

# The Blue Mountain NEWS



Glacial Boulder & Spring Barrens (BMBCL), Irwin Barrett

This newsletter is produced by the Friends of Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Society. It is all about the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area and the planned regional, wilderness park for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

#### Friends of Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes - Mission Statement:

*To support and promote the creation and development of the Blue mountain Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park and to encourage the stewardship and appropriate use of the area.*

## PROGRESS ON PARK PLAN

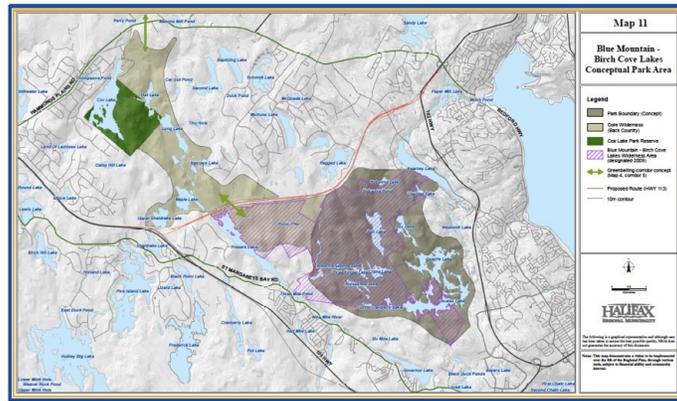
HRM Councillor Richard Zurawski was successful in bringing forward a motion on June 10 that will result in the completion of a staff report that will address land acquisitions, associated costs, timeline and much more pertaining to a public plan for the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) Regional Wilderness Park. The motion passed unanimously, and we would like to thank [Councillor Zurawski](#) for putting this 'on the table'. The full motion can be seen [here](#). We expect to see the report some time in 2021. Friends would like to point out that this is a welcomed first step, but also that there remains a considerable amount of work to be completed before we'll see an official opening of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park.



## BREAKING NEWS

As we go to press, a revised BMBCL page on the HRM website has gone live, on or

about June 12. *The Friends of BMBCL strongly object to the limited vision now presented by HRM.* We note many components of the page that are NOT in step with the historical record of direction from Regional Council to staff and, in fact, it contains several misleading statements especially as pertaining to "public consultations".



Map 11 - Endorsed by Friends of Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Society

The HRM page refers to the EDM report of 2006, a document that has been preempted by the creation of the provincial BMBCL Wilderness Area, through successive designations in 2009 and 2015. The page content is also inconsistent with the Municipality's 2014 regional plan Map 11, *as above*, which remains in force. This is the map endorsed by Friends of BMBCL Society.

Furthermore, HRM's recently-revised vision stands in stark contrast with the [concept plan map](#) jointly presented to and enthusiastically endorsed at an open and well-attended public meeting on May 30, 2012. The Friends mission to advocate for the creation of a regional wilderness park is consistent with the referenced 2012 concept plan and 2014 conceptual park area, subject to further refinement through a park master planning and public consultation process that is so sorely needed to bring this iconic park area from concept to reality.

The new and current HRM page can be seen [here](#). (or [here as a PDF](#)). *Friends does not endorse this new page*, and, in our opinion, it is not deserving of any further circulation. We will be meeting with city staff to discuss our disappointment with this dated vision of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park. **DISCLAIMER:** Friends was not involved or consulted in any way in the creation of HRM's current BMBCL page. Member feedback on this new HRM web page is welcome [here](#).

## MORE ON BANC LANDS

Our concerns here are many but the principal remains the status of the BMBCL access point which was originally shown in the 2012 BANC lands, concept plan. (see [Blue Mtn. NEWS, March 2020](#)). In response to a request made to HRM staff, we received the following statement on June 21st:



*This area (i.e. a designated space of about 10 acres as portrayed in the approved concept plan) has been conceived as a potential parking lot and trail head. The front portion of the lot is being roughly graded for this purpose. The developer is required to do this pursuant to the*

subdivision by-law and approved subdivision plan. This has left to date, something of a ledge to the rear of the leveled area. Through some recent discussions with the contractor, there should be an improved transition that should be achieved with the placement of rock fill. This will be the extent of the work that is undertaken by the contractor. The establishment of any infrastructure and subsequent park/trail planning would need to happen at a future point in time with many considerations.

**Questions from Friends:** Why are the BANC lands being cleared and levelled right to the Wilderness Area boundary? Why was the access point excavated to such a significant change in elevation, immediately adjacent to the Wilderness Area? Why does the BANC concept graphic on [their website](#) include HRM lands in Bayers Lake (behind Kent)?

The overall site and grading plans are not available to the public, and our requests to see these documents through HRM staff and councillors have been unsuccessful. Of interest, the Banc deed has considerable detail on the requirements regarding "viewsheds" that will affect the "Proposed BMBCL Regional Park". The deed can be seen [here](#). BANC issues will be discussed with HRM staff at an upcoming meeting.



BANC development as seen June 19, 2020 from behind Chain Lake Drive near KENT looking SW.

## MASKWA UPDATE

The Maskwa Aquatic Club remains closed to the public for BMBCL trail access. This is primarily due to the status of the liability clause in their crown land lease, administered by the Dept. of Lands & Forestry (DLF). Friends and other stakeholders have all written the Minister of DLF in support of amending that clause or otherwise allowing access. Other groups who have written letters of support include CPAWS-NS, CARP NS, Halifax NW Trails, the Sierra Club and the Kearney Lake Resident's Association. Here's a [link to Friend's letter](#) to DLF



This situation has been further complicated by the impact of Covid and club program restrictions as mandated by Canoe Kayak Canada. Security on the property is also a factor. Unfortunately, with this access point closed, the focus has shifted to Collins Road where upwards of 50 cars can be seen parked on busy days. As we reported in our last issue of [the NEWS](#), without a park plan in place, access points to the BMBCL remain an active issue.

Also under review is the area defined within the Maskwa lease where an adjustment (from 40 acres to 5) has been approved by DLF. Friends is advocating for the transfer of responsibility for the remaining 35 acres of crown lands to NS Environment where that parcel would then be added to the BMBCL Wilderness Area, creating a larger block around Charlies lake. We remain in contact with all stakeholders, and we are optimistic that a solution can be found.

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## CPAWS-NS IN THE BMBCL

The Nova Scotia Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society ([CPAWS-NS](#)) has been busy identifying conservation values in the Charlies Lake portion of the BMBCL. These lands (ie Maskwa lease/35 acres) are publicly-owned and administered by the provincial government, but are not included within the Wilderness Area. CPAWS-NS



would like to see the provincially-protected, BMBCL Wilderness Area boundary expanded at this location to include these public lands and is collaborating with Friends of BMBCL on this initiative. These lands provide an important public access point, and this portion of the BMBCL contains ecosystem types that do not occur elsewhere within the protected area. Ed. note: Chris Miller of CPAWS-NS has been a long-standing and active proponent for the creation of the Regional Wilderness Park and is a valued partner of Friends.

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## MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Friends will be engaging [all candidates](#) in the upcoming HRM municipal election on Oct. 17, including incumbents, to determine where they stand on moving forward with the creation of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park. The results of those communications will be shared with our members and other key audiences.



*We encourage all of our members to find out where candidates stand on this issue in [your district](#). The next four years will be critical to moving forward with this long-awaited regional park, and city council is going to be asked to make some key decisions, especially on budget and acquisitions. Watch for a *Special Notice to Members* on this topic coming soon, AND [let us know](#) if you would like to work on this committee.*

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## VOLUNTEERING WITH FRIENDS

We have come this far over decades due to volunteers with a passion for nature and the BMBCL in particular. We are grateful to honour their efforts by building upon them. Many diverse skills are needed in each of our action areas. Current priorities for Friends include:

> *Advocacy with HRM election candidates (as above)*

> *Get involved in your local Community Council* to track the development occurring around the BMBCL that is rapidly reducing our options for access - be a voice when it is needed most!

> *Technical Support for Communications* esp. for our website and newsletter.



If you have an interest in lending a hand short term, long term, indoors or outdoors, you will join people who bring a passion for our vision to all of our activities. Many hands make light work and more fun along the way. We'll follow up once we receive your [on-line form](#). You can also visit our website's new [volunteer page](#) for more info. Please and thank you!



## NATURE TRUST UPDATE

Friends is continuing to support the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, [SAVE THE WILD BLUE campaign](#) to purchase and preserve the critical 'connector block' joining two BMBCL Wilderness Area parcels. A HRM staff report is expected soon with a recommendation regarding a municipal contribution to the acquisition cost. You can find more information on our "Opportunities", [website page](#).

Also, please see the article below on Shelagh Duffett, fondly remembered for being who she was and for her outstanding contribution to the Wild Blue campaign.

## TRIBUTE TO SHELAGH DUFFETT

On Wednesday, June 24, we lost a friend in Shelagh, a woman intensely creative, generous, with a sense of humour and flair for sharing her passions effectively in her work and community. She was a distinguished local artist with an international reach (Shelagh's [web site](#)). In



February she gave us the successful [WILD art exhibit](#) in support of the Save the Wild Blue campaign, an endeavour that was a result, in part, of her fond memories of the BMBCL... *"I used to swim in Suzie and Quarry Lakes as a teenager and now I hike in the area. I want to do all I can to help preserve and protect this beautiful area for the future."* Friends is truly grateful for her support, and we extend our deepest condolences to her family.

On our Friends Facebook page her husband writes: *" On my post, I ask that people support the Hospice Halifax, but to be clear, the Nature Trust and the BMBCL Friends were very dear to us, and she would be honoured if donations were made in her memory to support saving our green spaces for the flora and fauna and for us to share their homes."* Thomas Duffett



Shelagh's work as shown at the WILD art event, February, 2020 in support of NS Nature Trust, Save the Wild Blue.

## HRM ARMCO ACQUISITION

Friends took a site visit recently to the 122 acres in Timberlea acquired by HRM from ARMCO in April 2019 with the support of the federal, Canada Nature Fund. This is a beautiful piece of land and holds real potential for the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park. This property has a woods road running through it making for a lovely existing hiking trail allowing for use without the damage that is occurring from user made trails elsewhere in the BMBCL. Thanks to James Boyer for leading the walk.





## TRIPS BY TRANSIT

One of the special features of the BMBCL is that it can be reached using public transit. [Trips by Transit](#) is a group that endorses our public transportation system by sponsoring and organizing group outings. Back in February, Friends met with this group on a hike to Susies Lake, that, according to participants, was a huge success. Thanks goes to our Directors, Mark Young & Anne Vaughan for assisting.



## LOOKING BACK

Imagine what this area must have been like 'back in the day'. These pictures of Susies Lake came to us c/o the [Rockingham Heritage Society](#), and we can be sure that the area was a special place for outings at the time. Seeing how the leaves aren't out yet, this would likely be a spring picture, ...maybe on a Sunday after church?



## KEY LINKS FOR BMBCL INFORMATION:

- > Friends of BMBCL Society: [Our website](#)
- > Ecology Action Centre: [BMBCL Historical Timeline](#)
- > Halifax Regional Municipality: [Proposed Park](#)



- > Halifaxtrails.ca: [Blue Mountain](#)
- > Our HRM Alliance: [Call to Action](#)
- > N.S. Dept. of Environment: [BMBCL Wilderness Area Description](#)

**FOLLOW FRIENDS!** We have an active Facebook page with more than 1000 followers, plus Instagram and Twitter. Have a look there too for more news.



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**CONTACT US:** If you have requests, ideas, comments, concerns... please let us know c/o [our website](#) or email: [bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com](mailto:bluemountainbirchcovelakes@gmail.com)

NEWS Ed: Richard Vinson

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Misty Charlies Lake, Chris Miller, CPAWS-NS

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