRM Housing Panel, often referred to as the housing task force. Other members of the panel are:

- Kelly Denty, Executive Director of Planning and Development, HRM
- Peter Duncan, Director of Infrastructure Planning, HRM
- Stephen MacIsaac, CEO, Nova Scotia Lands
- Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

December 6, 2021, Coalition Steering Team meets with MLA Brad Johns (he has territory within a stone's throw of the proposed park boundary on both the city's 2015 in-camera map and on our planner's proposed map). We discuss mostly

the concerns over how the PC Housing Task Force could affect the park, our list of ideas which we sent to the PC Housing Task Force by mail, but also if he could help foster the Province's clean-up of Montague Mines proposed housing and nudge the transfer of Marsh Lake into the park. He is willing to look into these and also see what he can learn about our request for the Amendment to s.237 of the Halifax Charter (which he had met with us about last year)

December 7, 2021, DND (regarding the Bedford Rifle Range) releases a Public Service Announcement on several platforms and directly to local city councillors and local politicians. (See below, in the Sandy Lake Park "security committee" summary)

December 15, 2021, the city releases the What We Heard (WWH) Report as part of the public feedback process of the Themes and Directions Report of the Regional Plan Review process. It contains accounts of meetings with stakeholders, letters from the public, and applications from multiple developers or citizens with zoning or development requests. It contains Clayton Development's request (We knew it existed since July 2020 but have waited to see it) to annex Sandy Lake lands as part of the development of Subareas 1 and 12 of Bedford West. It requests permission to densify Subareas 1 and 12 of Bedford West and to amend the Regional Plan to annex the Sandy Lake Lands to proceed as part of Subareas 1 & 12 development, calling Sandy Lake lands Subarea 13.

The WWH report also contains other developer's requests including United Gulf's request to allow development of their 390 acres just above Clayton's properties west of Sandy Lake, directly beside park land. There are requests for several other properties contained in our proposed park boundary. Each will need our attention with regard to the future health of the park and its wildlife corridors.

Page 6 of the Clayton submission states, under the heading Open Space Contribution, *"You will note on the GFLUM, an area of land adjacent to Sandy Lake referred to as "Conservation" Lands. We are aware of a growing interest by community stakeholders to see most if not all of the lands within the Sandy Lake watershed preserved as conservation lands. We have inquired of the City as to its interest in acquiring our landholdings at Sandy Lake for park and open space purposes. We have also informally advanced land trades if the Municipality is so inclined. As of this writing, we are not aware of the Municipality's desire to purchase and/or trade for our landholdings."*

While we are aware of only some conversations with the city that are referred to, this is confirmation that the company had indeed been willing to trade its Sandy Lake holdings if, as they had told us on several occasions since June of 2018, if the city wanted to engage. We learned in the summer of 2021 that despite our two years of work to have this opportunity brought to the city, it was never discussed, even in-camera. City councillors confirmed that the councillor who had been entrusted by us with the task of having the city initiate trade discussions did not do so, for whatever reason. Our hope is that with this clear confirmation that the developers would have traded, possibilities may remain.

December 16, 2021, Coalition Steering Team meets on-line with provincial Lands & Forestry staff, P. Geddes and L. Hickman. It is in response to our letters to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the resulting invitation from the Minister of Lands and Forestry, about our list of suggestions the PC Housing Task Force could do to increase housing stock. Sandy Lake could suffer serious consequences if the PC Task Force forces quick decisions rather than the fact-finding and checks & balances the municipality uses.

December 17, 2021, Coalition Steering Team meets with MLA Steve Craig (he has territory within the proposed park boundary on both the city's 2015 in-camera map and on our planner's proposed map). We discuss mostly the concerns over how the PC Housing Task Force could affect the park, our list of ideas for the Task Force, but also if he could help foster the Province's clean-up of Montague Mines proposed housing and nudge the transfer of Marsh Lake into the park.

December 31, 2021 Summary of some ongoing actions in 2021:

1. The coalition has 29 member groups as of December 2021.

2. We combined efforts with BMBCL and Purcells Cove Backlands to meet with and write letters to government to have the Halifax Charter amended to have section .237 allow 5 years for acquisition after a zoning change for parks and schools and such, instead of the current 1-year allowance. One year does not allow time to budget and process. The planners need a better tool with 5 years. Our HRM Alliance has joined our efforts and it is ongoing.
3. One of the two small cottage lots near Sandy Lake Beach has changed hands again for ~\$80K. in the fall of 2021 it went on the market again for \$125K and later reduced to ~\$85. We have kept Councillor Blackburn informed and she continues to follow up with the city's Real Estate department in hopes of acquiring it, a sensitive in-holding that will affect the park's quality.
4. We continue at every opportunity to ask government to transfer Marsh Lake to the city (or at least to the Dept of Environment where it will be protected). It currently is owned by NS Municipal Affairs and Housing Dept.
5. We continue to encourage the Federal Government's OECM program to proceed at the DND Rifle Range to protect the wilderness for the future as part of the Federal government's OECM program (Other Effective Area-Based Measures). OECM designation contributes to the federal government's 17% protected areas target, but would have no effect on the range's current activities or ownership. CFB Shilo in Manitoba is such an OECM territory.
6. iNaturalist has active participation ongoing in this richly diverse park.  
<https://www.inaturalist.org/places/sandy-lake-bedford>
7. As a result of the deliberate killing of four nesting painted turtles in summer of 2020, and reports of road-worthy vehicle rallies within the sensitive park lands, the SLCA parks chair coordinated Sandy Lake-Sackville River area stakeholders (security committee) in 2021, to curb illegal activities such as use of motorized vehicles, hunting, lighting fires, illegal camps, tree cutting, and harm to wildlife. By-law P-600 covers this and other park-protective actions. This work is expected to continue. In 2021 the committee accomplished several joint actions:
  1. NS Power upgraded its gate on the 102 Highway to prevent illegal vehicle entrance.
  2. City Parks is installing more "No Motorized Vehicles" signs and other informative signs in various locations identified by the committee.
  3. Halifax Police and RCMP are actively enforcing the no parking and no motorized vehicles signs. City Police plan an education program and a Parks Patrol Program city-wide asap.
  4. Community members are encouraged to assist by reporting infractions, license plate #s, location, time, pictures.
  5. SLCA rep met with NS Jeep club rep and they are helping inform other OHV groups that riding in the park is illegal.
  6. The NS Department of Public Works augmented the work done by NS Power at their Highway 102 gate by adding "no parking" signs along that section of highway. This was because some had begun to park on the highway shoulder, something that is prohibited for safety reasons.
  7. Dept of Lands & Forestry and Environment produced a report on illegal access points into the park and are assisting with enforcement.
  8. It is expected that the steps already taken will combine with the next parts of the plan to further curb activities identified by the stakeholders, such as vehicle use and hazardous activities such as hunting, lighting fires, illegal camps within the park and on NS Power and DND lands.
  9. December 7, 2021, DND released a Public Service Announcement on several platforms. PSA also went from DND to local city councillors and politicians to be circulated to citizens to reduce the risks of folks entering the DND properties and prevent the accompanying damage that occurs to the park. The DND properties have an extensive shared border with the park, and also follows a section of Sackville's Old Sackville Road.

***Public Service Announcement***

***Members of the public reminded of restricted access to Bedford Rifle Range property***

*December 7, 2021 – Halifax, N.S. – Department of National Defence / Royal Canadian Navy The Bedford Rifle Range is an operational, outdoor Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) small arms range located within the Halifax Regional Municipality. The 250-hectare property provides a safe, controlled area in which CAF personnel and authorized law enforcement agencies can receive qualification or requalification training for safe use of small arms (weapons designed for individual use). This range does not conduct any experimental testing of new weapons or ammunition for the Department of National Defence (DND).*

*Members of the public are reminded that the entire Bedford Rifle Range property is a controlled access area for reasons of safety and security, meaning that no individual may enter without first obtaining permission from a designated authority at the range. Trespassing on this property by foot or via an off highway vehicle for any reason, whether it be for recreational purposes or otherwise, poses significant safety risks to the individual.*

*Active shooting using live ammunition is the most prominent risk to anyone accessing range property without permission, as safety arcs vary for different weapons and ammunitions.*

*Additionally, there are various species at risk which inhabit range property and the neighbouring Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park; by limiting range activity to that of authorized users only, we can minimize disturbances to these species and their natural habitats.*

*All Bedford Rifle Range activities are planned, conducted and managed in a safe and controlled manner in accordance with National Defence policies and standards. By avoiding unauthorized entry onto range property, community members can play their part to ensure our operations remain as safe as possible for our members and the greater community.*

10. DND has also increased the number of “No Trespassing” and “Danger” signs around the fence perimeter. The fence itself has had repairs and increased monitoring which are expected to continue.
11. Local city councillors and area politicians circulated the PSA to citizens.

Fall, 2021, Coalition learns through public records that the city may have purchased 48 Smith’s Road. The city continues to be secretive about lands around Sandy Lake. We can see survey tape on another property along the north lakeside, but have no way to find out if it is related to any of this. Groups express gratitude for acquisitions whenever appropriate.

## **2022**

### **January 6, 2022 HRM L. Perrin presents 3 tiers of potential HRM developments to Housing Task Force meeting**

January 25, 2022, Regional Council, Committee of the Whole. The city’s Kate Greene makes a ~45-minute presentation to Council about the What We Heard Report, the latest phase of the Regional Plan Review process. In the presentation she mentions that the Sandy Lake boundary study contract has been awarded, although no name is given. In general, at various points in the meeting, councillors indicate interest in a shift in vision in the Regional Plan. That while we need housing, a similar priority on the importance of natural assets could improve the quality of life as well as mitigate climate change. Greene indicates that the Sandy Lake boundary study is potentially a new way of taking decisions - perhaps starting to look at things “from the inside out rather than the outside in”.

Councillor Cuttell is closest in identifying the bigger issue, suggesting that she had expected to see more vision in the plan. Councillor Lovelace tackles the same problem in respect of development on the Hammonds Plains Rd. As she points out, without an overall vision HRM will simply be picking the winners and losers in the individual decisions to remove Schedule J restrictions. But she also comments that although Sandy Lake is not subject to Schedule J restrictions, Schedule J decisions affect Sandy Lake. She asks that the entire area be examined with a vision for the whole.

Councillor Morse points to the contradiction in the plan regarding its focus on increasing housing availability but she doesn't see a similar focus on how we protect the natural areas which attract people to Halifax. She points out that there need to be more resources assigned to the HGPN or the opportunity to incorporate natural assets and buffers that would also help climate change. Greene indicates a need for more staff.

Councillor Kent moves that a 4000+ acre development be accelerated in Eastern Passage. It already has bussing and servicing. Motion passes unanimously. Councillor Hendsbee expresses interest in development in Musquodoboit Harbour and Porter’s Lake although services are not readily available there. Councillor Mason mentions the

development at Penhorn Mall plus the 15 buildings coming at the West End Mall. There are 3000 units now ready for permits. How many will there be by Dec 2022?

Councillor Outhit asks for a briefing note regarding the Sandy Lake boundary study which would give more information on its scope and timing as well as how the changes on the Hammonds Plains Rd and Sandy Lake Park expansion are linked. Note that briefing notes are between the councillor who asked for it and staff rather than a request for more information for all of Council.

January 27 2022, HRM's new staff, Emma Bocking (recently of Ducks Unlimited) and Emma Wattie (HRM's new WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM COORDINATOR) contact K. Robinson/SLCA to set up a meeting to discuss including Sandy Lake in the 75 lakes to be tested this summer in the city's new water quality monitoring program.

February 1 2022, meeting on changes needed to the Halifax Charter, hosted by Alliance, with invited former city councillor and provincial legislator, former city lawyers to identify important changes needed and elevate action for this Regional Plan review period. A major problem identified is that wording in city documents re environmental issues is "must consider" rather than "shall" or "will", causing development to almost always win over environmental concerns. Changing section 9.2 in Bedford Land Use By-law (8.2 Purcell's Cove, 10.2 in others, but all wording is the same) is essential to those interested in seeing environment on a par with development.

February 9 2022, HRM's Emma Wattie hosts organizational meeting with communities taking part in the new water monitoring program, Lakewatchers. It is a cooperative program between the city and local volunteers. Lots of enthusiasm! About 72 lakes. Sandy Lake is included.

Feb 28 2022, Coalition Steering Team (ST) meets with Provincial Housing Task Force's (TF) Peter Duncan, Vicki Elliott-Lopez and Jeff Garber. Their stated mandate is to look at larger projects and "focus on projects that can be expedited", saying they don't interfere with the Regional Plan or HGPN & will not usurp HRM's processes. ST asks if Sandy Lake is on their list and Ms. Lopez said that is privileged information. Mr. Duncan says Sandy Lake is on the list. Also that there are many studies needed before it can proceed if at all. That the task force will be true to the HGPN and RP. ST asked about trading to protect SL. Ms. Lopez says she **knows nothing about trades and that the TF role is to expedite development**. However, that the TF could make Charter changes happen. Will send our provided list of suggestions to improve housing starts to the TF.

March 3, 2022, NS Environment Network groups annual meeting (online this time) with Minister of Environment: K Robinson requests assistance in preserving the ecological values at Sandy Lake as an expanded park, and also assistance to move Marsh Lake into the park from the ownership of the Dept of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr Halman says it is not "in his lane".

March 7 2022, Coalition is contacted to take part in stakeholder meeting with McCallum re Boundary Study. The Coalition Steering Team (ST) had been told we would be contacted for our materials but this has never happened. ST rep Robinson works to have ST materials included now, to have the meeting virtual so the scientists with Covid concerns can attend, and to make the focus of the meeting primarily an opportunity for the scientists with on-the-ground experience at SL to discuss with McCallum scientists who are doing a mainly desktop report.

March 15, 2022, phone meeting between K Robinson and Leah Perrin city planner: Sandy Lake has been "decoupled" from the Regional Plan review. It now has "its own planning cycle" and is "rolling into phase 5". Perrin: "Purcells Cove Backlands is not available for housing so where are people going to live?"

March 25 2022: Provincial government designates nine areas in Halifax Regional Municipality as "special planning areas" for developments to help address the housing shortage. The special planning areas are: former Penhorn Mall lands, 950 units; Southdale/Mount Hope, 1,200 units; Bedford West 10, 1,300 units; Bedford West 1 and 12, 2,500 units; Port Wallace, up to 4,900 units; Indigo Shores, 150 building lots; Morris Lake expansion, 3,100 units; Dartmouth Crossing, 2,500 units; and Sandy Lake, 6,000 units (to be "shovel ready spring 2024"). The minister assumes authority for development approvals in those 9 areas.

The Province also provides \$2.3 million in funding for HRM to commission Background Studies on 4 of the Special Planning Areas, including Sandy Lake. <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20220325005>

Maps of SPAs: <https://novascotia.ca/housing-panel/docs/Maps-of-special-planning-areas.pdf>

Six of the 9 SPAs were Clayton Developments projects – and included all of the Clayton projects in the city's 3-tiered list of 23 projects the city was in the process of reviewing.

March 25, 2022, The Halifax Examiner article on the Provincial Task Force:

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/province-moves-to-speed-up-development-approvals-for-22600-housing-units-in-halifax-but-none-of-them-are-guaranteed-affordable/>

Dr. Patriquin comments on the Examiner comment page: *“Re the 22,600 housing units/ 6000 of those are at Sandy Lake Bedford; those plus another 1200 or so in the Bedford West fall in the Sandy Lake watershed. This lake is already in a precarious condition and there can be little doubt that between added phosphorus, organics, salt and siltation, – add climate warming which exacerbates it all – the lake will be pushed over the edge, and it will see closures such as we had for Grand Lake this past summer because of algal blooms. Also it will no longer be hospitable to the salmon the Sackville Rivers Association has worked so hard to bring back to the Sackville River. Further, the destruction of some key wetlands and riparian areas would likely increase flooding in the Sackville River Floodplain – oddly, the Sandy Lake watershed was not included in the comprehensive modelling conducted of the Sackville River flood risk, apparently because it was assumed there would be no further significant development in the Sandy Lake watershed for at least 100 years. ‘Not to mention the wildlife corridors and habitats and carbon storage and sequestration that will be lost if the Sandy Lake development goes ahead on this scale. View <http://www.sandylakebedford.ca> for details. People want to come to Halifax because its a great place to live & play. Let’s keep it that way and build in the less environmentally sensitive places not right in the middle of the few natural treasures remaining within our urban landscape...”*

Note: in the February 28 2022 Coalition Steering Committee meeting with Task Force reps we were told clearly the province will not usurp the city's authority. Over the next months some city councillors speak out against this and some remain silent.

March 28 2022 <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-s-announces-22-million-for-373-new-affordable-housing-units-in-dartmouth-1.5838001> Clayton is to build affordable housing at Eisner's Cove in exchange for \$ \$22 million for 373 new affordable housing units

March 29 2022, The Sandy Lake-Sackville River Coalition groups launch a letter-writing campaign which sees well over 1300 letters and emails go to the MLAs, city, and Task Force over the next few weeks. Citizen writers report receiving 'tone-deaf' cut-out response that Sandy Lake is on track to be developed but more studies have to be done.

All receive this cut -&-paste response to citizen's letters from Task Force (continues until Oct 2023):

*“Thank you for your email regarding the special planning area designation that accelerates development near Sandy Lake Park.*

*Halifax Regional Municipality is in the midst of a housing crisis. The existing housing shortfall in HRM is estimated to be in the range of 17,000 units.*

*Through the work of the HRM Housing Task Force, the province and city are working together to build more housing as quickly as possible.*

*The proposed residential development lands near Sandy Lake Park were first identified as a growth area in HRM when its regional plan was developed in 2006. The regional plan was reviewed in 2014, and the Sandy Lake area was once again identified as a future growth area. The lands near Sandy Lake Park that are slated for residential development have been owned by the developer since 2014.*

*Special planning areas must still undergo any required environmental studies or other permitting requirements.*

*Once again, thank you for your email about the proposed residential development near Sandy Lake Park. Please be advised that future comments about special planning areas should be made at <https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/regional-plan/special-planning-areas>.*

*Sincerely,*

*Geoff MacLellan*

*Chair, HRM Housing Task Force”*

(By June 2022, this response is ongoing. Many angry citizens reach out to Coalition - Some plan to respond to what they feel is an insulting letter; that no response would have been better than a form letter that essentially shows the task force does not respect citizen's options and has a single-minded focus.)

March 29 2022, Stakeholders online meeting to review draft McCallum report (Boundary Report). Present: 11 city staff, 3 McCallum staff, Clayton & United Gulf developer reps, 3 local city councillors, Dr Patriquin, Dr Beazley, SL Coalition reps.

Biologists' comments: Water quality is #1 issue. Where is it in this study? Road salts important to include. Big tree data is done but not yet posted on Versicolor website so not up to date in this study. Essential wildlife corridors 1 km minimum. Longer corridors should be wider. Look at regional context for corridors. Species at Risk data is poor. Needs systematic field study. 200 metres doesn't capture turtle nesting behaviour. Moose exclusion an error - Important species for this area and Chebucto Peninsula corridor. Hot spots are no-brainers but in fact there is little or none of this area that is not important to the overall connectivity. 50 metre buffer not adequate as riparian buffer, only for erosion. Salmon require 100 metre buffers. Put a protective area around the acid rock areas; acid rock is far from neutral. Right-of-ways being used now for hunting, poaching, illegal activities – this is an issue. "The whole area is a park, so go ahead and draw your boundary." Need to include entire area south of Hammonds Plains Rd; human boundaries not relevant to watershed that affects park unit. Include projected wetland areas and WESP studies. Include ecological heads of the streams. The Corridor Charrette report contains new important info additional to the HGPN corridors and should be included. Aquatic corridors missing from HGPN O2 report. Significant old growth and multi-age Acadian forests worth including for multiple reasons. Pull out the aquatic values and highest scoring land values and increase their value weights. HRM needs to identify their top values. Buffer needs to be all around the park, outside the park proper. Boundary needs to be determined by watershed not roads. It is a crisis if the lakes are not protected. What is the city's criteria for protecting water quality? Critical to do a flood plain study. This recognition of Sandy Lake's ecological value didn't start yesterday – scientists have known it for 50 years. The more people coming to Halifax, the more important it is to preserve the entire subwatershed.

Staff said this was important today to have scientists talk to scientists. Will incorporate today's input.

Coalition requests and receives a link to the 1986 Sandy Lake Master Plan which is listed as a resource by McCallum and we had previously been unaware of. (It has been added to this document now) No biologists are listed as being consulted. It is recreation focused, recommends removal of beach berm (The Sandy Lake community group of the time with biologists overturned this plan.) Overall, this old Master plan has very limited value – no recognition of the ecological values worthy of protection for multiple reasons. Rather, the Coalition continues to request that HRM create a Master Plan for parks city-wide. The current procedures are haphazard. A well thought out regional plan would help prevent situations such as currently at Sandy Lake. Better to choose what is to be protected before planning housing.

March 30 2022: Coalition Steering Team sends "gaps" list to Kate Greene and councillors as requested for follow-up actions with the McCallum boundary report.

April to June 2022, Door to door campaign begins to educate citizens about Sandy Lake's history & value, what the Province's Task Force is doing to develop it, what the Coalition is doing to protect it. Teams go door to door in Bedford & Hammonds Plains areas April through to June, handing out flyers, educating residents and asking for support. Some volunteers focused on park users and dog walkers in the park itself.

April 2, 2022: Ecology Action Centre's Ray Plourde writes a Herald Op-ed regarding provincial take-over of development in their newly identified 9 special planning areas: *"Let's just call a spade a spade. ...the big metro developers made a spectacular end-run around Halifax Regional Municipality's government, effectively rendering council and the various municipal planning strategies in place or in development, irrelevant. ...At the urging of the big developers, the provincial government has taken planning and decision-making authority out of the hands of our duly elected and accountable municipal representatives and placed it into the hands of a small group of insiders, which is neither. ...the biggest suburban chunks targeted for sprawl developments, which would consume huge tracts of nature (called "greenfield" development), are more problematic and require more study and consideration within the municipal planning framework. Areas like Sandy Lake, Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and the Eisner's Cove Wetland are squarely in the crosshairs. For citizens who've participated in open and transparent municipal planning processes in the belief they were helping to define the shape and character of their city, the message is clear: Developers will decide the shape of this city,*

*so you might as well just stay home and shut up. The message to HRM councillors is even more blunt: Give us what we want, when we want it or we will go over your heads and get it anyway. Councillors, you have been dismissed."*

April 12 2022: Planifax video released "What's So Special About Sandy Lake?"

[https://www.google.com/search?q=Planifax+videos+Sandy+Lake&rlz=1C1CHBD\\_enCA879CA879&oq=Planifax+videos+Sandy+Lake&aqs=chrome..69i57.6005j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:9e4f70ba,vid:UcW0fuNFPh0](https://www.google.com/search?q=Planifax+videos+Sandy+Lake&rlz=1C1CHBD_enCA879CA879&oq=Planifax+videos+Sandy+Lake&aqs=chrome..69i57.6005j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:9e4f70ba,vid:UcW0fuNFPh0)

April 22, 2022, Councillor Outhit is interviewed about Sandy Lake by Todd Veinotte radio show: *"What I have been trying to do with the developers, with the province, with HRM staff, with my colleagues, is to ensure that this development (at Sandy Lake) comes with significant improvements to the Hammonds Plains Road which would be 50% funded by the developer, and there would be significant expansion to the park in exchange for some density at no cost to the taxpayer. ...when I say upgrading, that could be lanes, that could be a roundabout at Bluewater, the raising up of Bluewater for flooding, bike lanes, sidewalks, the kind of things we saw between the interchange and Gary Martin would now go further up the road. That has to be done, and it has to be at least 50% funded by the developer. That remains my objective. Now I won't get a chance to vote on it per se, but behind the scenes that's exactly what I am still advocating for with staff, with the developer and with staff on the Task Force."* (See the events leading up to February 14 2020)

- This amounts to trading a viable ecological gem, a Regional Park, for 50% of the cost of improving a road that needs an upgrade anyway.

April 22, 2022, The Province passed Bill 137 hoping to streamline the housing approval process, suspending their referral to planning advisory committees for three years. These committees are composed of councillors and residents, and they review development proposals and make recommendations to Halifax regional council and the community councils

#### **May 2022, Clayton applies for early tree removal at Eisner's Cove**

May 2, 2022, Task Force minutes released with FOIPOP which was requested January 11 2022: City staff had presented 3 tiers of housing projects the city was examining. Sandy Lake is a Tier 2 development, yet was chosen to be fast tracked instead of other Tier 1 areas: *"The Sandy Lake Lands are one of the future serviced communities identified in the 2014 Regional Plan. The property owners have requested to begin the secondary planning process, so that serviced development can be achieved within the life of the Regional Plan as envisioned. The Regional Plan review will recommend a process for the development of these lands.*

**KEY CHALLENGES:** *There is significant public interest in protecting the environmental values of these lands and Sandy Lake itself. Regional Council has directed staff to retain an independent consultant for the purpose of identifying an optimal boundary for an expanded Sandy Lake Regional Park based on environmental information about the area".*

May 10 2022: DND releases second PSA about no access to DND lands (they already upgraded security and added danger signs all around perimeter fence, removed 11 deer blinds last fall and do regular boundary security checks. The PSA references support of similar security for the park's wildlife and habitats. See earlier PSA of Dec 7 2021.)

June 1 2022: Sandy Lake Security Committee meeting: Large number of bats nesting behind rifle range target area, likely also in Sandy Lake Park and is good news their numbers are increasing again. City Parks post more No Motorized Vehicles signs for Halifax Police to enforce in the park. Halifax Water and NS Power maintaining their roads and entrances to reduce ingress by unauthorized vehicles. Little or no damage to wildlife and habitats reported so far this year.

June 2, Sandy Lake Conservation Association meeting launches participation in the Love Your Lake national program offered by the Canadian Wildlife Federation and Watersheds Canada.

June 13 2022: 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.

June 15, 2022: 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 reports speaks to Clayton immediately after learning this news today, and reports that Clayton supports expansion of the park. He reports that he is convinced Shaw bought them to donate to the park. He reports asking them to make a public statement of their intentions, but is unsure if they will. (To date, August 9 2022, they have said nothing. The coalition steering committee is disheartened largely because the lands were apparently very close to becoming city park lands and also because this complication could have been avoided if the city hadn't insisted we not get involved in assisting the city with acquisitions. One of our members worked professionally with the Nature Trust for 11 years negotiating acquisitions and is more than capable of working cooperatively and effectively.)

June 15 2022, HRM Regional Plan review's Themes & Directions phase report is released. Sandy Lake is still listed as headed for development. Note: The Themes & Directions report defines "wilderness park".

June 17, 2022, guided walk at SL with local Liberal MLA Braedon Clarke.

June 28, 2022: Algae bloom reported in Sandy Lake – Test came back negative for toxic strains, but SL is now on the watch list of Dept of Env and city.

June 30, 2022. Task Force's first 2 housing approvals: Housing Minister John Lohr orders 2 development agreements approved in HRM: Clayton Developments' Penhorn Mall (905 units, which had already been under way under City Council's jurisdiction) and Armco's Indigo Shores (105 lots), reversing City Council's decision not to approve the Indigo Shores development due to schools and other services not being available.

July 2 2022, Richmond Campbell's Saltwire Op-Ed asks NS Premier Houston to act to preserve Sandy Lake. One suggestion is to offer the developers suitable trade.

July 8, 2022, McCallum's "boundary study" is released. It is named **Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment**. It suggested, but did not specify, a boundary because authors expressed preference to have recreational information to do that. Citizen groups and some councillors had understood that the ecological factors influencing a protective park boundary was the purpose of the study, not recreation. However, it was an excellent report that provided layers of the important ecological information and recommendations that could provide a boundary selection based on ecology. See the "heat map", "buffers map", old growth forest map and corridors in particular.

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/220712rc15110.pdf>

Our comments:

- Overall, we are encouraged by the quality and content of the report.
- The hot spots map is very good outlining 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.
- 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.
- This needs clarification: The report erroneously states that the "high value ecological components are largely found in areas of existing parkland and other adjacent lands" (p. 4 of the staff report, half way down) However, the highest scoring areas in McCallum's analysis (shown in bright yellow) are actually 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 stated 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). So, it's not just the highest scoring areas that are worthy of protection.

- We note the need for an amendment to strengthen the intent by adding "will be 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."

July 11 2022, K Robinson's Herald Letter to Ed re Richmond's July 2 2022 Op-Ed tells the public about previous developer offers to trade, and that the local councillor is working instead to allow high density development along Hammonds Plains Road in exchange for some park land expansion plus 50% of the cost of upgrading Hammonds Plains Rd. (Essentially trading the viability of a valued park for 50% of a road upgrade.)

July 12, 2022: Walk with NS Environment Minister Halman, his assistant and a D of Env Director. Coalition reps underlined the ecological values of the area, asked for assistance in preserving it, and also for his assistance in transferring Marsh Lake into the protection of his department from Municipal Affairs & Housing. We learn that the province is planning to make changes to the Halifax Charter.

July 12 2022, Council passes the final "boundary study" called Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment unanimously, after passing an amendment (3 against -Cleary, Mason & Mayor) that "Review and use the findings of the Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment in the background studies being undertaken for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area, including organizing the form and location of development to best protect:

- a. at least the suggested widths for important corridors,
- b. at least the suggested riparian and watercourse buffers, and
- c. the identified areas of predicted old or mature forest."

In her presentation, staff lead Kate Greene reports to Council that Clayton Developments called her before the meeting saying **if the boundary report buffer recommendations are adhered to Sandy Lake may not be developable.**

Link to Council minutes re: amendment to McCallum report re buffers and corridors. See pages 11-12:

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/220712rc-mins.pdf>

July 14, 2022, Clayton's driveway culvert is reinstalled (after 2013 removal when Armco owned it) and 2 machines are visible parked just inside the driveway. Culvert is reinstalled a few days later.

August 14, 15, 2022, protesters at Eisner's Cove Wetland, Dartmouth attempt to stop Clayton machinery from removing trees. Eisner's Cove Wetland is one of the 9 Special Planning Areas and is, arguably like SL, a valuable wetland that citizens believe should not be sacrificed for housing. The media covers a citizen chaining himself to a machine, climbing on a moving machine, and another being pulled to safety as machine moves forward. Clearing of trees temporarily stops. The citizens are asking for a "stop and swap", a trade, similar to the trades requested for Sandy Lake.

August 18, 2022, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, together with the Nova Scotia Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Timothy Halman, and the Nova Scotia Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, the Honourable Tory Rushton, mark Canada and Nova Scotia's shared commitment to nature conservation. the two governments agreed to work together to:

- advance negotiations on a funded Nature Agreement that will focus on a number of nature-related opportunities, including protecting more natural spaces in Nova Scotia and **increasing habitat protection** for species at risk and migratory birds, to be finalized by 2023;
- complete the pre-feasibility assessment and **work toward the designation of the proposed national urban park at Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes**, together with other key partners, including the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, and the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq.
- seek new opportunities for connecting key areas of protected and conserved lands, including by completing a **pilot project in Nova Scotia under Parks Canada's National Program for Ecological Corridors**, by 2025, in collaboration with partners.
- **develop a funding agreement to conserve old-growth forests and address the hemlock woolly adelgid.**

Under the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, Environment and Climate Change Canada has agreed to commit up to \$10 million, which will contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration, while also providing benefits for biodiversity and human wellbeing.

**September 6, 2022,** Signs are seen at one of the entrances to the Eisner Cove wetland, along Highway 111, where Defend Eisner Cove Wetland has set up camp to slow development. —

The Eisner Cove subdivision is going up in one of the special planning areas designated by Housing Minister John Lohr to “fast track” development in HRM. Concerned citizens protested outside the legislature because the new housing encroaches on a wetland.

Four people arrested after clash with police at Dartmouth development site

Protesters want to prevent a housing project from proceeding at Eisner Cove

**Sept 15 2022** Env Min Halman dismisses appeals to halt Eisner Cove destruction due to special species and habitat:

"After a thorough review and analysis of the appellants' claims and the A.J. LeGrow Holdings Ltd. application, the minister found no grounds for the appeals," noted the department in Friday's news release.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/eisner-cove-wetland-appeal-dismissed-1.6585497>

Sept 15, Ecology Action Centre Annual General Meeting gives awards to Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition and to Coalition Co-chair Karen Robinson.

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

October 1, 2022, The Canadian Wildlife Federation and Watersheds Canada oversee an initiative called Love Your Lake as an educational tool to help lakeside property owners understand how to protect their lake health.

The Love Your Lake Halifax team did a survey of Sandy Lake after sending letters to all property owners introducing them to the program, requesting input to a survey, and informing them what to expect should they see the team working in the lake, a lake science team examined the perimeter of the lake from the water. A guided walk occurred the same day and participants were invited to make video statements for publication with the report and on line. See

<https://www.facebook.com/sandylakebedford>

October 6, 2022, Letter sent to Sandy Lake area landowners announcing the RFP has been released Oct 6<sup>th</sup>) to hire companies to do the ‘Future Serviced Community Background Studies’ (pre-development studies) in the Sandy Lake Future Serviced Community. *“The background studies will review environmental and infrastructure constraints and opportunities, and provide recommendations about the potential development of the study area. Key study components include a land suitability assessment, watershed study, transportation study, and review of water and wastewater infrastructure.... Once the studies are underway, we will be reaching out to share additional information and discuss any plans, considerations or concerns you may have. Following the completion of the studies, the Municipality will review the information and determine if master neighbourhood planning should be initiated. If initiated, master neighbourhood planning will include broad public engagement opportunities.”*

(The RFP closing Date for applications is November 2<sup>nd</sup>. **K Fralic tells coalition that the studies are expected to take a year.**)

October 11, 2022, Council Amendments to Regional Plan to ensure Integrated Mobility Plan, Halifax Green Network Plan, HalifACT, and Halifax’s Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027 are included in development decisions:

The minutes of the Council meeting where the amendments were passed, October 11, 2023:

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/221011rc-mins.pdf>

Here is the wording of the 2 policies that were passed on that day that relate to wildlife corridors, wetlands, water courses and forests:

## 9.6.A PRIORITIES PLANS

Since the adoption of this Plan in 2014, Regional Council has approved several priority plans including the Integrated Mobility Plan, Halifax Green Network Plan, HalifACT, and Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027. The second review of this Plan began in 2020 and is expected to be readopted by Regional Council in 2023. The review will revise the policies of this Plan to ensure they are consistent with the priorities plans as approved. In the interim, this Plan supports the priorities plans which are actively used by staff to guide ongoing work.

G-14A In considering development agreements or amendments to development agreements, or any proposed amendments to the Regional Plan, secondary planning strategies, or land use by-laws, in addition to the policies of this Plan, HRM shall consider the objectives, policies and actions of the priorities plans approved by Regional Council since 2014, including:

- (a) The Integrated Mobility Plan;
- (b) Halifax Green Network Plan;
- (c) HalifACT;
- (d) Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027; and
- (e) any other priority plan approved by Regional Council while this policy is in effect.

G-9A Given the strategic importance of regional objectives in mitigating climate change and protecting the future health of the municipality, new secondary planning strategies or amendments to existing secondary planning strategies, shall organize land use or management of land in a manner, including the scale, location, density and form of development, so that:

- (a) the protection of environmental or cultural features of significance on the lands is considered, including wildlife corridors, the urban forest, wet areas, wetlands and watercourses;...

(See September 2023 for the RP pop-up sessions to seek input and answer questions about the draft RP **a planner's response to a question as to why Council's motions of October 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 amendments to the Regional Plan that include wildlife corridor preservation do not seem to be showing up in the Subareas 12 & 1 plan.**)

Oct. 14, 2022, K Robinson discussion with K Fralic of city planning. *"decisions on Special Planning Areas are being made by the Minister not Council, the Public Hearing component of the process will not be included for those decisions. As mentioned, when we spoke, the direction we have been given to date is to continue to undertake the background studies and secondary planning, if initiated, following our standard processes. These processes include public engagement activities above and beyond the Public Hearing. As a result, we anticipate that there will still be opportunities for public engagement through our work."*

*Coalition begins asking HRM and the Province that once the pre-development studies are complete a comprehensive public process take place before Council/the province makes a decision/recommendation on whether to proceed or not. That is, after the studies are complete and before either the city or province make a decision.*

**October 19 2022**, just days before Council had ordered the Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment, the PC government had released an untendered report written by a company the Premier had once worked for, "to identify barriers to efficient and effective housing development in HRM and provide advice to address the key barriers," according to the preface of the review.

Deloitte Report: <https://novascotia.ca/housing-panel/docs/housing-development-barrier-review.pdf>

Notably, the study only consulted developers, contractors and the like. It did not consult the public, the professional public, city, or academics.

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/government/city-hall/provincial-review-calls-for-less-public-consultation-on-halifax-housing-development/>

October 21, 2022, Friday. Three blows:

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/government/city-hall/provincial-review-calls-for-less-public-consultation-on-halifax-housing-development/>

1. October 19, 2022, **Deloitte Report released:** <https://novascotia.ca/housing-panel/docs/housing-development-barrier-review.pdf> The Deloitte Report was commissioned by the provincial government's housing task force task force, hired the consulting firm "to identify barriers to efficient and effective housing development in HRM and provide advice to address the key barriers," according to the preface of the review.

It recommends Halifax reduce public consultation around development, fast-track projects for "trusted" developers, and make a suite of other changes to speed up development applications. recommends the provincial government's Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality, also known as the housing task force, create its own parallel planning department to address the recommendations. There are 15 in total.

This is in line with the task force's work on so-called special planning areas in HRM, where the minister approves developments based on a recommendation from the task force with no public hearing.

Deloitte recommended, should: "Limit public meetings to those required by legislation;" "Exempt from public consultation all projects ten units or less that conform to the Regional Plan;" "Reduce the number of times applications/projects are reviewed by an advisory board or combine reviews where possible;" and "Consider exempting from public input if a development has a minimum (e.g. 30%) affordable housing component."

developing what Deloitte called the "Establish Trusted Partner Program," which would include "enhanced fast-lane service" for developers with a "track record of high-quality submissions."

Notably the study only consulted developers, contractors and the like. They did not consult the public, the professional public, city, or academics.

2. Oct 21 2022 **Bill 225** <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20221021001> amends the Regional Municipality Charter and gives the Minister of Housing ability to override municipal bylaws within the previous 6 months if they impact housing development. City and the Councillors are very upset about this override of authority. HRM's statement in response: <https://www.halifax.ca/home/news/statement-regarding-announcement-government-nova-scotia-proposed-amendments-halifax>
3. **Supreme Court Ruling on the Annapolis v. HRM case** - The decision is a (sort of) call to action by 5 Judges who sided with Annapolis that HRM's Regional Plan is not legally strong enough to reject Annapolis Group's appeal

Oct. 26, 2022. Lawyer David Donnelly presents to Our HRM Alliance. Recommends HRM make defacto expropriation illegal as has been done in BC and Ontario. It would protect city from BMBCL court case and be important for all of Canada not to set a precedent allowing developers to guarantee high income from land speculation. Also, implement the HGNP. Use 2014 Stantec Report. Don't develop in environmentally rich areas. Federal Attorney General could write to NS, Feds could fund study on urban sprawl and Climate Change re Urban areas. Advice re Annapolis & BMBCL - "do a land swap. Halifax has a progressive city council here now: make it a world leader. Get the green belt. Be the best".

November 1 2022, Coalition meeting with staff to follow up Boundary Study. Harvey, Sivak and Fralic present. K Greene missing.

KF: McCallum didn't determine a park boundary because they didn't have information on recreation and other park issues. (!)

KR: ***It isn't a park boundary that we requested. It is the ecological boundary that is needed to protect the existing park's assets.***

In response to the question, **staff couldn't think of a case where pre-development studies led to an area not being developed.**

KF: "A Goal of studies is to determine if & where development would be appropriate."

**Re: Council's motion to staff re buffers & corridors B Sivak interpreted: It is "to be considered. It is not direction. Wait to see how it is incorporated in final reports."**

Also, that ***"removing wastewater from some of these areas at SL may not be feasible. If costs too high other projects have not moved forward."***

Harvey, *“If you believe the ecological features on certain lands should not be developed because they will have an impact on the park, you could not say that is not a “no development area”. You could influence a form of development but you can not categorically say, unless it is a watercourse setback, to a property owner they can’t develop at all. It may influence form of development, but McCallum study can’t identify an area in which there will be no development. Not possible. It could identify areas for potential acquisition. Or cause concentrations of development in some areas. That is what the municipal tools we have are.”*

McKendry: Subarea 12 falls out of scope of BMBCL and SL. Identified in Charrette as both water corridor, land corridor and a pinch point. Time is running out. At Purcells Cove in 2018 multiple important corridors now don’t exist because developments at those sites did not consider the HGPN. That spot is all that is left here.

Sivak’s response: *“A separate project is already working on Subarea 12. We are aware. It will be a challenge to preserve as wide an area needed & SL part of the study will be looking around it for connections around it.”*

KR: *“In encouraging the use of the ecological boundary study we want to impress on you that our concerns are for the long-term health of this ecosystem its buffers, wetlands, species, habitats, how it impacts biodiversity & climate change. From what we’ve heard today, you do not yet have the pieces in place that will allow Sandy Lake and the Park to continue as healthy, including supporting the salmon in the Sackville River. Note that when the 2013 300 acre clear-cut happened buffers and rules were essentially followed, yet, even now the mouth of the main tributary has a huge fan of rotting wood chips – from 10 years ago. That underlines that whatever is done in these precious lands in this watershed will impact the park, the lake, the rivers, its ability to mitigate other stresses like Climate Change. The mess is still there in the lake 10 years later even with a healthy snapping turtle population. When we/you check this or that box in the process, we need to look a lot closer at possible outcomes and risks. Take extra precautions and not be satisfied with the usual, which tends to be behind the times.”*

(Overall, the meeting was discouraging. The 3 staff were mostly telling us why protection can’t happen, including disregarding the motion from Council that instructs them to do differently in protecting buffers, corridors and old growth forest at Sandy Lake. The boundary Study glass seen as half empty instead of half full.)

November 8, 2022. Two important events:

- Housing Minister John Lohr speaks before City Council. Admits 2 things caused him to create Housing Task Force: a report that Halifax is 20<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Canadian cities re: speed of approving developments and because of what developers were telling him. Councillors pushed back with facts, including Bill 225 is anti-democratic. <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/government/city-hall/john-lohr-hears-halifax-council-concerns-on-plan-to-nullify-city-bylaws/>
- That night, despite multiple opposing presentations to the Law amendments Committee, the Province passed Bill 225, that gives the Province the right to nullify any bylaw passed by the city in the previous 6 months, ongoing. Starting with changing the allowable times for construction noise.

November 6, 2022 Geoff MacLellan leaves as chair of task force

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- Housing Minister John Lohr speaks before City Council. Admits 2 things caused him to create Housing Task Force: a report that Halifax is 20<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Canadian cities re: speed of approving developments and **because of what developers were telling him**. Councillors pushed back with facts, including Bill 225 is anti-democratic. <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/government/city-hall/john-lohr-hears-halifax-council-concerns-on-plan-to-nullify-city-bylaws/>
- That night, despite multiple opposing presentations to the Law Amendments Committee, the Province passed Bill 225, that gives the Province the right to nullify any bylaw passed by the city in the previous 6 months, ongoing. Starting with changing the allowable times for construction noise.

**Background:** Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister John Lohr introduced Bill 225 on Oct. 21 2022. As Jennifer Henderson reported for the Halifax Examiner, the bill amends the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter to give Lohr the power to “nullify” municipal bylaws passed in the last six months if they “impact housing or development.”

Lohr said the purpose of the bill is to strike down an amendment to the municipality’s noise bylaw that Halifax regional council passed in August. Council voted 12-5 to change the hours from 7am and 9:30pm Monday to Friday to 7am to 8pm.

But as MLAs on the provincial Law Amendments Committee heard during their meeting on Monday, the bill reaches further than the noise bylaw.

“Bill 225 is not about construction and blasting hours,” Mayor Mike Savage told the committee.

“It is about seizing new ministerial powers while striking a political pen through the Charter’s duty to consult the municipality it was designed to help govern.”

Savage, who voted against the noise bylaw amendments, said the bill has the potential to put the province in charge of the city.

November 21, 2022. Robinson and McKendry meet with Sobey’s/Crombie’s Ian MacDonald re: Sandy Lake Park and the 50 acres Sobey’s owns by Jack Lake. Mr. M. will speak to his superiors.

December 7, 2022. Walter Regan awarded Queens Platinum Jubilee Medal in a postponed ceremony.

January 1, 2023, Cathie O’Toole takes over as the City’s new CAO, replacing Jacques Dube. O’Toole has a long and successful work history with HRM as top accountant and then director of Halifax Water for ~10 years.

Ducks Unlimited Marsh Lake video 2022: <https://www.facebook.com/AisforAdventure/videos/150950111235044/>

## **2023**

January 19, 2023, Coalition Steering Team meets with new Halifax Green Network Plan staff lead, Matt Conlin. He is working on corridors, using Charrette. HGNP is a priority plan. Council wants it. Report soon to Council on HGNP.

Sackville councillor Russell announces Walter Regan Park beside Downsview Mall

January 24, Council accepted a staff report regarding incorporating the Wildlife Corridor Landscape Design Charette Report within the Halifax Green Network Plan.

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/230124rci05.pdf>

January 31 meeting on wetlands with city’s Medina and Grey and several park groups. We still have no information on the city’s plans for the wetland at Bluewater Road intersection with Hammonds Plains Rd. (other than what Councillor Outhit says, that his plan is for Clayton to fix the problem in exchange for being allowed to build at Sandy Lake.)

February 2, 2023, two meetings are held on stormwater issues. The city prepared meetings for a year. Includes all levels of government and stakeholders. Morning meeting for professionals and city-scientists, evening meeting for public. Province doesn’t plan to come up with stormwater requirements until 2026. Long after areas under extreme pressure re housing development could benefit from better requirements. E. Bocking gives excellent presentation on Valuing Natural Assets as an Infrastructure Tool. The city’s head accountant is at the table. There seems to be support for increased buffers, but the Regional Plan will lead this.

Date unclear: A 10<sup>th</sup> Special Planning Area at Musquodoboit was added to the Housing Task Force’s list of Special Planning Areas, over some controversy that it was a favour to a PC MLA.

Dates unclear: 2022 onward, Shannon Park, MicMac Mall, Penhorn Mall are progressing toward housing. They had been in the queue previously.

West End Mall community node is announced for a multi-year high density development.

February 14, 2023, Stantec Consulting is hired to do the pre-development studies for “Future Serviced Communities” Sandy Lake, Highway 102 Corridor, Morris Lake, and Akoma Lands. These are managed by HRM but funded by the province as part of their Housing Task Force. SL-SRRP Coalition is officially on the stakeholders list.

February 15, 2023. SL-SRRP Coalition sends letter to all 55 Provincial MLAs individually, with personal invitation to guided nature walk at SL come spring, and request to remove SL from Special Planning List for all the reasons provided. Letter has 3 parts: 1. General letter from coalition co-chairs requesting SL be removed as a Special Planning Area, 2. Part one of Appendix provides ongoing information on citizens’ anger at the Task Force’s tone-deaf stock response to letters. It points out that this is not to be confused with a public process, and that the coalition is aware that the Task Force’s stated and practiced mandate is “to expedite housing”, not to genuinely respond to public input. 3. Part two provides extensive historical, cultural and ecological information on Sandy Lake to provide the Task Force with important relevant facts that it evidently does not yet have. Copied on the letter are the Mayor, CAO, and City Councillors.

February 16, 2023, New chair of provincial housing task force replies to Coalition co-chair Robinson offering a meeting.

February 17, 2023, Coalition groups begin writing letters to the Premier and Minister Lohr and copying the mayor and council. Also, Coalition groups request their members write their concerns to their MLAs across the province, and the Premier and Mr. Lohr.

March 19, 2023, New Coalition group, Nature Nova Scotia, creates blog and newsletter introduction of the situation at Sandy Lake-Sackville River to more Nova Scotians. Nature Nova Scotia’s blog: <https://naturens.ca/save-sandy-lake/>

March 23, 2023, new Coalition group, CAPE (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment) begins several media interviews. March 23 one CBC at Sandy Lake Park. Global News, CBC Radio, and others cover the story of Health benefits from preserving a place like Sandy Lake, from individuals’ health to global health. Todd Veinotte Show feature.

March 2023. Previously, it was decided that the coalition needs to identify brownfields and areas that can be reused for housing as part of our efforts to find alternatives for the province to substitute for development at Sandy Lake. However, March 2023, it is determined that the 2002 Brownfields Study needs too much updating for our team to tackle. However, the 2002 document is still very instructive, so is sent as promised to several politicians and the task force, as requested.

March 2023, Dr. Patriquin releases updated report on deep water oxygen studies at Sandy Lake. Sandy Lake volunteers are assisting both Dr. Patriquin, ongoing, and now the city’s Lakewatchers Program to collect data.

March 2023 “Deep water oxygen levels in Sandy Lake fall to precariously low levels” D. Patriquin:

<http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2023/03/21/deep-water-oxygen-levels-in-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-fall-to-precariouly-low-levels-19mar2023-19mar2023/>

also updated:

<http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/waters/lakes/sl-report-more-details/critique-of-predictions-lack-of-follow-up/>

Clearly the AECOM 2014 study predictions on phosphorus is wrong. However, it is not too late to make decisions to return Sandy Lake from impending harm. This study is the single strongest case for not allowing housing development in the Sandy Lake watershed. Remember that Bedford West Subarea 12 and 1 across Hammonds Plains Road are also in Sandy Lake’s watershed and will impact the lake.

April 13, 2023, Coalition Steering Team meets with Fred Crooks, new chair of the province’s housing task force. Team requests that Sandy Lake Special Planning Area be removed from the list. He commends us for our efforts but states, while what is done can sometimes be undone, that is not likely to happen. He repeats the position of the cut-out email responses routinely received from his team. His mandate is to create new housing. Our position that they are creating

“housing at all costs” offends him. However, all indications are that. He says it was HRM that put Sandy Lake on the list, not the province. Also, we are to wait for the Stantec report that will tell us whether to develop or not. We point out that their RFP does not specify that task. (Later, when we asked our councillor if they gave the SPA list to the province the reply was ‘no’. The province asked for a list of potential developments that were in the process, not a list of developments the city recommends are ready to go ahead. City staff gave a list of 23 divided into 3 tiers of ‘readiness’. The province chose 9 of them, and they were not all from Tier 1. It is very possible Sandy Lake (Tier 2) would not have proceeded had it stayed in the city’s process. Our point: the city does not let itself be bullied by developers (which is partly why the city is in the courts now with Annapolis).

Week of April 12<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>, Council passes the budget and approves hiring a coordinator for the Halifax Green Network Plan.

Just before and since April 18<sup>th</sup>, surveyors are all over the Clayton lands marking with survey tape.

April 18<sup>th</sup> Walter & Robinson meet with dairy manager for annual/semi-annual meeting. Dairy does not want the development and not willing to allow development road to cross their driveway. There has been a salt bin at the top of Robinson’s lane since Dec 2022 or early 2023. Walter & Robinson seek another solution, removal of the salt to a place that won’t drain into the pond and ultimately the lake. Pond’s conductivity measurement is ~6468 and it is normally between 130-200. Several trees are dead or dying already. Walter recommends location and method. Dairy will address it. Several other joint interests were discussed and the partnership strengthened.

April 19, 2023, Coalition Steering Team meets with Councillor Blackburn. Contrary to what Mr. Crooks said, HRM did not send a list of areas ‘ready to be developed’. Rather, they sent a 3-tier list of areas in the queue for assessments in the possible development processes. It is concerning that the province has automatically shifted Sandy Lake to their top 9 (now 10) areas to be fast tracked.

The city’s new environmental team is actively studying wildlife corridors.

April 24 dairy’s salt subcontractor removed bin but left large amt of salt in 40X40 area. Salt flow is much worse.

April 28, 2023, the dairy staff tasked with removing salt bin and mitigating the damage creates action plan with Robinson. Salt subcontractor will remove metal bin from the premises. Dairy will repair & seal its old concrete salt container for next year, and place a berm around it. 3” of soil will be removed from about 40x40 ft area after metal bin is removed, and will be replaced with clean gravel. (As of Oct 2023 this is not done)

May 3, 2023, Coalition Steering Team ‘Stakeholders’ first meeting with Stantec Consulting at their Burnside offices. Overall, Stantec project managers realize it would be a better fit if we, our biologists, meet with their environmental team doing the studies. A plan is made to do that soon.

May 3 2023, Dr. K. Beazley’s May 2023 corridor summary submission to Stantec Environmental and HRM: [http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Beazley\\_SandyLake\\_SAR\\_Wildlife\\_Corridors.pdf](http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Beazley_SandyLake_SAR_Wildlife_Corridors.pdf)

May 4, 2023, Coalition sends to the Premier, Minister Lohr, the Housing Task Force, a Formal Request that Sandy Lake be removed from the SPA list.

May 2023, release of Love Your Lakes’ Sandy Lake Summary Report: <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sandy-Lake-Love-Your-Lake-Report.pdf>

May 16, 2023, Meeting with Minister Lohr and Peter Harrison we learned that provincial Transportation committee is meeting frequently. The plan is to bypass Hammonds Plains Road with several routes. Highway 113 is being re-examined. Transportation committee has been adding lots of planners. Why not engineers? Mr. Lohr said his government wants to double the population of NS, so is not concerned if the housing crisis never ends. We told Mr. Lohr about Mr. Crooks claims he did not choose the SPAS, HRM did. Lohr said he is not one to step aside from his own

responsibilities. We asked Mr. Lohr to remove Sandy Lake from the Special Planning Areas list for all the reasons we had time to tell him about. He said he can't promise anything. He said the housing crisis is getting worse every day. Today there are hundreds of nurses from all around the world wanting to come here & we need places for them to live. He too is focused on increasing housing and he can't make any promises.

He also stopped and commented that in some ways he "hopes the housing crisis doesn't end" because he supports his government's goal to double the NS population. But he did seem to hear that there is more at stake at Sandy Lake than met the eye so far for him.

Mr. Lohr asked what we thought of the Clayton map. We said we have seen 3 potential maps, and we didn't get to answer him beyond that.

He also said that They said development will follow all environmental laws. We pointed out the McCallum report & Council motion called for special mitigations such as larger buffers.

Mr. Lohr espouses the same belief as Mr. Crooks that creating the full spectrum of houses is accomplished by building higher-end ones to free up the other.

He was very attentive in hearing that Clayton had offered to trade.

He summarized that he is engaged in a "larger conversation" and that we are now part of that. That it is complex. And he can't make any promises. He said we need to "find a balance" (That usually means compromising nature for housing, not balanced at all but we didn't say so. We'd like to say that the "equity-seeking group here is nature and that saving SL will begin the approach to something called balance")

May 26, 2023, Friday, Shelburne Wildfires begin.

May 28, 2023, Tantallon Wildfires begin. Evacuation of Sandy Lake area was expected in the next emergency alert on Sunday night but didn't come.

May 26, 2023, Tuesday, Farmers fire starts ~4:30pm, as other fires continue and more begin across the dry province. The dairy has large Ammonia tanks, as refrigerant, a caustic material very hazardous in contact with fire and to the lake. The Sandy Lake extended area is evacuated around 5pm. Once the fire was less of a risk, late that night, residents were allowed back, but with a 30-minute evacuation warning protocol in place just in case. This fire was about 400m from the 67-acre park section west of Sandy Lake, and was located within the area the province plans to develop for housing. The helicopter was overhead to get water every 2 minutes for hours, once or twice a day, whenever the ground crews called for help. The fire was under control about a week later. The ground crew stayed for about a week longer, putting out hot spots. No homes or businesses were lost to this fire. The Tantallon fire and the Shelburne County fire continued to burn for days, weeks. About 200 homes were lost in those fires combined. Climate change is delivering a new normal we are warned. Shelburne being the worst fire in Nova Scotia history.

May 2023, Coalition seeks information on putting monetary value on protecting green areas. Archibald Lake analysis refers to a 2013 assessment by Global Forest Watch Canada that says Nova Scotia's protected areas have an average annual value of \$5,827 per hectare for ecosystem services. A subsequent report from the 2017 TD bank group and Nature Conservancy of Canada report the value of ecosystem Services of Long Tuskett Lake lands at a minimum of \$26,250 per hectare annually. Such calculations are beginning to carry more weight with governments and is an issue being discussed during recent meetings with Federal provincial and territorial colleagues

June 1 2023 Minutes of Task Force on Housing: <https://novascotia.ca/housing-panel/> They had an update from the city's Ben Sivak team on the studies being done for the Planned Growth Areas/ SPAs. The notes state that the studies for Sandy Lake will be ready in Fall 2023, not March 2024, like the rest, and as originally commissioned. We see that as a problem from several sides. It seems Sandy Lake fast track is being fast tracked more. How can they legally ask for the contract deadline of March to be shortened? Also, environmental studies require being done at certain times of the year to be accurate.

Also, we hear that the development agreements for Bedford sub-area 12 and 1 will be signed imminently.

Tuesday, June 6, 2023, The Task Force website finally posts criteria for the Task Force's SPA selection. (We had been asking for this since the selections were made from 3 tiers with no information provided on why these were chosen. Several tier 1 locations had been passed over and Sandy Lake was chosen from tier 2. The only connection evident at the time was that 6 of the 9 locations were the Clayton Developments' properties.

See also the agenda and minutes of the Task Force meetings here: <https://novascotia.ca/housing-panel/>

*June 10, 2023, Dr. D. Patriquin's June 2023 summary submission to Stantec Environmental and HRM:*  
<http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PatriquinSandyLakeWQforStantec22Jun2023b.pdf>

2022 – 2023 – HRM Task Force members meet regularly with HRM staff and get updates on progress on each of the Special Planning Areas. Each SPA is moving forward at different rate. Some SPA are finished, including Southdale/Mount Hope (Eisner Cove wetland). On Task Force request, Sandy Lake SPA is reported to be receiving special and more frequent reports than the other areas.

June 2023, Coalition found maps showing the end of ARMCO's wastewater pipe upgrade that we had been seeking long term. A casual conversation with an HRM engineer led to the information. It rests on the edge of Subarea 12 & 1 now, as Clayton extended it to their boundary.

June 19, 2023. Dr. D. Patriquin makes a presentation to Northwest Community Council. Halifax examiner posts and article on Dr Patriquin's presentation. Councillor Outhit takes issue with Dr. P's Bluegreen Algae information. The next week sees clarification of dates and tests. See <https://tinyurl.com/36xrw4jj> Dr. P underlines the precariousness of Sandy Lake.

June 20, 2023, Regional Plan process approved to go forward, public process begins.

June 21, 2023 Update to Deep Water Oxygen Levels in Sandy Lake Fall to Precarious Level:

<http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2023/03/21/deep-water-oxygen-levels-in-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-fall-to-precariously-low-levels-19mar2023-19mar2023/>

also updated: <http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/waters/lakes/sl-report-more-details/critique-of-predictions-lack-of-follow-up>

June 22, 2023, Coalition Steering Team meets w Stantec environmental team & HRM growth planning team under Ben Sivak. Significant information is provided to Stantec & team. Also, Staff and Stantec have updated the task force three times recently on Sandy Lake not on any other of the special planning areas. This is of concern. The Provincial Housing task force has requested of the city speed up the environmental Studies by the fall of 2023 instead of by the contract date of March 31st 2024. The coalitions concern is that Sandy Lake needs to be slowed down to get it right including to do more studies a proper floodplain study and studies of indigenous interests, geological interests. Sandy Lake is a most complex SPA and is already moving too fast to be sure decisions are correct.

HRM team lead expressed that Sandy Lake Area was included in the 2017 Sackville River floodplain study. The Coalition scientists clarified that the AECOM 2014 report has significant flaws has two scientific dissenting reports now, and secondly, verified first hand that Sandy Lake was not included 2017 Sackville River floodplain study. This is very important information to have delivered to the Stantec team and HRM team.

Discussed Clayton's proposed development map for West Sandy Lake, overlaying the McCallum study heat map and buffers map indicates very little recognition of environmentally sensitive areas it in the Clayton development proposal. Of note, or one example, is an extensive wetland called Walter's Wetland for a future school. We pointed out that The Province of Nova Scotia stopped buying landfills, swamps, and marshes for building new schools 2 ½ decades ago.

Dr. Beazley's submission provided to Stantec at a previous meeting is posted online at [http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Beazley\\_SandyLake\\_SAR\\_Wildlife\\_Corridors.pdf](http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Beazley_SandyLake_SAR_Wildlife_Corridors.pdf)

Dr. Patriquin's submission to Stantec is entitled, 'PatriquinSandyLakeWQforStantec22Jun2023b', and is and posted at: <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PatriquinSandyLakeWQforStantec22Jun2023b.pdf>

June 26, dairy salt bin is still not removed. A huge rainfall washed away part of the 115 Farmers Dairy Lane driveway, and took salt directly into the lake.

June 30th 2023 head planner K Denty retires. New HD hired mid-summer. Jacquelyn Hamilton.

June 2023 Dr. Patriquin releases his studies deep water oxygen levels in Sandy Lake to precarious levels. See: <http://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2023/03/21/deep-water-oxygen-levels-in-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-fall-to-precariously-low-levels-19mar2023-19mar2023/>

July, 2023, Ecology Action Center hires part-time staff to assist with Sandy Lake communications and promoting the art show at the Secord gallery, letters to target and lawn sign campaign for the summer '23 to end of October.

July 3, 2023 overnight rainfall washed 115 Farmers Dairy Lane driveway again. This is of note because this is very unusual to wash out this driveway. Plus the salt has not been dealt with.

July 5th 2023 Our HRM Alliance general meeting was held at the Halifax library. Regional Plan team presented. Originally was to be a RP review only, but circumstances have changed so quickly and so much since 2014 review the city decided to make this another complete major review. This new Regional Plan is to supersede the previous plan. The Alliance and coalition and other groups have begun preparing comments and submissions, as invited.

July 7, 2023 Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park security committee meets at DND Rifle Range offices. New members given an update of the three years of positive joint work toward using vandalism, reducing risk of Fire, reducing illegal hunting, reducing harm to the wildlife, illegal off-road vehicle use. Joint efforts of group members are succeeding.

July 11 Signs arrive for distribution in province-wide Save Sandy Lake campaign.  
Save Sandy Lake Province-wide sign campaign & letter campaign is launched

July 11, flash downfall washed 115 Farmers Dairy Lane driveway repairs away again. Dairy parking lot was a lake funnelling directly down 115 Farmers Dairy Lane doing so much damage homeowner could not repair it. Dairy manager reviewed damage next day & dairy will discuss.

July 13, SL beach closed due to bacteria. Jul 17, 2023 (Halifax, NS) – The Halifax Regional Municipality is advising residents that Sandy Lake Beach in Bedford has reopened to swimming. Sandy Lake Beach is a supervised beach. Municipal staff regularly test the water quality at all supervised municipal beaches, as well as two unsupervised beaches, during the summer months. The reason to beach closure due to bacteria proof of the precariousness of the lake and backs the findings of scientists that Sandy Lake must be protected from further development.

July 13 2023, Show opening, Secord Gallery, Quinpool Rd, Halifax, 2 week show. Proceeds donated by artists to help Sandy Lake effort. Organized by Jeremy Vaughan. Donated space and promo by Phil, gallery owner. Well-attended opening. 7 artists en-plein-air.

July 19, 2023, Coalition learns that Council has heard no reports from the Housing Task Force and is not getting equivalent updates from HRM staff and Stantec. Steering team requests that the city voice to the province their

displeasure with the direction of Sandy Lake. Not registering that displeasure implies the city accepts it or supports it. The city is still an independent elected entity which represents its citizens and has a responsibility to speak.

July 21, 100-year storm, 5 hours steady heavy downfall. Bedford and Sackville floods. Rifle Range underwater, Highway 102 NSP entrance & roadside washed away. See archive pictures. Sandy lake rose 6 ft. Farmers Dairy Rd flooded to the roof of the pump house. Bluewater Rd covered a communications truck completely. Floods provincewide and four lives lost. Farmers Dairy Lane pump house shorted out, sewage flowing directly into the lake, but harm prevented by several days of big pump trucks coming and going constantly to limit the inflow. The Sackville River Rose between 10 to 15 ft. Two issues at Sandy Lake - some homeowners experienced flooding of their first floors lower floors due to Lake level rising. Others experienced extreme stormwater runoff from the dairy parking lot, house flooding and even large bushes being removed by the power of the water, driveways destroyed, gardens uprooted.

July 23, 8:22 pm PSA the Farmers Dairy Rd pump house is not working. Sewage is flowing directly into the lake. Lake and beach are closed. Residents asked not to let pets in water or to touch or use the water. (Some lake dwellers have always used filtered lake water for drinking water). Media reports.

July 25, 2023, Dr Patriquin sends a submission on the Subareas 12 & 1 of Bedford West. [Regarding Case 23307 – Bedford West subareas 12 & 1 Special Planning Area 25Jul2023 | Forests and surface waters of Sandy Lake & Environs \(Bedford, Nova Scotia\)](#) The public meeting was postponed due to the flooding. See: Regarding case 23307 Bedford West Subarus 12 and 1 Special planning area.

July 25, 2023 counselors Outhit and Lovelace are interviewed on the Todd Veinotte radio talk show. Asked why prevention was not done when we knew there would be another storm of this magnitude again eventually. Why was mitigation not even begun? Councillor Outhit reply was we can't predict extraordinary events like this week's storm. SRA's Walter Regan followed it up in an article by the Halifax Examiner - while we can't anticipate everything we can learn from experience and can take action to prevent to the best of our ability. We can use common sense. We need to designate a floodplain area and don't build there, the 2017 Sackville River floodplain study said. The study was adopted but action was not taken. Number two, what sorts of mitigation can be done? Do we buy some properties? Three, it is also reasonable to have a building pause for studies so we make better decisions. Buyers deserve to know the risks on their properties they may buy.

In the same interview the caller asked for a pause on development on Hammonds Plains Road because it is such a complex situation - pause until studies can be completed for better decisions. Counselor Lovelace reply was what you are proposing is a moratorium we will not do a moratorium on developments on Hammonds Plains Road because it causes property values to drop – landowners have plans for their land & can't go ahead. Instead, we will update the red book and phase it in. Mr Reagan response was now is a good time for such a pause because housing prices are very high, and there may never be a better time.

July 27th the pump house is back online but the lake remains closed.

July 27th 2023 Bedford Sackville counselors Outhit and Russell and Sackville Rivers associations Walter Reagan agree on Todd Veinotte show for action on 2017 floodplain report. Their recommendations are listed. Counselor Outhit suggests a bridge over Bluewater Road Marsh is necessary and that 20K cars use the Hammonds Plains Road daily.

The flooding incident is underlining the need for slowing down development in the subareas 12 and one and west of Sandy Lake in order to properly assess potential for the floodplain issues. Risk of increased flooding in Bedford Sackville has been mentioned in meetings in all levels of government. Finally, scientists and Regional Park coalition representatives being heard. There is hope this may now be done.

August 2, PSA Sandy Lake Beach is reopened – bacteria counts below risk levels. Property owners are on their own to get water tested for home use.

August 16 2023 Subarea 12 & 1 public meeting. City planners and Clayton staff had posterboards with pictures of their plans and attendees could ask questions. There was no presentation. Of note was no evidence of any plan to include Clayton's holdings in Subarea 12 to have some of the wildlife corridor that is evident to the Halifax Green network Plan maps. The city planner who was in charge of the wildlife corridor file earlier this year was part of this event but was unable to answer why the corridors are not evident in tonight's plans. Planners indicated the bigger buffers of 30 metres were offered by the developers. We voiced appreciation of those increased buffers but they do not substitute for a terrestrial corridor. Planners voiced huge pressures on them from the developers and also from the government to build housing.

See above, Dr. Patriquin's post on the flood and on Subarea 12 & 1. [Regarding Case 23307 – Bedford West subareas 12 & 1 Special Planning Area 25Jul2023 | Forests and surface waters of Sandy Lake & Environs \(Bedford, Nova Scotia\)](#)

September 2023, Sunnyside Mall Regional Plan review pop-up sessions to seek input and answer questions about the draft Regional Plan, **a planner's response to a question as to why Council's motions of October 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 amendments to the Regional Plan that include wildlife corridor preservation do not seem to be showing up in the Subareas 12 & 1 plan.**

The planner read the 2 amendments 9.6.A and G-9A and said it is clear that G-9A does not extend to Subareas 12 & 1 because it is in the development agreement phase, and the term "development agreements" does not appear in the text. We expressed that it would seem clear from Council's amendments that they intended this be included because the corridor through Subareas 12 & 1 is a pinch point of the last remaining corridor in the area because the RP's map 6 shows this as fact. The planner agreed it should be fixed, and would bring it to the city's attention.

September 13, 2023. Following is our **email for related items for inclusion in the Regional Plan:** *Our comments:*

1. G-9A needs to be fixed. We need an amendment to the amendment.  
The G-9A section clearly does not apply to development agreements such as what is happening at Subareas 12 & 1, because that word "development agreement" is not included in the text. That needs to be fixed and applied immediately to Subareas 12&1 as well as throughout the RP. Otherwise, what is all the HGNP and other work for? We need to be brave at this point. It is a David & Goliath situation with the province & the developers both wanting one thing only, but if there were ever a time to make sure the right thing happens it is here for corridors, at Subareas 12&1, and the RP has to be amended to make sure it happens now.
2. 9.6.A Priorities Plans section does not appear to be being well implemented in the current Subareas 12 & 1 plans. Most importantly, that area has a wildlife corridor which has now become an "Essential Corridor" since the HGNP was written. It was then one of 2 Important corridors through to the Chebucto Peninsula & BMBCL. Now, the other previously "Important Corridor" was closed off to the east of Sandy Lake by Clayton's development there. Where is Subarea 12&1's wildlife corridor? 30 Metre buffers are important but they are not equivalent to a full corridor. In this case the consequences of not providing the full corridor (and not expecting Clayton to participate in that – leaving it to the remaining private landowners who plan to develop in the area in the future is unfair) will be far-reaching and permanent. This is the proving ground that sets the tone for the preservation of corridors.

The time is now to show the HGNP is being used in development decisions. With the twin crises of Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss, both of which threaten life on this planet, we need to make sure the language in the RP ensures our ability to do the right thing for our planet now. Every small decision counts.

Subareas 12 & 1 are the proving ground. If they are allowed to slip past achieving true wildlife corridor protection, wetland and floodplain protection, then what is to stop the next domino from falling the same way? The province and the developers are putting so much pressure on creating housing at all costs, and we can see

the planners are feeling caught by that. If ever there were a time to bravely face and enforce the facts of Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss it is now.”

Sept 2023. SLCA begins learning about how to protect Sandy Lake Hemlocks from Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestation that has apparently reached Bedford this year. Met with professional to learn costs. Plan is to follow in Keji park’s Port Medway group’s volunteer efforts.

October 2023, over concerns for the wildlife corridor through Subareas 12 & 1 (See August 16 2023) two Coalition and EAC representatives (Dunsby and McKendry) met with a head HRM planner and planners on the Subarea 12&1 team:

1. Planners again seemed to believe we would be content with the bigger buffers of 30 metres. Our biologist team insisted that while the increased buffers are important, they do not substitute for a terrestrial corridor.
2. The planners don’t feel they have the tools to implement the corridors.
3. Planners did go to the Regional Plan staff to ask for guidance on the corridor in 12&1 but the RP staff put it back on them to create a plan.
4. The Regional Plan is a high-level document with lots of language supporting corridors, but it does not provide the “how”.
5. Planners said they get no training in “how”
6. The 2 EAC reps are skilled in this. Consequently, they and staff began information exchange. Staff seemed fully engaged in the guidance, options, real examples, and further resources on how to create corridors in different circumstances.

A few days later came the conclusion of staff “HRM planners feel the bulk of the corridor is outside the Clayton development (lands beside Clayton) and will reconsider our comments in future”.

October 12<sup>th</sup> 2023, the first day of the Fall Sitting, the Province presented **Bill 329** that is to change the Halifax Charter, and yet important charter changes such as the one we have been requesting for years in meetings and letters (Change s.237 to a 5-year window from the current 1-year window for acquisition) are not in it.

Instead, the bill is designed to remove even more of the city’s role in housing development and to give one person, Minister Lohr, the final say in everything related. This is an egregious overstep of immense proportions from all we have read in the bill. Citizens voted for municipal councillors to represent them and to carry out municipal responsibilities such as guiding and regulating housing. The city has 90 planning staff who work to get it right. It is an ever-evolving system that the city is genuinely working to improve. Nothing is perfect, mostly because factors keep changing in real life, but we look to the Province to work collaboratively to assist the city, rather than tossing the baby out with the bathwater.

It seems evident that the province has been given incorrect information and is trying to heavy-handedly solve a problem they don’t know enough about. Even well-meaning developers are in business, and even the best ones can only take altruism so far. The province needs to recognize soon that their methods are making things worse, not better.

Further, we learned that councillors can not do their job of speaking up for their constituents and the city’s goals and practices, because the province is telling them very little or nothing about plans for the councillors’ areas. The province has really one priority and very little real knowledge of the subtleties of the development process.

This is seen by the city and the public as an egregious overstep of immense proportions.

a mouthful of an “Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, and Chapter 21 of the Acts of 2021, the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act, Respecting Housing.”

Thankfully, translated into English by Canadian Press reporter Michael Tutton:

*Nova Scotia’s government is inserting itself into the process of approving residential developments in Halifax, saying it needs to create a fast-track system to deal with housing shortages... The bill, which amends two pieces of legislation, calls for more flexibility in the types of units allowed in buildings, and increases minimum floor-plan*

*and lot sizes for residential towers. It would also impose a two-year freeze on the fees the city levies on developers.*

*And here's what it's really all about, as explained to the Law Amendments Committee by Halifax Mayor Mike Savage and reported by my colleague, Tim Bousquet:*

*"This legislation is unnecessary and it's harmful," Savage told the committee. "This legislation is built on a demonstrably false premise, introduced with absolutely no notice or discussion. It is an autocratic intrusion into municipal affairs and completely ignores the biggest problem that it claims to address.*

*"By and large, this legislation is an egregious overreach and is not a solution to the housing crisis," continued Savage. "This bill is performative and addresses a problem that doesn't exist and is part of that regulatory solution that enables a single person — a single person with no planning experience or any knowledge of the municipality — to singlehandedly approve projects to go ahead with no requirement for accountability or justification."*

*"Consolidating power with a provincial minister, any minister of any party, erodes public process and transparency and undermines HRM's legislative mandate to deliver public service."*

About Sandy Lake specifically, the Provincial Housing Task Force minutes, and from what we learn in meetings, was getting frequent up-dates from city staff (and Stantec) on the progress of development studies at Sandy Lake, at least until the Task Force stopped meeting in July 2023. Yet, councillors tell us they could get no corresponding updates from staff or Stantec. This is a huge mistake on so many levels. Secrecy causes reasonable people to suspect wrong-doing. Why would the province invite that? The city is the body that knows the needs of the city and its people and how development needs to be shaped. The city should be involved in all of this. These city staff have been placed in yet another silo at a time when we need to break down silos. The province's "develop at all costs" approach is a damaging priority, and its mistakes we in the city will be forced to live with for a very long time.

October 16, 2023, Law Amendments Committee meeting. Over half of Councillors plus Mayor, CAO, HD and city lawyer spoke strongly against anti-democratic, egregious, overstep by province. To date, October 23, 2023, third reading has not happened. Perhaps the PC government is realizing they need to collaborate rather than decree when they have nearly no expertise in the topic in question.

October, 2023, Save Sandy Lake sign campaign & letter campaign are ongoing. People have begun telling us they are seeing signs in other areas of the province.

October 2023, new cut-out response to citizens' letters in response to our Feb 15<sup>th</sup> MLA letter:

*"Thank you for your email regarding the designation of lands near Sandy Lake Park as a special planning area.*

*The Province of Nova Scotia has created the Executive Panel on Housing to help address housing challenges in the capital region. As part of this initiative, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has designated ten special planning areas in the Halifax Regional Municipality to support the development of over 22,000 new residential units.*

*To help accelerate an increase in the supply of housing, the designation allows the Minister to make decisions on planning matters in those areas. All of the selected sites support HRM's growth strategy and are aligned with the regional plan. The proposed residential development lands near Sandy Lake Park were first identified as a growth area in HRM when its regional plan was developed in 2006. The regional plan was reviewed in 2014, and the Sandy Lake area was once again identified as a future growth area.*

*It is important to note that while lands near Sandy Lake Park are designated as a special planning area, the proposed development, and all of those in other special planning areas, must still complete all required environmental studies, and other permitting requirements. The Province has invested \$2.3 million dollars to enable the municipality to conduct this critically important work in a thorough and timely way.*

*Additional information related to the ten special planning areas along with a link to submit concerns or feedback on proposed developments can be found at: <https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/regional-plan/special-planning-areas>*

*On behalf of the Executive Panel on Housing, thank you for taking the time to share your views on this important issue. Sincerely,*

*Secretariat, Executive Panel on Housing in HRM*

November 1, 2023:

- a. ECC Minister Halman quoted today about Wetlands of Special Significance change to its subset of the Wetland Policy. At essence, all wetlands seem to be OK to fill in "in the public interest" (for housing & industry)
- b. Common from gov't: "find the balance between environment and development" really means "we plan to build no matter what". It misleads the public and actually works to influence public opinion, but is a lazy and faulty way of avoiding really working with environment for the good of all.

Nov 4, 2024, KR meets Liberal Leader Zack Churchill by chance at Music NS awards event, Yarmouth. Discussed exploring problem solving for Sandy Lake, including trade as a viable option. SLSRRPCoalition follows up over the next months with MLA Braedon Clark, but communications fall off for no apparent reason.

November 13, 2023 Council requests staff report on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid in HRM:

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2023/11/13/councillor-morse-requests-staff-report-on-plan-to-protect-eastern-hemlock-in-hrm-13nov2023/>

Nov. 15, 2023, Coalition circulates 'Why remove Sandy Lake from SPA list'

Coalition receives an anonymous tip about the Province painting SL as one of most polluted lakes in HRM due to private septic fields...Dr, P's studies, beach & the jumping salmon tell us differently, although it is on the edge and needs to be walked back to better health. It is definitely not one of the most polluted and is not expendable.

Nov 18 2023 Article in the Herald announces Vicki Elliott-Lopez is new chair of the Housing Task Force

Nov 28, 2023, Subareas 10, 12 & 1 development agreement is signed. As of December 13<sup>th</sup> we have not been able to get a copy to review if any of our recommendations regarding wetlands, wildlife corridors, and stormwater runoff have been addressed adequately. These subareas are within the Sandy Lake subwatershed and will impact corridors and water issues in the park, through to the Sackville River, and down into the Chebucto Peninsula.

Coalition requested meeting with Stantec. Is given meeting with HRM development team instead:

Nov 29 2023

Present: Stephanie Salloum, Ben Sivak, Matt Conlin, Elizabeth Montgomery, Walter, Karen McKendry, Mary Ellen Donovan, Karen Robinson

- **Us:** *Can Stantec studies be expanded to entire watershed and also include full floodplain study?*

**HRM:** Stantec will look at surrounding areas as required by the topic being looked at (traffic, waterways...). Ground truthing is of study area only. Looking at broader watershed more generally.

Stormwater is top of mind.

Looking at floodplain issues but not at the level of detail of the Sackville River 2017 study.

Depending on the Stantec results, will decide if needs a 'deeper dive'. Does it overlap with the development site?

RFP it requires looking outside the development area for some topics such as roads & watershed

- *Province requested Interim report this fall from Stantec and only for SL SPA. Status? Process?*

Stantec did data collection first, then summer spent on the ground & doing water testing.

Now, doing analysis & environmental modelling.

Province as funder, requested interim report at SL. Seems to want it to go faster.

**Premier requested SL be prioritized**

However, Stantec can't do the areas faster.

No conclusions yet

No ability to make decisions now

**But will soon get an in-house report in early draft form that will not be published.**

A few months away from having professional conclusions from Stantec to make any decisions.

**February or March, final report**

**A few months later, spring/summer, report to Province (or Council, if it is taken off SPA list)**

**If it goes ahead, a big new process starts for Master Planning. City-led, and with draft reports & public processes.**

**We are (our team) already anticipating some Stantec results so we are ready to comment or adjust. Day to day, we are looking at possibilities, but we have to wait for Stantec's results.**

**Then we will meld them and go to The Panel (Housing Task Force) with our recommendations. They will tell us what the next steps will be.**

RFP asked for rough costs and how feasible or not feasible it may be

Background studies are "eyes wide open" re costs, environmental impacts, infrastructure costs, etc.

No guarantee it will move forward until we have that, "although to be honest, the Province seems to be pushing it that way"

Costs may indicate it is not feasible. I can point to other decisions in HRM where they did not progress for those reasons.

- *Who will pick up the costs of infrastructure in the wake of the Province's recent restrictions on collection of development costs?*

We don't know. Amendments to Charter Act & Housing Act made changes. Maybe province will.

**If we have to put a new lane on HPRd, which is likely, how will it be funded? Not clear yet.**

That is part of Master Planning

- *Will you be using the other studies such as McCallum now?*

McCallum was desktop. Stantec will be more detailed.

Combination of McCallum and Stantec will combine to provide info for some time to come.

- *Wildlife Corridors: learned at 12 & 1 how to implement corridors. Yesterday the development agreement for 12 & 1 came out. Need to look see how corridors were applied there.*

One challenge is getting across HPR. If SL goes ahead, will force a major upgrade to HPR. We will look to Stantec for how to integrate w corridors.

10 years ago this would not be discussed. Progress. An opportunity.

- *Bluewater Road wetland: we are interested in seeing it reclaimed as functioning wetland*  
*We request that any time you are talking about wetlands or wildlife or park boundary& planning we request that we be at the table. We have expertise to contribute.*  
*What size buffers? McCallum & Council motion?*

It is in the RFP for Stantec to consider those, incorporate them, analyse & comment on it. Do they support that? If not, why? We need their commentary & advice.

- *Who is on the SL file in Parks Dept?*

Richard Harvey & Doug Reid work on all major parks in HRM, but we correspond with Doug Reid. He sends us info on the SL file.

- *Does the 2014 AECOM study have any role?*

Historical data, past conditions, baseline, trends. More recent work collected by HRM & Stantec too.

- *Including the SLCA rebuttal report to AECOM 2014?...Dr Patriquin's reports?*

Yes, whatever your group sent in.

- *What would you say makes SL so attractive to the Province (or city for that matter)?*

Diplomatic answer:

**1. 2006 it was in the RP. A lot of background work had been done.**

**2. The risk taken to upsize the sewer pipe. One of the reasons SL is at top of list is that sewer has already been done.**

**It could be walked away from, but it increases the option going forward.**

**3. “These SPAs are political decisions made by the province – you can look at the various ownerships of the lands in the areas as well.”**

- *But city signed hesitant approval of the upsizing clarifying that upsizing would not be a factor in decision over proceeding at SL – but you say it is.*

It is just one factor.

- *One of 3, that is a significant factor. P Duncan told us only \$800K were spent & it was more for Subareas 1 & 12.*

We don't know details. Talk to Pduncan

- *In meeting with Housing Task Force want to be seen as getting lots of units, but meeting w Minister he said there is no limit to unit# being sought.*
- *SL is high unit# but other areas are too. How will you determine the metric they want? What is the capacity at SL really?*

Want different types of units. What will be Central to Master Planning. Background studies assess the capacity. Stantec. Higher density uses less land than 20 years ago.

- *School on wetland issue. Province stopped putting schools on swamps & dumps in early 2000's.*
- *Also, HGNP was a guide for where not to build. How is it reflected in this?*

Map will be completely different in the end. Stephanie's team will throw out Clayton's plan and use Stantec's information. We are the decision-makers & are backed up by our policy documents.

- *Will you use 20-30 story high rises to increase density?*

Too soon to say. Nowhere near making those decisions.

- *Subarea 12 is part of SL watershed. Will we see that Stantec worked in there before approval of development agreement decided for 12 & 1? That area will affect Sackville River & SL park. Was development agreement altered by Stantec's work in SL watershed?*

We do have a floodplain team doing desktop of all of HRM floodplains. Will flag special areas needing more.

- *Province says Shovels in Ground in spring 2024. Imp to have floodplain study done before that. Is there time?*

Shovels in ground is Province's wistful thinking. Ambitious. Take with a grain of salt.

**In spring we may get Master Planning started depending on Stantec report.** Spring summer decision to proceed with Master Plan, maybe. Not Shovels in the ground.

***What about recent permission to do tree removal and level ground before approval is given?***

**There is history to do this in cases where decision is clear. It is related to the ARMCO clear cut & why the Minister wanted development too. Used usually when planning is quite far advanced. It enables developers to get an early jump on preparation. Haven't gotten there yet at SL but there is potential for that at SL.**

- *About the 300 acre clear-cut. The trees are 10 years old now & the full suite of Acadian Forest species are growing and already protecting the lake again. It is not damaged land any more. It is recovering well and not to be flattened again. Be sure the make that point to others in the process please.*

*The plan is to use advanced retention ponds at subarea 10. Will that be business as usual now?*

Correct. Priority. Stantec is looking at natural systems for SL

- *Risk of building in 2 major areas above SL SPA? United Gulf & other?*

They are not in planning area. Stantec has reached out to United Gulf and will have looked there for watershed issues related to SL environment, & be included in analysis. “They are seeing it through the same lens as you are”

February or March we will have more info for you, but reach out any time.

Late 2023, we learn that the transportation module and watershed module, possibly others, in the Background Studies for the Sandy Lake SPAs are behind schedule for various reasons. The Task Force is updated that the Background Studies will take longer to complete – new completion date is Fall 2024. The Task Force requests an interim report on the work underway by Stantec for the Sandy Lake SPA.

Dec 18 2023 Group of 8 Parks-related groups meets – will work on common issues in RP draft.

## 2024

January 2024, Cornerstone Parks Program by Park People <https://parkpeople.ca/opportunity/cornerstoneparks> Adds 3 Halifax area wilderness parks to their national program. This program connects and supports several "Friends Of" groups for large, urban parks in Canada, including Stanley Park Ecological Society, Les amis de la montagne (Mont Royal), and High Park Nature Centre. There are now 7 groups involved, and Park People wanted a group on the East Coast to join.

The East Coast Cornerstone Parks would encompass 3 parks:

- Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) Park group, Friends of BMBCL
- Sandy Lake Regional Park, Park group SLCA
- The Backlands/Shaw Wilderness Park, Park group, Backlands Coalition

A staff person will be funded by the Parks People to coordinate activities and deliverables for the 3 parks.

The Deliverables:

- i. Participation in bi-monthly Cornerstone Parks partner meetings and other offerings from Park People, and communication with other Cornerstone Parks partners outside of meetings as needed.
- ii. Three events hosted that focus on getting members of equity-deserving communities to one of the 3 parks.
- iii. Data on the number and extent of invasive species on protected lands at each of the 3 parks. Data shared with landowners/managers.
- iv. Surveys results from park user surveys for each of the 3 parks.

(Follow-up December 2024: Multiple events and walks were carried out in the 3 parks and to assist the parks)

Jan 10, 2024, Meeting with CAO, J Hamilton, HRM development team, Councillors Blackburn and Morse  
Stantec should tell us if development at Sandy L is viable, looking at technical feasibility ballpark. Reports go to the Province but also city.

Discussion: General confusion about how corridors are defined & what might be needed. Expensive overpasses? Underpasses?

Coalition team: said expertise exists in NS & elsewhere, Charette, no need for more research now, we need action. Opportunities are currently being cut off. Important corridors have become essential corridors. Running out of options to implement. Explained tool kit for corridors. Planning for some creatures will also serve many others. Least expensive is to plan ahead rather than catch up later. We are in this for the long haul.

What if Council voted on a motion to remove SL from SPAs? At least show Province needs to look very closely before moving at SL? Any down side?

Response: Expect it would be detrimental to city. Better off with current process. Prov is very sensitive to any criticism from city. The only municipality with no service exchange agreement, & items under Bill 329 not enacted yet.

Coalition: Is Council being updated by Task Force?

Response: We expect an update next week in-camera because of confidentiality agreements for all who sit at the table. CAO doesn't know what is going on at Task Force table.

Coalition: This seems very undemocratic.

Response: We are doing our best in a difficult situation.

Coalition: Will city look for trade with Anderson Lands or downtown or elsewhere?

Response: Maybe. Province would have to be on side. Our intent is to minimize our servicing costs and have compliance with all of our policy objectives, e.g. HGPN & others.

Councillor: Why growth nodes close to urban centre not progressing, but SL is a greenfield with high ecological value and higher servicing costs, & it is progressing fast. Doesn't make sense.

Response: Province chose what to prioritize. May be need to expand the service area anyway because 1 mil population in relatively near future. 20 master plans underway now. Thinking ahead.

Response: I'm not seeing that the province necessarily wants to develop at SL. What they do want is answers including how it will impact on transportation.

Response: SL is potential growth node. Soon we will bring to Council other areas, some suburban, that will move ahead of SL because SL needs a lot of work. The other ones are actually way ahead of SL.

Coalition: We have seen no evidence of actual criteria for the 54 growth areas in 2006 RP. Some look purely political – e.g. that a councillor wants growth in his/her area. No robust criteria in 2006 or in the Provincial SPA selection of 9 of 23. And these don't align with HRM criteria. We question the choice of the 9 areas. Other choices could produce more houses and faster.

Response: unknown pressures on Province?

Coalition: All 6 of Claytons were selected.

Coalition: 20K cars on Hammonds Plains Road daily now. Subareas 12 & 1 approved and will add more. SL more again. Without addressing the current issues.

Coalition: Why is city allowing this to go ahead?

Response: City has no ability to stop it at the moment.

Coalition: Province has legislative power to take SL off the list.

Response: It is not all negative. Good work is going on. W city staff and we have a good staff working on the TF.

Councillor: Sounds like a lot of answers will be in the Stantec Report.

Coalition: We hope you will expand it to include floodplain study and entire subwatershed.

Response: Will be looking at both in Stantec & will get recommendations from them, but not likely what Walter is requesting.

Coalition: Disappointing because if it isn't in the tender it doesn't usually happen.

Response: Ben, should we discuss this further offline? Haven't discussed this before.

Coalition: Can you, the city, expand the Stantec studies and get a full floodplain study? Future floods are coming.

Response: Ben just said it was...

Coalition: to some degree only. Not what is really needed.

Response: not to the degree Walter wants.

Coalition: will it include the Climate Change approach used in the 2018 study?

Response: Yes.

Coalition: Will Stantec look at 12& 1 regarding impacts on flooding in Bedford Sackville?

Response: Yes, info on surrounding lands and Stantec recommendations on this.

Report will go to city and Province.

Coalition: What I didn't appreciate for the longest time was why SL is so different. Why so many competent people are so focused on it. When BMBCL has 1000 lakes. How is this different? 11 habitats, 16 SAR, Whose got that? Nowhere! It is an unusual circumstance. It doesn't exist at BMBCL, I can tell you that. That is what is different.

January 17, 2024, 46 acres in Musquodoboit Harbour were designated a Special Planning Area under the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act.

Media noted controversy noted over political connections of the owner. Application by KWR Approvals on behalf of the property owner (Harbour Garden Village Inc.) for a development agreement to allow the subdivision of a new lot that will contain a 48-unit shared housing with special care facility (The Birches Nursing Home) on PID 40192528 in Musquodoboit Harbour, which is designated a Provincial Special Planning Area.

January 2024, An interim report of the Background Studies on the 4 Stantec study areas, including Sandy Lake SPA, is shared with the Task Force and HRM. This is not made public or shared with us.

January 31, 2024

- Sobey parcel continues to be held by Sobeys for city to offer. T Outhit first said he wants it (reported by other councillors) and then staff & he says it is "not being marketed" and therefore, not for sale. KR continues to follow up. It IS available for sale to the city although it is not on the market. Advantage to buying when it is not on the market.
- Interim Stantec Report is done. J. Hamilton said no access for public.

Feb 13, 2024

- Bedford Common development expects 14K people. Lucasville Rd and Hammonds Plains Rd have approvals, Penhorn, West End Mall, MicMac Mall...
- We understand HRM has signed off on 24K units now. The target of the Task Force was 22K, so why build at Sandy Lake? (Mr Lohr told Karens that there is no ceiling.)

- More people means more parks are needed.
- Could we fortify some councillors for the day Sandy Lake comes to Council? We have lots of housing coming so why would we want to develop a place like Sandy Lake? It is quality park needed to serve the new residents of HRM.
- Creating Map of units by dots. "Here's why we need SL as a park" visual
- McCallum Heatmap: We have lost 70% of species in 50 years. SL is rich and must be preserved.

February, 2024, we learn of 6 more city acquisitions in the "accordion" area of Sandy Lake Park. Thanks sent to the city planners. One is not so much an acquisition as a recognition that it had been transferred to the city along with all of the other Jack Lake lands from CMHC and NS Dept of Municipal Affairs in 1999 and had not been registered. (It sits on Marsh Lake, and this fits with our discovery that Marsh Lake's transfer of deed had not been registered back then either. We still have not managed to have it given to the park as it was intended.)

Feb 17 2024 Council's rejected Fall River development becomes a SPA of the Province

Feb 27 2024

- October 2022 acquisitions we just learned about: 1 piece deeded, 4 expropriated, 1 mapped/acknowledged but came to city in 1999 with bulk of Jack Lake lands. Total 6 parcels. Could have been title-clarifications/friendly expropriations.
- We agreed we can now request 1700 acres instead of 1800 acres
- Charter s.235 can prohibit development on marshy land. We need to tell councillors, make sure this stays in the city's tool box.
- Caution: No access to Marsh Lake 50 acres, but they need to know we are watching. Last year Shaw swooped in under the city's realtors and bought 2 strips of accordion including Marsh Lake shoreline.
- Province unwilling to give up lands. Caution re: "Lands for Housing 2.0"
- Why did it take 16 months for us to learn about acquisitions? Also, Sobeys land is available but we hear nothing and so our hands are tied, as with the cottage lot and Shaw purchases where we could have played a positive role.
- According to Section 19 of the Charter it is illegal to keep such things secret from public. Council must state it publicly in meeting.

Feb 29, 2024, KR meets w D Reid HRM Parks planner working on Sandy Lake

- 1986 focus on park was mainly beach area. 1999 acquisition of Jack Lake assembly altered perspective. We asked, "If Jack Lake lands were developed, would it affect the rest of the park?" (*K - ask it now because west lands even more impact on park*)
- Current priority: long term configuration of park - fix 20-year inactivity. Also, long term impacts from private properties inside perceived park area can lead to confrontations. Correct that. Better the lands are park! Acquire the accordion sections of far side.
- Intent is to close the gap of 20 years of inactivity, then go on to other priorities. (*K- good but the west and south of Sandy are currently at more peril*)
- "I won't give you a copy of any new conceptual map". It is not my place
- Council had a study done & it led to a map of the study area. How do the values of what is in the park now overlap (within study area)? West of SL and some of Marsh Lake were identified by McCallum. Watercourses and other areas outside the park did not rank as high as areas already in the park. (*K - We disagree that is what McCallum meant. will clarify*)
- Protecting watercourses to the Sackville River all along SR watershed, including McCabe's Lake & Lucasville – equal interest in protecting all these lakes that feed the Sackville River & some of Little SR, right into the Basin. So buffering is important. McCallum said focus on watercourse protection. That is what I took away, anyway.
- Not pursuing Sobeys land. Council provides direction. Acquired several pieces Oct 2022, accordion area, and some are not assets yet. It is an active file.

March 22, 2024 to May 2024. Silt in Western Brook into Johnsons Brook into Sandy Lake. From blasting at Subarea 12 Larry Uteck Blvd. Citizen reported to Bedford Environment office. By May it seems resolved. SLCA created report for political, ECC, and community.

March 27 2024, EAC meeting with Task Force: McKendry & Dunsby with Elliott-Lopez & Jarrod B.

- To keep EAC & Task Force communications open
- Their top priority to advance 9 SPAs of 11
- They get updates from Stantec
- Sandy Lake Stantec Report likely by summer, not March 31
- Other 3 in Stantec report soon afterward. Sandy Lake is priority.
- Plan to add more SPAs sometime
- Working with Transportation Task Force
- Implementing Deloitte Report using bill 329
- Improving environmental actions during development
- Removing red tape, including some action on covenants (essentially tasked with removing progress made previously by municipal gov't on these things)
- ME reported a legal group is starting to work on these covenant issues – big concern over valuable property rights. Political ramifications to interfering with covenants.
- Kortney said EAC supports complete communities. They seemed to have no idea.
- EL said they have kids & care, etc....JB added "Not development at all costs"
- EAC goal of meeting was to keep communication open.

April 18 2024

HRM releases to the public the Draft Interim Reports including Sandy Lake report.

Stantec's draft Land Suitability Assessment Interim report: (see lower right side of the webpage):

<https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/futureservicecommunities>

- Province required the interim report – Stantec work is not complete. Report disregards Dr Patriquin's studies on water quality, only acknowledges Salmon once were in the system – we had provided evidence it is now.
- Report is so bad some decide not to respond at all. Coalition does. And requests meeting w HRM to discuss the significant shortcomings.
- Examples:
  - o the research materials and data about the Sandy Lake area forwarded to them by our Coalition and by HRM was not used, including important water quality work by Dr. Patriquin
  - o No acknowledgement that Atlantic Salmon have returned to the lake and system
  - o A statement that there is no evidence of runoff damage to the lake!
  - o No evidence of a floodplain study to augment the 2017 Sackville Rivers Floodplain Study regarding potential impacts from development in the Sandy Lake watershed
  - o 30 metre buffers with an acknowledgement that more may be better, but "given the need for housing..."

End/mid April, 2024, Full time staff person hired at HRM to handle Halifax Green Network Plan

April 28 2024, Alliance/Group of 8 meet with Mayor Savage re: urgent fixes needed to new RP draft

- chasm between intentions and result to be activated with tools.
- Current RP's page 14 guideline/policy line on env. is weak (text="opportunities" only) but is at least present. But it is removed in the draft RP - a major step backward, and needs to be fixed. We suggest Dr Manuel's version.
- Mr. Mayor asked for a copy of that & he would "get it in."
- HalifAct has over 20 staff etc. and staff is coming on re: HGNP this month.
- Us: but HGNP passed in 2018 and had revolving part time staff. Held his hands up to show the lack of balance between the 2 reports. A development officer didn't even know what HGNP was, then recalled vaguely it was something that had died.
- Us: All we have really is Map 5 regarding development

- Us: wording issue again: Needs to change throughout from things like “shall consider” to “must apply”. And the policy and wording must be in the bylaws and suburban plans so development officers must apply.
  - Us: Mayor championed important issues to Council before. Would he do that here? Champion these needed changes in RP and bylaws to get what Council thinks they are getting? Mayor seemed willing overall.
  - Staff asked for a 1 or 2-pager about today’s points and the needed wording.
- Overall: a. He is willing to try to get principle statement in RP
- b. Willing to get stronger environment wording in RP
  - c. City was shocked when Province forced on city Sandy Lake and Fall River developments.
  - d. Mayor thinks highly of Alliance

May 14, 2024, Sobeys has new corporate realtor. He is willing, as was the previous one, to reserve their Sobeys 50 acres at least until after the Oct election of new councillors.

May 23, 2024, Dr Patriquin posts comments on the Land Suitability Analysis Interim Report (links to submission and cover letter are at the bottom):

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2024/05/23/on-the-draft-landscape-suitability-analysis-for-the-sandy-lake-study-area-23may2024/>

May 24, 2024, KRobinson and KMckKendry interview for Global TV about Stantec report

May 27, 2024, SL-SRCoalition responds to the Stantec Land Suitability Analysis Interim Report:

<https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/rpsubmission>

June 14, Biologist K McKendry photographs Salmon parr in Peverill’s Brook. Confirmed by iNaturalist. Walter Regan, Salmon expert, says its parents would have over-summered in Sandy Lake. There have been unphotographed sightings for several years, but this confirms that Salmon are back in Sandy Lake and breeding there.

<http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Salmon-in-Sandy-Lake-system.pdf>

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/waters/lakes/about-lake-fauna/about-the-fish/atlantic-salmon/>

ASF Rivernotes: Parr in Sandy Lake – K McKendry <https://www.asf.ca/rivernotes-july-11th-2024/>

June 25, 2024, Coalition meets w HRM development team to discuss our report on concerns over Stantec Interim Report’s extensive shortcomings. Coalition team feels heard.

June 28 2024, New Sackville Floodplain study is out. Reference in print to previous verbal statement that this did not include Sandy Lake area and therefore it is not expected that development might happen at Sandy Lake for 50-100 years.

Summer 2024, There are 11 Special Planning Areas now:

Former Penhorn Mall lands

Southdale/Mount Hope

Bedford West 10

Bedford West 12 and 1

Port Wallace

Indigo Shores

Morris Lake Expansion (Eastern Passage)

Dartmouth Crossing

Sandy Lake

Musquodoboit Harbour

Fall River Site C

Descriptions and updates on the eleven special planning areas can be found on the HRM website:

<https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/regional-plan/special-planning-areas>

July 15, 2024, Media report Minister John Lohr approved an increase to density on Hammonds Plains Road at Larry Uteck Blvd for a property (PID 00645846) in his Special Planning Area in West Bedford.

Note: This same project was rejected by HRM planning staff in August, 2023. There is very little information available but the developer appears to have obtained the needed additional density credits.

July 23, 2024, Coalition co-chair K Robinson meets with senior staff of Premier's Office. Goals: 1. It appears that the Premier is not getting the non-housing information on SPA Sandy Lake. Opportunity to make sure important information is known. 2. Work together to find a win-win for housing goals/developers/preserving Sandy Lake area's valuable ecosystem services. One hour and problem-solving was just underway, so plan was to meet again soon.

(This meeting came from KR and Mary Ann McGrath speaking with Premier during the CARP - Canadian Assoc of Retired Persons, spring AGM. As of Dec 1, 2024, attempts to do the promised follow-up meeting got no response from Mr. Adam Smith and Mr. Neal MacDonald.)

August 6, 2024, Six new SPAs announced: <https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2024/08/06/minister-designates-new-special-planning-areas-approves-development-agreement> The new special planning areas are:

- Westphal urban reserve lands, Dartmouth – up to 18,000 units, plus 96 long-term care rooms
- 1226 Cole Harbour Rd., Cole Harbour – more than 511 units, plus 144 long-term care rooms
- 1109 Fall River Rd., Fall River (Opportunity Site B) – 316 units, plus 144 long-term care rooms
- Paper Mill Lake, Bedford – up to 4,714 units, including 214 units in Phase 1.

The Minister has also approved a recommendation by the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality to issue a development agreement to Perry Lake Developments Inc. for 120 units off Ingram Drive in Fall River (Opportunity Site C).

August 21, 2024, Referred to in the future as “the August '24 Directive” N.S. Government announces new regulations to increase housing in HRM. Known as “the Directive” to Council that there is only one priority and that is housing. Also, removing approval for 2 & 3 bedroom apartments. Makes it look as if more “units” are being created, but actually decreases family use & roommate groups, so decreases housing of more people. Also, developers can charge more for the bachelor units & one-bedroom units per capita. They make more \$ per building.

[New provincial regulations force HRM to increasing housing \(citynews.ca\)](https://www.citynews.ca/news/2024/08/21/new-provincial-regulations-force-hrm-to-increasing-housing/)

*...the new regulations under the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter will require the municipality to make increasing housing supply the priority focus in all land-use planning, regulations, decisions and development approvals under the municipal planning strategy.*

*“Nova Scotians need more housing, and that need is especially great in HRM,” John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, said. “In order to truly address this housing crisis, we need to ensure that increasing supply is a key focus in the municipal planning process and the prime consideration in development decisions. These regulations will ensure that happens.”*

*The province said other changes to the charter's Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations include:*

- *Permitting residential uses in most zones, where appropriate*
- *Removing on-site parking requirements for developments in the urban service area*
- *Ensuring height restrictions do not impact density for mass timber residential developments*
- *Removing unit-mix requirements and reducing the percentage of ground-floor commercial space required in residential buildings started before April 1, 2027*
- *Permitting manufactured housing, including modified shipping containers, in all residential zones*
- *Permitting temporary housing in all zones to allow employees to live on or near a work site during an assignment*
- *Adopting a secondary municipal planning strategy for suburban areas by January 31, 2025.*

#4 on removing unit-mix requirements for 2 & 3-bedroom units will reduce the number of people a unit can house (think students or single working people who share an apartment, and families with grandparents.) and the developers can put a higher number of units in a building if they are all bachelor or one-bedroom, plus they make more money off them.

Some of these will have lasting negative impacts, according to urban planners. The directive to the City shows that environment and any other priority is to take second place to housing.

Sept 9 2024, NW community Council staff report on Hammonds Plains Functional Plan request

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/community-councils/240909nwcci02.pdf>

(This goes on to be cancelled in early 2025 for what we understand is due to another study the CAO is seeking or expecting)

October 1, 2024, The Precarious State of Sandy Lake - Report to The Premier, from Dr D Patriquin:

<https://sandylake.org/news-2/>

Links to the 3 parts:

report, footnotes, and cover letter to decision-makers here:

[PatriquinInConclusion1Oct2024](#)

[PatriquinFootnotes1Oct2024](#)

[PatriquinLetterCorSandyLakeSPA1Oct2024](#)

October 2024, Lakewatchers Report:

<https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/environment-climate-change/lakes-rivers/lakewatchers>

Oct 6 2024, Dr. P's comments on Lakewatchers Report,

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2024/10/06/hrm-lakewatchers-state-of-the-lakes-2022-23-sampling-years-report-released/>

Oct 7 2024, Global News at 6, re: Dr Patriquin's Report he sent to Premier Oct 1:

<https://globalnews.ca/video/10799205/concern-grows-about-halifaxs-sandy-lake-and-housing-development/>

October 18, 2024, Saltwire, Geoffrey Hurley article on top environmental issues including Sandy Lake:

<https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/opinion/commentary-nova-scotias-vulnerable-coastal-environment-101001073/>

October 19, 2024, Municipal Election. New boundaries. John A. Young wins District 14 which now contains most of Sandy Lake Park. Small piece north of Sackville River in our proposed park boundary is with Mr. Gillis in Sackville.

October 24, 2024, Houston Governments' pre-election media release: a connector road through the watershed of Sandy Lake Park to connect Hammonds Plains Road to Highway 101, plus major highway upgrades to the 102:

<https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2024/10/24/traffic-solutions-safety-improvements-major-highways>

This road announcement was a total surprise to us, and it appears to be premature since three major reports have not yet been released: the Joint Regional Transportation Agency's full report, the final Stantec Land Suitability Assessment for their proposed housing development west of Sandy Lake, and the City's Functional Plan staff report on Hammonds Plains Road.

We know that more housing is needed in the province, especially lower-income housing, and that communities need safe and quick exits in case of fire. Had we been at the table, we may have a better

perspective regarding the road. For example, if the plan were to put a road INSTEAD of a development - a point A to B highway with no side roads - and built to accommodate wetland function, wildlife habitat, and park assets, that MIGHT work, but such an approach would need thorough study. However, why build a road through a proposed park at all? The Joint Regional Transportation Agency had been discussing links further down the Hammonds Plains Road to keep it away from the 102 exit 3. The Sandy Lake idea seems to have come from a suggestion of Councillor Pam Lovelace for putting a road through Kingswood. Urban planners tell us the road will INCREASE traffic on Hammonds Plains Road rather than decrease it, due to the Induced Demand concept.

October 27, 2024, 'Take a Hike and Call Me in the Morning' – a study of the health benefits of walking in nature

By Dalhousie University Medical School and Ecology Action Centre. Location: Sandy Lake Regional Park. A study of physiological and emotional responses to a guided hike in a park. Participants participate in a 1-hour hike, and submit a saliva sample (painless) and questionnaire before and after the hike. To see participant eligibility criteria and other study & hike details, go to: <https://forms.gle/Pwe5vo3v9g6dcweJA>

October 28, 2024, On the Natural and Not-so-Natural History of Sandy Lake (Bedford, NS), Dr. Patriquin's Presentation to NS Wild Flora: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmh70wgTvVs>

October 2024, Coalition learns of 2 more city acquisitions in the "accordion" area of Sandy Lake Park. Thanks sent to the city planners.

October 2024, Sandy Lake situation compared to the Cod Fishery: <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Compromise-at-Sandy-Lake-and-the-Codfishery-Collapse-SLCA-website.pdf>

November 8, 2025, Houston Governments' media release SL connector road pre-election announcement: <https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2024/10/24/traffic-solutions-safety-improvements-major-highways>

November 8, 2024, CTV News Atlantic, Friday. Traffic interview with Ahsan Habib, Director Dalhousie School of Planning. Starts at 26:06  
<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video/c3019374-ctv-news-atlantic-at-six-for-friday--november-8--2024?binId=1.1145507>

November 2024: Now, we have a Provincial election on Nov 26.

See the Ecology Action Centre's document on the priorities of the various parties in the election: <https://ecologyaction.ca/our-work/politics-policy/provincial-election-2024>

You will see the PC column indicate little interest in environment. Their priority is "the business of government".

Our opinion: While we need more housing and we need to make sure vulnerable communities have adequate exits during fires, it is possible to serve all priorities, including the environment. At Sandy Lake we continue to post online and send letters, newsletters that it would be tragic to sacrifice a Regional Park and the outstanding ecosystem services of its unique ecosystem for houses and roads when houses and roads can be put elsewhere.

Our Ask of all candidates:

- i. Remove SL SPA – slow down – put affordable housing elsewhere – road is premature- Province must listen to science – Housing at SL is unsustainable urban sprawl and comes at a very high cost to environment and people's park.

- ii. \* Moreso, now that the connector has been added to the mix – need time to sort out the road before approving housing

November 8, 2024 Coalition Newsletter outlines concerns around Premier's snap announcement for Sandy Lake Connector: <https://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Coalition-news-Nov-8-2024.pdf>

Nov 10 2024, Global News, Community Blind-sided by Province's pre-election Sandy Lake Road connector Announcement:

<https://globalnews.ca/video/10863326/global-news-at-6-maritimes-nov-10/> starts at: 12:36

November 11, 2024, a curious Blue-Green Algae bloom is identified at Sandy Lake. This is the first confirmed BGA bloom on record. Also the latest detection of BGA in any HRM lake.

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2024/11/11/curious-bga-bloom-on-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-in-early-november-11nov2024/>

November 12, 2024, The HRM Lakewatcher's Report was presented to the new City Council on first sitting

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/standing-committees/241003essc1312.pdf>

The 3 recommendations were passed by Council:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to initiate a review of the Municipality's current Salt Management Plan guided by the Syntheses of Best Practices Road Salt Management.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to investigate policy options for setbacks for new stormwater discharge locations into natural waterbodies and consider options for naturalization and/or Low Impact Development (LID) features at existing stormwater discharge locations around priority lakes.
3. Request that the Mayor write a letter to the Province of Nova Scotia's Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Halifax Regional Water Commission, supporting and encouraging the timely development of provincial stormwater quality standards.

Project head, Chris Kennedy had been pleased with Dr. Patriquin's review of the LakeWatcher's report

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2024/10/06/hrm-lakewatchers-state-of-the-lakes-2022-23-sampling-years-report-released/>

November 13, 2024, CBC news, Rail transit advocate says more highways not the solution to Halifax's traffic woes: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/president-light-rail-advocacy-group-questions-government-plans-reduce-traffic-1.7381642>

Nov 21 2024, letter to UARB from SL-SR Coalition, BMBCL, and Purcell's Cove Backlands Co. about need for improved stormwater control. Hopeful response immediately from UARB. BMBCL has "evidence in the Regional Plan public file regarding the stormwater system across from Costco being in violation of Fisheries regs. In the filing by the Stevens Group, C006, toward the end of the 62 page document, they state based on work done by their consultant, Strum Engineering, The water flowing into Susies Lake is in violation of the Fisheries Act. They don't just state the relevant numbers, they actually state that the water quality violates the regs. This water comes from a stormwater system comprised of 2 five-foot diameter pipes under Lacewood Drive." Letter has gone on to head of Halifax Water.

November 25, 2024, Coalition letter to new Mayor Fillmore, introduction & update:

<http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Letter-to-Mayor-Fillmore-and-Council-Nov-25-2024.pdf>

November 26, 2024, Walter Regan, Bedford TV, Save Sandy Lake clip by Natalie Chiasson, WTV News:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxfOV7L7Pb0>

November 26, 2024, Provincial election. Houston's PCs are returned to office with a "Super Majority". NDP is Official Opposition and Liberals lost all but 2 seats. Leader Churchill lost his seat. Local MLA Liberal Braedon Clark lost to PC candidate. Former Councillor Outhit wins for the PCs in Bedford. Former Councillor Blackburn loses to PC Brad Johns. Former Councillor P. Russell loses to NDP candidate in Sackville.

November 28 2024, Coalition begins sending letters requesting meetings with all local MLAs.

December 4 2024, Coalition meets with Joint Regional Transportation Agency for the first time, to discuss the "Sandy Lake Connector" highway that was announced prior to the election. Their Nov report has been delayed to the new Year, likely January, due to the election, and also waiting for a new minister.

Will they meet with the Housing Task Force? Tanya is on the HTF, Mark used to be. Mark said they "need to align with housing and environment too".

We began with brief history since 1971 and referred to multiple studies currently showing layers of importance to preserving the entire ecological unit.

They had no answers on # of lanes, if there would be roundabouts, if it would trigger "Impact Studies" such as on wetlands. This is in "infancy stage". It is just a "line on a page" now. The route could change.

Will there be a floodplain study? Likely only for the bridge over Sackville River, but maybe more.

Archaeological study where the road goes only, and they are aware acidic slate in the area.

We asked about the other routes that they examined farther down Hammonds Plains Road, that this announcement came as a complete surprise to us. Will any of the others proceed too? They "looked at Margeson Drive connector and others. A lot has evolved since then...where development will go...population...aligns with interchange...this one had the most merit". City is handling community egress for fires...not their mandate. We said major studies are underway that we are assured will factor in to whether or not development occurs at SL. "Yes, other studies are coming". Re: the studies they did to choose this road, were studies done on the other areas too? Used "Transportation Modelling for movement of people and goods to land on this recommendation. Public interest issues now." (Is environment, park protection, only a public interest?)

We pointed out the tributaries that affect the entire natural system, also wildlife corridors right through road bed – HGNP and Charrette studies. They requested we send the 2 studies. done.

Already met with many groups. Will they expropriate or buy land? Too soon to say...maybe 3 landowners? Depends on design.

There will be routine public input if Environmental Assessment is triggered. We express routine public engagement is not working for us in many incidences. We request closer working relationship. CEO said 3 times they will work with the 3 of us, continue to meet with us, and receive our documents as things proceed. CEO is unfamiliar with the focus area of the Stantec Report. We said essentially the SPA map but some outside, according to what we are told.

We expressed floodplain concerns, need for study of this Largest subwatershed of Sackville River. "We hear you loud and clear." We closed with importance of floodplain study, of protecting wetlands, tributaries and wildlife corridors in that area and that we continue to request the city acquire the land for park and ecosystem protection.

Dec 27, 2024, Forest Bathing – Joan Baxter

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/health/the-healing-powers-of-trees/>

Dalhousie U Health and Nature Study at Sandy Lake Oct 2024 is coming soon

Green Schools webinar w K McKendry:

the "field trip" to Sandy Lake and the EAC office (not the Q&A with kids afterwards):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-W1M9LyH68>

Green Schools about my job as an environmental activist (a green job), including about my work on the Save Sandy Lake campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWyAF5cS1t4>

January 22, 2025, The Government of Nova Scotia released the 2025-26 Five-Year Highway Improvement Plan:

<https://novascotia.ca/tran/highways/5yearplan/highway-plan-2025-26.pdf>

The Sandy Lake Connector is listed, without any studies released, any of the Joint Regional Transportation Agency's work or evaluations, and no public consultation.

January 23, 2025, Premier Houston sent a shocking letter to all PC caucus members, signalling his intention to expedite an array of resource extraction projects – even though it would mean lifting long-standing and hard-won bans on fracking and uranium mining, ending a moratorium on offshore drilling in the important and highly sensitive fishing grounds of Georges Bank and reviving the proposed Energy East pipeline. Houston said he wanted to take the “no” out of Nova Scotia, and, in both a letter to PC MLAs and while speaking to reporters Wednesday, said it was time to stop bowing to ‘special interests’ blocking activities like fracking and uranium mining.

January 25, 2025, new housing minister, Colton LeBlanc, gives HRM an extension to his deadline for consulting w public on proposed regulations to speed up housing starts: <https://halifax.citynews.ca/2025/01/25/hrm-receives-extended-deadline-for-minimum-planning-regulations/>

January 27, 2025, Premier walks back the pledge to drill on Georges Bank after fishing interests pushed back.

January 30, 2025, city planner B. Sivak responded to our email about the status of the Stantec Report on Sandy Lake, “The Sandy Lake portion of the study is now largely complete and Stantec is continuing to complete the reports for the three other study areas. Sorry, I can’t speak to specifics about the process for sharing with the Housing Panel, but will certainly advise when I’m able to provide more information.”

February 7, 2025, the coalition co-chairs write to Alex Levy, Section Head, Regulatory Review, Habitat Protection, Fisheries & Oceans Canada: We expressed that Although F&O doesn’t always have a focus on wetland fish habitat, this appears to be a situation where impact on Sandy Lake itself, its tributaries and numerous wetlands, are all part of one fish habitat ecosystem.

We understand your division undertakes regulatory reviews of proposed infrastructure and are asking that your division take a close look at what mitigation measures the developer is proposing to address both construction and post-construction issues. Also, the newly announced connector road will need equivalent examination. We requested a meeting.

February 11, 2025, Green Schools posted webinars with K McKendry: the "field trip" to Sandy Lake and the

EAC office (not the Q&A with kids afterwards): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-W1M9LyH68>

And about her job as an environmental activist (a green job), including about her work on the Save Sandy Lake campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWyAF5cS1t4>

February 12, 2025, Sandy Lake volunteers post Save Sandy Lake signs in downtown Halifax, including near the Legislature (which returns Feb 14<sup>th</sup>)

February 14, 2025, the first day of the Legislature sitting. The budget and significant bills are presented - The Government Organization and Administration Act, and An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources:

Nova Scotia's fracking ban is being repealed. The government will start mapping the province's uranium deposits, the first step to opening up mining. MLAs and the premier are getting a big raise. The legislature is to have the power to keep auditor general reports private, and to fire the auditor general at will. Non-unionized government employees will now be at-will and can be fired without cause. Communications Nova Scotia is abolished. The Fixed Election Dates law is reversed (This was the first piece of legislation the Houston Government passed when it first took office 4 years ago, and it was brazenly disregarded when Mr. Houston called this fall's election early.)

The auditor general can be fired with a 2/3 vote of the legislature.

The attorney general (who is also the minister of justice) can at their discretion name any auditor general report as "privileged and confidential," which precludes that report from ever being made public. Anyone wanting the sealed attorney general's report to be made public will have to get a court order to reverse the attorney general's privileged and confidential designation, a process that could take years.

Auditor General Kim Adair was not consulted on the changes, according to her communications manager, Amy Pugsley Fraser.

Halifax Examiner: "Premier Tim Houston floods the zone with sweeping changes to government."

"Flooding the zone" is a term used by Steve Bannon, who was very close to U.S. President Donald Trump during his first term. It refers to doing so much so fast that it's impossible for people to keep up. What do you pay attention to when so many changes are brought in at once? What is most important to oppose? How do you oppose it? How do you even keep track of everything that's happening, especially in the absence of good communications?" Experts and news outlets are calling this an attack on Democracy.

February 17, 2025, Coalition Co-chair Walter Regan presents 100 hand-made Valentines to Save Sandy Lake to local MLA Damian Stoilov, PC, asking for his support and to find a way to make his Party aware of the valentines.

February 18, 2025, The Many Versus the Many forum focuses community around current crises sparked by concerning government letters and Bills that present multiple threats to democratic processes in NS and could allow for removing long-term bans on hazardous resource extraction. Event cosponsored by the Council of Canadians, the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, ACORN Canada, The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, the Ecology Action Centre, and the Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council.

<https://canadians.org/event/halifax-the-many-vs-the-money-town-hall-feb-18/>

February 18, 2025, Heartfelt thanks sent from Coalition co-chairs to organizers of Love Letters to Sandy Lake,

[https://www.instagram.com/p/DF-gIOzJwca/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DF-gIOzJwca/?img_index=1)

February 20, 2025, UNESCO's Harmful Algal News reports Unusually late BGA bloom in Sandy Lake (Bedford):

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2025/02/20/unusually-late-bga-bloom-in-sandy-lake-bedford-reported-in-harmful-algal-news-unesco-20feb2025/>

February 20 2025, Media release changing Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA) to 'Link Nova Scotia'. Legislature consolidates power, creates ability to deal with stalemates over properties, and more, to fast-track government projects: <https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2025/02/20/legislation-introduced-help-complete-projects-grow-economy>

Feb 2025 Floodplain Study update

<https://pub-halifax.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=1090>

<https://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Reasons-for-Sandy-Lake-subwatershed-floodplain-study-Jan-24.pdf>

February 24, 2025: The Halifax Examiner reports: “Here are just some of the changes proposed in the last week:

- limit debate in the legislature;
- change the workings of the Law Amendments Committee such that it cannot amend laws;
- restrict information the public can access through the Freedom of Information Act;
- eliminate the independence of the auditor general’s office and withhold the AG’s reports from the public;
- override the authority of municipal governments to make decisions about transportation;
- remove the community consent requirement for fracking, so that Houston’s government can approve fracking projects no matter what communities affected by them think;
- do away with the annual report on emergency department closures, making it harder for the public to understand the state of the health care system.

The Houston government is also coming after the media’s ability to provide independent reporting of its actions. First was gutting the formerly independent Communications Nova Scotia and placing its operations under the direct control of the premier. Second was ending the 175-year practice of ministers scrumming with reporters outside the legislative chamber.

And now they’re saying it out loud: they will refuse to deal with the media. In a recent fundraising letter from the Progressive Conservative Party, Cole Harbour MLA Leah Martin includes this pitch to party members: ‘Will you pitch in here right now to help us withstand NDP attacks, overpower the special interests and professional protestors, bypass the media when we need to, and stay on track with our plan to Make It Happen for Nova Scotia?’ “

February 24 2025, Premier removes threat to auditor General that was in Bill 1:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/auditor-general-tim-houston-premier-legislation-government-1.7467168>

**Comments from Sandy Lake Coalition:** Some of the PC government Bills are of great concern to Nova Scotians who did not see any of these points in the recent election:

- Even with the removal of the lines regarding the Auditor General, Bill 1 still has provisions that could seriously harm how government works. Note the proposed changes to the Freedom of Information Act, including that any minister could simply refuse to respond to a FOIPOP, and that the Municipal Government Act would allow municipalities to do the same. FOIPOPs are an essential part of transparency, but I can’t imagine getting even less information. Changes to the Civil Service Act could cause non-unionized employees to be fired without cause.
- The legislation removed HRM from the Joint Regional Transportation Agency, making it no longer “joint”. The body is to become part of the Department of Transportation and Public Works. The coalition is concerned that the documents from the JRTA will now be ‘lost’. They could provide proof that the Sandy Lake Connector was indeed examined thoroughly rather than what appears to be the case: Evidence in a FOIPOP shows former city councillor Pam Lovelace’s letter where she said she suggested the Sandy Lake park route idea to the Premier shortly before he announced it. In our meeting with the JRTA, Coalition representatives were told that it had been chosen as the “best fit”, but they would not provide us with any of the documents, or even a list of other options that had been vetted.

- Another concern is that this bill gives ultimate power over all transportation decisions anywhere in the province to the minister of public works.
- Bill 6 opens up the processes for fracking and uranium mining, and possibly removes the current community consent requirement for fracking. And more.

All of these have implications for Sandy Lake. FOIPOP's are already highly redacted. The city's voice has been removed from the JRTA, and it is housed now in the Provincial Department of Transportation.

- The JRTA's final report has not been released to the public or to City Council.
- Interest in the Climate emergencies and environmental protection is hardly visible. More authority is given to the province and there is less public input.

February 25, 2025, 'Issues of transparency and accountability are now in question,' law prof says of Houston government's legislative changes:

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/issues-of-transparency-and-accountability-are-now-in-question-law-prof-says-of-houston-governments-legislative-changes/>

February 25 2025, The NS Premier posts a full-page letter "ad" on the front of the Herald using the US President Trump's tariff threats to frighten Nova Scotians into believing we must abandon all precautions and remove bans on resource extraction.

February 25, 2025, the Coalition received a response to our February 7<sup>th</sup> letter to Alex Levy, Section Head, Regulatory Review, Habitat Protection, Fisheries & Oceans Canada: "As DFO's mandate is limited to WUAs that occur in or near water and their potential impacts on fish and fish habitat, it is recommended that the Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition engage with Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change and the Halifax Regional Municipality for further concerns related to this housing development project. ...If your organization identifies any environmental concerns in the area, such as erosion and sedimentation, it is recommended that you report the incident to the National Environmental Emergencies Centre at 1-800-565-1633 to ensure all relevant agencies are notified of the incident."

February 25 2025: Information and Privacy Commissioner Tricia Ralph asks Premier Tim Houston to withdraw legislation affecting her office: <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/information-and-privacy-commissioner-tricia-ralph-asks-premier-tim-houston-to-withdraw-legislation-affecting-her-office/>

February 26 2025: 'An assault on democracy': opposition lambastes PCs' 'bypass the media' fundraising pitch, <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/an-assault-on-democracy-opposition-lambastes-pcs-bypass-the-media-fundraising-pitch/>

February 27 2025, "Premier Tim Houston has a hate on for 'special interest groups' but won't say who they are. Here are the actual special interests in Nova Scotia": <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/premier-tim-houston-has-a-hate-on-for-special-interest-groups-but-wont-say-who-they-are-here-are-the-actual-special-interests-in-nova-scotia/>

"Premier Tim Houston scared the living daylights out of many Nova Scotians with his threats of undoing the moratoria on uranium mining and fracking and with his under-the-table approval of a lithium exploration license to an Australian company in southwest Nova Scotia. Feb 27, 2025":

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/premier-is-pushing-extractive-industries-but-is-anyone-even-interested-in-nova-scotias-uranium-lithium-and-fracking/>

February 27 2025, Premier Tim Houston backs down from confrontation with legislative reporters:

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/premier-tim-houston-backs-down-from-confrontation-with-legislative-reporters/>

February 2025 Sackville River Floodplain Study update is released:  
<https://pub-halifax.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=1090>

February 2025, HRM Budget, Planning and Development business plan held a Key Deliverable on the Halifax Green Network Plan (p. 135) to "Provide a progress report to Regional Council on the Green Network Plan in 2025/26 and complete implementation by 2028/29." We are hopeful of city support despite the province's apparent low priority for environmental protection.

March 3 2025, Medical experts warn fracking and uranium extraction carry dire costs:  
<https://www.theenergymix.com/ns-fracking-uranium-plans-carry-dire-costs-experts-warn/>

March 3 2025, NDP wants pause on lifting of uranium, fracking bans as doctors warn of health risks:  
<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/ndp-wants-pause-on-lifting-of-uranium-fracking-bans-as-doctors-warn-of-health-risks/>

March 4, 2020 Sackville River Mitigation Planning Study 2020  
By DesignPoint Engineering & Surveying Ltd, Section 3.2 Model Updates  
[https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/business/planning-development/sackville-rivers-mitigation-planning-study-2020\\_0.pdf](https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/business/planning-development/sackville-rivers-mitigation-planning-study-2020_0.pdf)  
p. 15 confirms Sandy Lake watershed was not part of this series of studies

March 5 2025, Dismantling Democracy Rally - Hfx Examiner  
<HTTPS://WWW.HALIFAXEXAMINER.CA/DISMANTLING-DEMOCRACY/BEWARE-TIM-HOUSTON-WERE-COMING-SPECIAL-INTERESTS-RALLY-HELD-IN-HALIFAX/>

March 5 2025, Mikmaw Chiefs send stinging rebuke to Premier re resource extraction:  
<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/indigenous-nova-scotia/mikmaw-chiefs-send-stinging-rebuke-to-n-s-premier-tim-houston/>

March 5 2025, Reported in Halifax Examiner March 6:  
The Financial Measures Act (2025) introduced by PC government on March 5  
*"contains the following provisions around housing:*

- *extends rapid approval for housing and housing-related development projects in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) until November 25, 2026*
- *continues to suspend referrals of planning matters to advisory committees and community councils until November 25, 2026*
- *allows the minister of Service Nova Scotia to support developers by continuing the freeze on development fees charged by HRM or Halifax Water, as needed.*
- *Lohr said the province has made no decision on whether to freeze fees beyond 2026. The date of Nov. 25, 2026 aligns with the one-year extension the Houston government previously gave the executive panel on housing that it appointed to fast-track building more housing in HRM. Career civil servant Vicki Elliott-Lopez heads the five-person panel.*

*Here's how Lohr explained the reasoning behind allowing the province to control the reins:  
We've done very well in getting units constructed. At the same time, there is still a housing crisis and we know it's a crisis of affordability. I think that's one of the reasons why we are building more public housing. We still have that sense of urgency to see more units built.  
Lohr was asked by reporters at what point he would consider returning control over housing permits to HRM.*

*Lohr said a 3% apartment vacancy rate was a target he originally considered when he was the municipal affairs and housing minister. He said all the building that has taken place recently has improved the vacancy rate to 2%, compared to 1% a year ago."*

March 17, 18, 19, 2025, Members of the Nova Scotia public voiced concerns in several sessions on the Public Bills Committee regarding the Omnibus Bill they said threatens people's access to information, violates labour rights in the civil service, removes guardrails around government action, undermines democratic processes, gives ministers new powers to override the governance and independence of universities and municipalities, and intends to remove bans and moratoriums on fracking, uranium mining and other resource extraction.

Bill 6, "An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources" will overturn the ban on fracking and opens the door to uranium mining. East Coast Environmental Law, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and the energy coordinator with the Ecology Action Centre speak to the Public Bills Committee on fracking and known hazards from such research extraction.

PC MLA Scott Armstrong attacks the Ecology Action Centre staff member who spoke on her area of expertise, fracking. MLA Armstrong, who by the way attended President Donald Trump's inauguration, accused EAC for receiving some U.S. funding. This is one of several attacks on the EAC by this government. Meanwhile the Houston government gives U.S.-based industries hundreds of millions of dollars and refers to a mining industry PR person as an "expert". <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/how-dare-you-scott-armstrong-pc-mla-criticizes-ecology-action-centre-for-receiving-some-u-s-funding-while-the-houston-government-gives-u-s-based-industries-hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars/>

March 18, 2025, Halifax Council passes first reading of Sackville floodplain proposed changes to municipal planning strategies and land-use bylaws for communities along the Sackville River and Little Sackville River, including Bedford, Lower Sackville and Middle Sackville. It's the first time the planning rules have been changed in the area since the 1980s or early 1990s. Maps are based on a 2017 study that was updated just last year and notably takes climate change models into account. The 2023 floods underlined the importance of these changes. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-gets-first-look-at-long-overdue-sackville-floodplain-changes-1.7487040> Walter Regan and the SRA worked hard to get these. The potential impacts on flooding increase if the Sandy Lake SPA is developed still need to be studied. Sandy Lake SPA contains headwaters for this, the largest of the sub-watersheds of the Sackville River.

March 2025: The Kingswood Ratepayers Assoc, a Coalition member group, posts 4x4 Save Sandy Lake signs at strategic locations on Hammonds Plains Road, Lucasville, and Lower Sackville, with slogans:

"Save Sandy Lake to Reduce Flooding  
Choose Clean Water over Traffic  
Choose Forests over Traffic  
Choose Salmon over Traffic"

The community pulls together as Coalition groups in Lucasville, Uplands Park, and the Sackville Rivers Association assist with the effort, along with citizens who allow the signs to be posted on their private land.

March 27, 2025, The Spring session of the legislature ends, and much of the Houston government's agenda is approved by the PC supermajority. <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/how-will-this-spring-session-of-the-n-s-legislature-be-remembered/>

March 28 2025, Mi'kmaw Chiefs condemn Bill 6 in a letter: <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/halifax-councils-acquiesce-to-police-demands-is-cowardly-and-shameful/#N1> Halifax Examiner

March 2025, Keep the "know" in Nova Scotia: New fact sheets on landowners' rights:

- Fracking and the renewable energy transition
- Lithium mining and battery recycling
- Mining royalty payments
- Uranium exploration and mining
- Landowners' rights
- Nuclear energy and small modular reactors

April 13, 2025, Kingswood's Chris Bryant Global News (follow this link then click on Global News at 6 Maritimes): <https://globalnews.ca/videos/halifax/>

April 23, 2025, Karen M presentation to City's Environment and Sustainability Standing committee (ESSC), summarizes Sandy Lake situation. Starts at 55-minute mark. Includes question section to 1:15 mark. <https://www.youtube.com/live/8OPpbHYT-Mk>

May 16 2025, PC Government media release announces Secondary Planning is to go forward at Sandy Lake and Highway 102: : <https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2025/05/16/minister-designates-new-special-planning-area-two-major-studies-complete>

May 16, 2025, the awaited **Stantec Land Suitability** or "Background Studies" were released the same day, May 16, 2025, without any public consultation process. This is the first time to our knowledge that Secondary Planning was announced before any public process.

These technical studies include a land suitability assessment, watershed study, transportation study, and review of water and wastewater infrastructure. These studies can be found here:

- Summary, Stantec LSA Report Sandy Lake, released May 16 2025:

[https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/9817/5527/1951/cb7d080ee349934d76776f46d4157d3e\\_Sandy20Lake20Summary20Report.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/9817/5527/1951/cb7d080ee349934d76776f46d4157d3e_Sandy20Lake20Summary20Report.pdf)

- Land Suitability Analysis, Stantec LSA Report Sandy Lake, released May 16 2025:

[https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7317/5527/1954/78231d0b45e1b984761ea71cb21442f3\\_Sandy20Lake20Land20Suitability20Analysis.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7317/5527/1954/78231d0b45e1b984761ea71cb21442f3_Sandy20Lake20Land20Suitability20Analysis.pdf)

- Watershed and Stormwater, Stantec LSA Report Sandy Lake, released May 16 2025:

[https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7817/5527/1958/284aef783adb871294e69fbf0623ac82\\_Sandy20Lake20Watershed20and20Stormwater20Management20Study.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/7817/5527/1958/284aef783adb871294e69fbf0623ac82_Sandy20Lake20Watershed20and20Stormwater20Management20Study.pdf)

- Lake Servicing Study, Stantec LSA Report Sandy Lake, released May 16 2025:

[https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/8517/5527/1950/de6cd3edc7f2092ce8025a122f405e56\\_Sandy20Lake20Servicing20Study.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/8517/5527/1950/de6cd3edc7f2092ce8025a122f405e56_Sandy20Lake20Servicing20Study.pdf)

- Transportation Study, Stantec LSA Report Sandy Lake, released May 16 2025:

[https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/9917/5527/1960/3dbcd91a4cfa3e6a37431334ebbbd5ee\\_Sandy20Lake20Transportation20Study.pdf](https://hdp-ca-prod-app-hfx-engage-files.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/9917/5527/1960/3dbcd91a4cfa3e6a37431334ebbbd5ee_Sandy20Lake20Transportation20Study.pdf)

- The RFP is the tender doc that described what the successful bidder will have to include in their work to study 4 of the "future growth areas" that the Province/HRM wants (Sandy Lake, BMBLC, Morris Lake, Akoma Lands): <https://procurement-portal.novascotia.ca/tenders/HRM-22-373>  
RFP Number: 22-373, Date Issued: October 6, 2022  
Pages 17 - 26 and pages 40 - 42 are most relevant for Sandy Lake.

Coalition Response to Secondary Planning release - Global News at 6, May 16 2025

<https://globalnews.ca/video/11184499/global-news-at-6-halifax-may-16-2025/>

starts at 8:16

Saltwire May 16 2025 Sandy Lake Secondary Planning

<https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/nearly-20000-housing-units-proposed-for-sandy-lake-highway-102-west-developments>

CBC news May 16 2025, CAPE quotes re Sandy Lake aspect:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/n-s-designates-new-special-planning-area-near-blue-mountain-birch-cove-lakes-1.7536939>

Expediency and Env Protection – NS can have both , Geoff Hurley, May 28 2025

<https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/halifax/opinion-halifax/commentary-expediency-and-environmental-protection-nova-scotia-can-have-both>

HPR Functional Plan update to Council May 2025 (being put off)

<https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/community-councils/250512nwcc131.pdf>

June 11, 2025, "N.S. premier's letters to municipalities that asked for 'pause' on uranium contain thinly-veiled threats." (Halifax Examiner): <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/20250611-Premier-Tim-Houston-letter-to-West-Hants-on-uranium.pdf>

Note the letter states: "We are going to get both sides of the story, gather facts and have healthy discussion on a project-by-project basis. Not every project will proceed - some projects in some areas are simply not conducive to development and that is fine."

(The Coalition continues to point out the facts to the Premier that "Sandy Lake is simply not conducive to development." Development at all costs will not serve the future well.)

June 18 2025, City News: <https://halifax.citynews.ca/2025/06/17/some-n-s-municipalities-who-voted-for-pause-on-uranium-get-letters-from-premier/>

June 19, City Hall, Public Hearing on new Regional Plan: recorded speeches:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGKRc1xtNeM>

Kateryna Radchenko's speech to Council here: <https://youtu.be/SC-cW2Xj2X4>

June 19 2025, Suzanne Rent Halifax Examiner: <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/special-planning-areas-halifaxs-regional-plan-and-changing-how-we-design-communities/>

June 23, 2025 Halifax Examiner, HRM Council Regional Plan public presentations - Sandy Lake features: <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/government/city-hall/speakers-share-concerns-about-density-infrastructure-loss-of-nature-at-public-hearing/>

July 7, 2025, Walter Regan on CBC National re floodplains:

video version: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgfsQ\\_pZVgc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgfsQ_pZVgc)

written version: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/flooding-canada-preparedness-1.7578994>

July 25 2025, Dr. David Patriquin releases his response to the Minister of Housing re: the Stantec May 2025 Sandy Lake Land Suitability Analysis water section, finding it “deeply inadequate”.

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2025/07/25/community-studies-for-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-special-planning-area-ignore-critical-data-on-water-quality-23jul2025/>

Click on “view documents” at the end of the post to see Dr. Patriquin’s July 25 2025 letter, comments, and notes, or see these direct links:

Letter: <https://versicolor.ca/sdocs/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PatriquinLetterSandyLake18July2025.pdf>

Comments Document: <https://versicolor.ca/sdocs/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PatriquinSandyLakeComments18Jul2025.pdf>

Notes: <https://versicolor.ca/sdocs/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PatriquinSandyLakeNotes18Jul2025.pdf>

The retired Dalhousie professor and researcher states that he has not been studying Sandy Lake in order to stop a development. He studies it because there is so much to be learned from this outstanding place. However, he has uncovered strong evidence that effort is needed to turn around the serious decline in water quality – human-caused decline.

Key quote: “Sandy Lake is in trouble NOW... [Development] will do it in.”

August 1, 2025, Zebedee case re: Eisner Cove:

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2025/08/01/citizen-launches-legal-action-against-mount-hope-development-ltd-re-damage-to-wetland-1aug-2025/>

Aug 6 2025, Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA, now Link Nova Scotia) report released:

Main page: Link NS re Transportation plan: <https://linknovascotia.ca/regional-transportation-plan/>

The Plan: [https://linknovascotia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JRTA\\_Regional\\_Transportation\\_Plan\\_Full\\_Report\\_SINGLES\\_FINAL\\_20250805-web.pdf](https://linknovascotia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JRTA_Regional_Transportation_Plan_Full_Report_SINGLES_FINAL_20250805-web.pdf)

The Executive Summary: [https://linknovascotia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JRTA\\_Regional\\_Transportation\\_Plan\\_Full\\_Report\\_SINGLES\\_FINAL\\_20250805-SUMMARY.pdf](https://linknovascotia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JRTA_Regional_Transportation_Plan_Full_Report_SINGLES_FINAL_20250805-SUMMARY.pdf)

The Government response:

<https://linknovascotia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/25-55544-143345-Government-Response-to-Link-Report.pdf>

August 11, 2025, the long-awaited and long-worked-on Regional Plan was passed by City Council only to be rejected by The Province. Organizations, businesses, citizens, worked alongside the city for a decade to create the new Regional Plan which included a modest increase in riparian buffers from 20 metres to 30 metres. The Province rejected the plan because it sees 30 metre buffers and electric vehicle charging stations as barriers to their priority of more housing.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/province-rejects-halifax-regional-plan-says-wetland-setbacks-impede-housing-1.7606337>

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/by-rejecting-halifaxs-regional-plan-updates-the-houston-government-is-abandoning-its-own-environmental-policies/>

<https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/halifax/regional-plan-rejected-housing-municipal-affairs>

August 18, 2025, Limnological profiles confirm long term trend of decline in the health of Sandy Lake (Bedford, NS), a major new development on its headwaters could do it in, data continue to be ignored.

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/2025/08/18/latest-limnological-profiles-confirm-long-term-trend-of-decline-in-the-health-of-sandy-lake-bedford-ns-a-major-new-development-on-its-headwaters-could-do-it-in-data-continue-to-be-ignored-18aug20/>

September 8 2025, SLCA President speaks to North West Community Council on The Situation at Sandy Lake, starts at 1:59:00 and lasts 10 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/aCDd0giPDwg>

September 18, 2025, Coalition team meets with Senior Advisor to Minister of Growth and Development Colton LeBlanc and several members of the Housing Task Force (HTF). The Coalition outlines the deficiencies with the Stantec report and requests the work we done well before decisions are made. It underlines again the need for the full Floodplain Study in order to protect Sackville and Bedford from floods. The HTF insists the Province only provided the funds for the city to do the Background Studies, that they know nothing about planning/development themselves, so they are relying on the city to follow all of their regular processes and make a recommendation to the Province about development at Sandy Lake. They seem unaware that the city is struggling to do all of the processes well within the truncated timeline required by the Province. However, they also say the Minister has taken the place of City Council in the final decision. They request that the Coalition send them all of the studies that were given to Stantec but that were ignored/not used in the report. (Coalition sends the missing scientific studies on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> but as of December 31 2025 has no acknowledgement of their receipt or of any planned action.)

September 24, 2025, Coalition team meets with several city planners working on the Sandy Lake SPA. The Coalition refers to the Province's August 2024 Directive and other well-publicized reports of the Province having taken over housing from the city. Also underlined is that the coalition is seeing the shortened processes are already short-changing Sandy Lake. The city says nothing to undermine the Province in any way, just the facts. It is confirmed that the text/requirements of the RFP are the same in the final contract with Stantec and, most importantly, that city staff tried to get all of the terms of the RFP acted upon. They confirmed that didn't happen, but stopped short of saying why that didn't happen. Also, that the Sandy Lake evaluation process would have taken 10 years to carefully conduct in the past. The province is requiring city staff do it in two years or less.

September 26, 2025, St Mary's U international study, Sandy Lake data 2025, Sept 26, St. Mary's U., Award Abstract # 2306894 Collaborative Research: University of Missouri System. MRA: *On thin ice - implications of shorter winters for the future of freshwater phytoplankton phenology and function.*

"Some of the sample collected will go to in-house testing for N, P and chlorophyll as a "trial run" for the undergraduate course (at St Mary's U). The rest will go to an international study that we have volunteered to participate in looking at the impact of ice cover (in the context of climate change causing shorter and less intense winters) on algae growth in lakes, and will also include a winter sampling event. This data will include nutrients (N, P, DOC), phytoplankton ID and phytotoxin analysis." J. Younker, SMU

Data documented with permission at:

<https://versicolor.ca/sandylakebedford/waters/lakes/limnol-profiles/#sep2025>

September 2025, the Coalition has been sharing with governments its critique of the Stantec Report, along with requests of the Province and city that the missing data be used, and important studies such as the floodplain study be done before any decisions are made.

**Below are the Coalition team's main, high-level comments regarding what is missing or especially problematic about the background studies completed by Stantec:**

A. Lacking from all reports

1. **No study of flooding risk for lower Sackville River based on potential development at Sandy Lake.** From the RFP:

*“Review any existing floodplain mapping or other available flood resources to identify potential flood hazards currently existing within the watershed.”*

It is vital that a study be completed that examines the potential flooding risk on the lower Sackville River that is based on the proposed development scenarios within the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area. The Sackville River floods, impacting homes, businesses, infrastructure, and more in the floodplain of the Sackville River. In 2023 a flood on the lower Sackville River caused substantial damage and took one life. Rivers like the Sackville River flood more extensively when forested land in the watershed is converted to hard surfaces such as the roads and houses proposed in the Clayton development. The Sandy Lake subwatershed is the largest subwatershed in the Sackville River watershed. How water moves through the Sandy Lake subwatershed could have a profound effect on flooding downstream. It is imperative that the potential increased flood risk to the lower Sackville River be modeled before development decisions are made.

## B. Land Suitability Analysis

1. **Lack of analysis of potential impacts on Sandy Lake Regional Park despite this requirement in the RFP.** From the RFP:

*“Special Considerations:*

*The Sandy Lake Study Area is located to the west of the Sandy Lake Regional Park. Land acquisition and planning for the park is ongoing. Maintaining the integrity of the park, including the functioning of shared environmental, recreational and cultural features, must be considered as part of this study. This includes consideration of the visual impact and compatibility of development in the vicinity of the park.”*

Also:

*“Identify habitat, open spaces and other features that should be preserved and recommend mitigation and remedial measures to reduce the impact of potential development.”*

2. **Lack of serious consideration or use of HRM Council’s motion regarding the Sandy Lake Environmental Features Assessment (a.k.a the McCallum report) despite requirement to use this report in the RFP.** From the RFP:

*“The Sandy Lake Environmental Features Assessment was recently completed to identify areas of ecological significance for consideration during the park planning process. On July 12, 2022, Regional Council passed the following motion for consideration as part of this study area:*

*1. Review and use the findings of the Sandy Lake Ecological Features Assessment in the background studies being undertaken for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area, including organizing the form and location of development to best protect:*

- a) at least the suggested widths for important corridors,*
- b) at least the suggested riparian and watercourse buffers, and*
- c) at least the identified areas of predicted old or mature forest...”*

3. **Lack of inclusion of several, relevant reports and datasets, despite the requirement to do so in the RFP.** From the RFP:

*“HRM provided resources include:... Any other relevant reports and studies upon request”*

Also:

*“Other resources include:*

- *Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition*
- *Forests and Surface Waters of Sandy Lake & Environs – A Natural History Perspective”*

All relevant studies were sent to HRM and Stantec. Despite this, the following are key studies that were not used in support of Stantec’s work:

- Dr. David Patriquin’s work on Sandy Lake and Environs website
- Natural Wonders study on SAR, birds, and wildlife corridors
- Dr. Karen Beazley’s contributions regarding wildlife corridors
- [iNaturalist](#) observations
- The park planning study and rationale commissioned by SLCA done by retired HRM planner J Skora
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 1986 Jack Lake report is mentioned but one of 2 main reasons for not developing at Jack Lake is left out – the need for strict mitigations to protect the lakes
- Blue-Green Algae report of Nov 2024, confirmed by UNESCO
- Impacts from approved development in Bedford West Subareas 12 & 1 which are within the Sandy Lake subwatershed
- The decomposing sludge in Sandy Lake since the 2013 cut of 300 acres
- Reports that Wild Atlantic Salmon and Mainland Moose are confirmed in the lake/watershed
- Archaeological ‘pre-contact’ study

**All of the above-listed “missing” studies, and other “missing” studies, have also been sent to the Task Force.** All missing studies can be accessed at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/atrlmdpl9up4ag3fioxfj/ADBGT9WVEmbWS2fdUvt-cEc?rlkey=9rk7ist8yvkyho1sqzdyozsx&e=1&st=juis8vcn&dl=0>

**4. Not all wetlands in the study area were visited and studied.** From the RFP:

*“Appendix A, Detailed Scope of Services, 3.3.1.1.1 Delineate, assess, and inventory all watercourses and wetlands...”*

There are 24 wetlands in the Sandy Lake SPA Study Area as per Stantec’s desktop and field work. The RFP required delineation, assessment, and inventorying of all wetlands in the Study Area, but Stantec reported only conducting these field assessments on 13 of the 24 wetlands. The work on wetlands is incomplete and should be completed in order to get a true picture of the watercourses and wetlands, and the potential impacts on them of development.

**5. Wildlife corridors mapping is incomplete and incorrect.**

- I. The wildlife corridor identification work completed by Natural Wonders Consulting Firm, which shows wildlife corridors in the study area left out of the Land Suitability Analysis. It should be included in the analysis and the map of wildlife corridors in the Study Area.
- II. 100m wide wildlife corridors are proposed over top of streams, which actually creates 50m terrestrial wildlife corridors on either side of stream, falling short of the 100m needed on each side. This is important for terrestrial species that cannot cross streams but can move or disperse over land. The mapping and analysis should be redone to truly include 100m wide

terrestrial wildlife corridors on both sides of streams.

- III. Aquatic corridors are not considered, although they are needed and are proposed in the “Wildlife Corridor Landscape Design Charrette Report.” Using the Charrette Report and potentially other sources of information, key aquatic corridors to be maintained should be proposed in the Study Area.

6. **Biological Components weighting is different between the Sandy Lake SPA Interim/Draft report and the Final report.** From the Interim/Draft report:

*“Each of the three LSA figures for the biological components have been weighted equally and combined to show the overall summary LSA of biological components (Figure 3.17).”*

From the Final report:

*“Each of the three LSA figures for the biological components have been weighted and combined to show the overall summary LSA of biological components (Figure 3.17). Habitat LSA and Wetland LSA scores have been averaged and Stantec manually adjusted the weighting of policy-protected constraints including established environmental buffers such as watercourse setbacks and wetlands intersected by watercourses. These features were deemed to have low development suitability and were manually emphasized as indicated by the red shading in Figure 3.17.”*

**The change in weighting of components results in a map that shows more developable area in the Final report than in the Interim/Draft report.**

C. Watershed and Stormwater Management

Main points from Dr. Patriquin’s independent examination of the study:

1. Stantec’s background studies did not include Dr. Patriquin’s limnological data, or that of Casey Doucet (although Doucet’s study is listed in the references). Why was this data ignored?
2. This data has ramifications, including that it indicates there may be issues with lake water quality that Stantec’s work does not examine. These include very low deep water oxygen levels, and internal phosphorus loading.
3. Current development scenarios show building in the most sensitive area of the subwatershed (west side of Sandy Lake where the lake’s tributaries are located).

For a deep dive into the extreme flaws in the Sandy Lake water quality section of the reports see Dr. Patriquin’s [Community Studies for Sandy Lake \(Bedford, NS\) Special Planning Area “ignore” critical data on water quality 25Jul2025](#)

D. Traffic study

1. Traffic modeling looks at more than 6,000 units. The number of units considered varies across the background studies. This is problematic because the studies predict potential impacts for different numbers of units and development layout. Ultimately studies must be harmonized to predict impacts for a consistent number of units.
2. Traffic modeling includes a “Do Minimum” scenario that allows us to compare to a baseline. This should have been done for all elements being examined in background studies.

3. The traffic report does recognize that wildlife corridors from the Halifax Green Network Plan may be negatively impacted. All background studies should examine how wildlife corridors could be impacted.
4. The traffic study did not model a “Sandy Lake Connector” (Hammonds Plains Road to Hwy 101 connection). It is vital that potential impacts of “Sandy Lake Connector” be modeled if it is seriously being considered for construction. Its potential path lies right in the area where wildlife corridors are needed, and where the tributaries of Sandy Lake lie.

#### E. Servicing study

1. This infrastructure modeling work assumes a 30m buffer around wetlands and watercourses, not more. Again, the 50m – 100m buffers must be considered.
2. This infrastructure modeling works with Clayton’s proposed development plan and does not avoid or modify development in the proposed wildlife corridors in Land Suitability Analysis. Wildlife corridors must be planned for an would likely involve avoiding or modifying development in the area where wildlife corridors are needed.

#### F. Across reports

##### 1. Incorrect buffers for wetlands and watercourses

The buffers seem to be 30m in all modeling in the reports and maps of proposed development. But the “McCallum Report” and related HRM Council motion state that 50m – 100m buffers must be examined. This was not respected.

##### 2. Wildlife corridors were only identified in the LSA. They were not used in the other studies.

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**As noted above, one of the Coalition’s main concerns is that several reports and studies relevant to making a solid decision regarding to develop or not to develop were left out of Stantec’s report, despite the fact that they were sent to Stantec either by the scientists who conducted the independent studies, or by the Coalition. The well over 20 missing documents have been sent to the Task Force and HRM, and are contained in this dropbox until this matter is resolved:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/atrlmdpl9up4ag3fioxfi/ADBGT9WVEmbWS2fdUvt-cEc?rlkey=9rk7ist8yvkyho1sqzdyyozsx&e=1&st=qr6y0ukg&dl=0>

#### October 3, 2025, Province Takes Further Steps to Unlock Development in HRM

<https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2025/10/03/province-takes-further-steps-unlock-development-hrm>

The measures include Municipal Affairs Minister John Lohr designating HRM as an interim planning area. Under this order, new minimum planning requirements for HRM take effect immediately. The designation also enables some policies from HRM’s Regional Plan for suburban growth, and the Minister has taken other additional steps to support transit-oriented growth. ...The interim planning area order removes barriers to residential development in the region.

October 24, 2025, The Sandy Lake Conservation Association sends a letter to Halifax City Hall to encourage the city to stand up for the years of work that the city, organizations, businesses, and citizens put into creating the new Regional Plan that the Province chose not to approve, based in particular on the province’s assertion that

30-metre riparian buffers and electric car charging stations are 'barriers to development'.

<https://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SLCA-submission-to-the-Regional-Plan-2025.pdf>

October 24, 2025, Halifax releases notice of Public Engagement on Sandy Lake and Bluewater Birch Cove Lakes Special Planning Areas. Sandy Lake is to be November 12 and BMBCL November 19.

For Sandy Lake: <https://engagehalifax.ca/sandy-lake-special-planning-area>

Oct 28, 2025, Becky Druhan, leaves PC Caucus to be Independent. "Over time, it has become clear that there are some differences of principle between my views and those of leadership."

<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/as-tim-houston-becomes-more-dictatorial-becky-druhan-quits-the-pc-caucus/#V1>

November 12, 2025, HRM's Sandy Lake SPA Open House. Bedford United Church, 10-12, 2-4, 6:30-8:30. The Coalition is denied permission to include its materials alongside the city and developer's maps/info boards. Coalition has maps of environmental aspects from the McCallum Report (Heatmap, Buffers map, and main summary map) and the Stantec Report's wildlife corridors map and summary Land Suitability map. The church then rents the Coalition a room upstairs. Signs are quickly fashioned to direct Open House attendees to the remote room. Note: The maps presented by the Coalition are all from HRM-funded studies that the coalition believes the public has a right to see alongside the pro-development maps that are part of the HRM main event.

The event demonstrates that the public process continues to be truncated as compared to the standard public processes HRM used to undertake: There is no microphone or overview speech/presentation of "how this plan will serve the community"; no question-and-answer section based on a presentation. Attendees can view a slide show and talk to HRM staff and Clayton representatives manning the display boards around the room, but attendees are left to their own abilities to get an understanding of the maps and to ask questions. Many express feeling out of their depth.

It is evident however that HRM planners are trying to get and give as much information as possible within the directives required of them by the Province. As an example, as they used to do, they provide sticky-notes and a big table so people can write their concerns and feedback. Also, there is an on-line survey. Note that the survey has only development-related questions, such as 'what kind of houses would you like to see'. There are a couple boxes in the survey where paragraphs of independent thought can be included. The Coalition informs the public where possible that environmental or other non-development comments or concerns can be accommodated there, even though the survey questions do not relate to anything but development.

The developer reveals an entirely new development map plan of the area. Note the Stantec LSA was based on the previous map, and states that deviations from the original map and information could invalidate conclusions from the report.

November 17, 2025, Kingswood Ratepayers Association AGM: Coalition Co-chair Walter Regan guest speaker. Mr. Regan gave an excellent overview of Sandy Lake's historical and environmental facts. An audience member asked if what Mr. Regan said was true. For some reason, the local PC MLA chose to answer, saying, "It's a perspective, stitched together to give a perspective, but Sandy Lake has been on the municipality's radar for development for 20 years." That is what MLAs are being told to say, what they believe.

There was no-one there with the deep knowledge of Mr. Regan to defend his presentation. The Coalition is working now to correct the partial truth that MLAs are using. Beyond the insult to Mr. Regan, the important facts are that the 2006 Municipal Planning Strategy listed Sandy Lake to be considered for "possible development" within the life of the plan. A full evaluation would determine if development would be approved or not. HRM decides against some developments. However, the Province seems to think that just being on the list for evaluation means development is guaranteed. We have heard some MLAs even scoff at

the incompetence of HRM for not having managed to develop Sandy Lake by now, when they have had 20 years to do it! The Coalition continues to work to bring truth to the situation.

November 24, 2025, Coalition discovers on the BMBCL HRM SPA page Links to 4 declassified docs.

Re: Sandy Lake: [pub-halifax.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=2901](https://pub-halifax.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=2901)

[Intergovernmental Relations - Declassified Presentation - Feb 4/25 Regional Council | Halifax.ca](#)

Also, Re: BMBCL: [Intergovernmental Relations - Declassified Report - Apr 29/25 | Halifax.ca](#)

[Intergovernmental Relations - Declassified Presentation - Apr 29/25 Regional Council | Halifax.ca](#)

**Regarding the first doc, HRM Feb 4 2025** in-camera report on SL DECLASSIFIED: [Intergovernmental Relations - Declassified Report - Feb 4/25 | Halifax.ca](#)

Reports by planner Ben S to Regional Council that public has not seen before seem to have been provided in-camera and then “declassified” later, and now are available on the Highway 102 Corridor Lands SPA webpage.

Go to <https://engagehalifax.ca/highway-102-special-planning-area>, under Documents (on the right) click “See more,” then click [Future Serviced Communities Study - January 2025 Regional Council Report](#)

Summary:

- Background includes that **in Feb. 2023 “the province directed HRM to prioritize the Sandy Lake SPA as a condition of its funding”**
- Sandy Lake – 400 ha, 59 property owners, 4 development proposals
- Municipal position: await completion of JRTA transportation plan before proceeding to secondary planning
- Sandy Lake is “medium to long-term growth” (10+ years)
- **Dependent on major infrastructure upgrades**
- “Other growth opportunities may be able to support more cost-effective housing development in a shorter timeframe”
- **“Significant municipal costs expected”**
- “FSC study shows that portions of the site can support urban development provided key recommendations are implemented through further planning work.”
- Flood risk and stormwater management
  - o Significant flooding issues
  - o No development recommended in 1:100 year floodplain
  - o “Requires adjustments to initial concepts proposed by developers”
  - o “Careful approach to ensure no negative impacts on infrastructure, property and public safety”
  - o *(Shows flooding map we haven’t seen before)*
- Ecology and environment – consider watercourse buffers, risks to SL water quality, SAR, wildlife corridors, “key features for protection generally align with flood risk areas”
- Limited opportunities to support early phases before major infrastructure is programmed or constructed
- **Any approvals for early phases can only be supported once overall planning is sufficiently advanced to ensure development starts in the right location and aligns with broader land management strategies**
- **Development Agreements – “Direct the CAO on advice of the Executive Director of Planning and Development to return any Development Agreements for Special Planning Areas unsigned that are not consistent with relevant Regional Plan, secondary municipal planning strategy, and priority plan policies.”**
- **Even though Minister can overrule HRM positions, sign within 14 days**

- **“Not signing the agreement indicates the lack of Municipal support and helps mitigate any legal and political risks associated with a development that is inconsistent with relevant planning policies.”**

December 1, 2025, the Coalition sends a letter to HRM as part of the Public Engagement Process (which also included the Nov 12, 2025 open house). This message is equally important to go to the Province. The letter clarifies several points that seem to be misunderstood by decision-makers, and underlines the seriousness of the risks to Sandy Lake Regional Park, Sandy and Marsh Lakes and the Sackville River ecosystem: <https://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SL-SRRPCoalition-public-engagement-letter-Dec-1-2025.pdf>

December 2, 2025, The Sandy Lake Conservation Association sends a public engagement letter to HRM, and copied to the Province, to provide a summary of important current information on the situation that is putting Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake, Sandy Lake Regional Park through to the Sackville River, at serious risk. <https://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SLCA-public-engagement-letter-Sandy-Lake-December-2-2025.pdf>

December 2025: Coalition discovers on the Provincial Government’s portal of FOIPOP documents a letter of **October 22, 2024** from Clayton Developments to the Premier (on which none of the mentioned parties were copied)

[https://openinformation.novascotia.ca/FOI-Requests/2025-02385-PRE/723y-6g96/about\\_data](https://openinformation.novascotia.ca/FOI-Requests/2025-02385-PRE/723y-6g96/about_data)

- The letter refers to the October 1 2024 submission by Dr. D Patriquin, calling his summary report on Sandy Lake water quality “pseudo-science” (*Note: The report was reviewed and approved by qualified limnologists. It included a map compilation of water quality tests over the long-term showing the quality trajectory. Data points were done by universities, by researchers, and from HRM-funded reports.*)
- Accuses Dr. D. P. of working “on behalf of residents currently living on Sandy Lake”, people who have ‘Inherent bias” to “maintain their current exclusive status residing directly on Sandy Lake”. (*Note: He has never worked for lake residents, although he sends the 30-group Coalition the results of his studies. While there may be a few residents with that self-centered view, they are the minority and are not members of the so-called “special interest” organizations which have the long history of working to preserve the park assets, including water quality of 3 lakes, the streams and wetlands that feed the system through to the Sackville River. Also note that living in a park is a lot of work compared to living in a streeted city community. Dwellers serve as unofficial guardians, the eyes and ears of City Parks; they share the neighbouring lake and lands with thousands of park users each year, and welcome their role as protectors of what they recognize is a responsibility to protect - an amazing ecosystem. Lakedwellers responses to the letter: That they sip mint juleps as they lounge on their private lake is the developer’s NIMBY fantasy. One asks how far from the lake’s edge a resident has to live in order to be respected.*)
- It asserts that the NS Department of Environment & CC ‘s policies and regulations ensure build-outs that do no harm to lakes. (*Stormwater experts instead say that stormwater regulation in NS are among the worst, if not the worst, in Canada because they only account for quantity of flow, not quality. For example, in Calgary there are 3 levels of retention ponds: level 1 for volume, 2&3 filter impurities. The 20-metre “buffers” being required by the Province instead of the 30-metre HRM Regional Plan recommend size are actually setbacks, not really buffers. Also see the sludge at the mouth of the western brook that has been affecting the lake’s nutrient load since the 2013 clear-cut of 300 acres, which followed all the provincial requirements and 20-metre buffers, yet has caused long-term harm to the lake’s water quality. Also, note the siltation incident of March 2024 which was stopped by NSECC officers who commented that silt incidents are so badly managed that they receive requests for action almost daily.*)

Why did the developers not copy the subjects of their accusations? The letter happened to be discovered in the government portal.

December 16, 2025, SLCA president/Coalition Co-chair K Robinson meets with Environment Minister Hallman. He has fond memories of his walk at Sandy Lake Park in 2022. She requests that the department make sure that all studies that were ignored or not done in the Stantec Report get done with NSDECC oversight. Also, that the department work quickly to improve its stormwater and wetland protection regulations (see comments above). If it can't be done quickly, will the department request that Sandy Lake be removed from the SPA list until true protection can be guaranteed? The Minister suggests that the Coalition continue to work with the Housing Task Force and the local compliance office.

January 8, 2026 Coalition's third meeting with members of the Housing Task Force, this time along with HRM development staff, as we requested.

Coalition concerns noted were:

1. The full floodplain study of potential effects on flooding in Sackville and Bedford – a matter of public safety and ethics,
2. Study the potential impacts on the park, lakes and waters through to the Sackville River. While developers have the right to apply to develop their properties, no-one has the right to cause damage to neighbouring properties, be they privately owned or publicly owned properties such as a public park of considerable value. Sandy Lake had dual, conflicting, futures in the 2006 and 2014 Regional Plans that we were assured would be sorted out in the 2020 review. Unfortunately, the province decided to make Sandy Lake an SPA before that process could be done. That problem still exists.
3. Stantec showed no consideration of the site-specific McCallum study and Council's motion on the recommendation that this special case requires 50-metre and 100-metre riparian buffers – this must be done.
4. There is no more sensitive place to build than in the headwaters, the tributaries and wetlands that feed the lakes, park and neighbouring areas. Wetland/watercourse alteration protocols do not recognize the combined functioning of the water network. Will there be a study to determine how many and which wetlands can be 'altered' before harm begins to be done to the system downstream?
5. Significant wildlife corridors exist in this area and must be maintained. Stantec acknowledged the corridors, yet the final LSA maps did not contain them. Further, the maps revealed at the open house show very little awareness of how corridors work.
6. Stantec's report states that they did not have time to do the full scope of what they normally would do. They identified at least 20 items needing further study. One could not justify moving ahead with development before all the facts are in, so this is important.
7. The Clayton map now being evaluated bears little resemblance to the map that the LSA studies were based upon. Stantec warned in the report that straying from the scope/maps they studied could negate their recommendations and conclusions.
8. Within all of this is a wild card: the province has 100% jurisdiction over a proposed connector road that was not modeled in the Stantec Report, yet presents existential challenges to the park, lakes, and the outstanding ecological values that have been well documented over at least 5 decades.

All of these reasons we suggested are enough to warrant major further study and evaluation, possibly an entirely new or expanded LSA. A reasonable way out of this difficult situation is to remove Sandy Lake from the SPA list, protect it all as park, and enable the developers to put the needed housing in a more sensible place. Clayton told us in 2018 that they would trade, having done so for communities in at least three places. It

is important to also do this at Sandy Lake. We could all celebrate this cooperative decision made for the good of all.

It was indeed very helpful to have all of us in the room at the same time. Coalition asked how the ignored and deficient issues from the Stantec Report will be addressed. HRM staff said they are in the beginning of the Planning Review, assessing next steps. The Provincial reps said they will expect to get recommendations from HRM and then costing and such will be determined.

February 3 2026: After months of letters and efforts to find out from the Houston government which Minister receives reports from the Housing Task Force and is responsible for SPA decisions, the Coalition receives an informed response from one member of the Task Force whose email we happened to find. *“Minister John White, in his role as Minister of Housing, is responsible for the Housing in HRM Act, which establishes the Executive Panel for Housing in HRM. This responsibility was assigned to him through an Order in Council following his appointment. While the legislation itself has not yet been amended to reflect this change, the Order in Council formally assigns the Minister authority for the Act.”*

Ongoing, 2025-2026: Text on HRM’s Engage Halifax website on Sandy Lake SPA, <https://engagehalifax.ca/sandy-lake-special-planning-area>: *“Background: The 2006 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy designated these lands as “Urban Settlement” (US) - a potential growth area...”*

*Two important aspects of this:*

- *As written in the 2006 MPS, Sandy Lake was to be considered for a ‘potential growth area’. In practice, the city conducts evaluation processes of proposed developments to determine whether to go ahead or not. In some cases, they choose not. However, the Province has been functioning as if just being on the list to be examined is reason enough to approve housing.*
- *At least 6 times the Province has overruled Council’s decisions of late – HRM chose not to proceed w secondary planning at BMBCL(Hwy 102 Corridor), but the Province overruled and proceeded. Also, Bedford West 12 & 1 liveable plan was rejected and density chosen, HRM said no to Indigo Shores and the Province went ahead. See Eisner’s Cove and Port Wallis. HRM recommended it was premature to advance to secondary planning at Sandy Lake, but the Province announced secondary planning on the same day that they released the Stantec LSA to the public (May 16 2025). Normally, there would be a public engagement process before HRM would decide to go ahead or not with secondary planning. Building at all costs seems to be the Provincial goal, and unfortunately the Province is demonstrating it has very little experience in making real-life housing decisions. Has the Province realized yet how clever the developers are at getting what they want? That the city should be commended for doing the hard task of making sure it is planners/council that decide how the city develops, not developers?*

*The Coalition is grateful we are able to meet with the city and Housing Task Force, and will continue to work to increase awareness and quality of information for evidence-based decisions. We ask the Province to remove Sandy Lake from the SPA list and work with the developers to build the needed homes in a better place that will not destroy a treasured Regional Park.*