

Still much to protect

Citizens, government must work together for wilderness areas

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By TAMARA LORINCZ
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The Nova Scotia Environmental Network would like to thank Environment Minister David Morse and his department for their recent protection of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

We would also like to acknowledge the hard work over many years of our members – the Halifax North West Trails Association and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – that created the public campaign and worked with the government to protect the area.

For citizens to enjoy this new wilderness area in the Halifax Regional Municipality, we will need public access points, a trail system and signage. We look forward to partnering with the government to determine these entry points and trails.

We would also like to invite the public to join us for the second annual BioBlitz on Saturday, June 6, to learn more about the incredible biodiversity of the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area (www.smu.ca/bioblitz/home.html).

The Network is also anxious for the government to protect other critical wilderness areas around the province to help meet our 12 per cent target under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.

We hope that the Chignecto Game Sanctuary will be designated a wilderness area and protected from industrial development. The sanctuary has some of the last tracts of intact old-growth Acadian forest and is home to the endangered mainland moose, but it is under threat from clearcutting and mining. The Chebucto Wilderness Area, bounded by highways 103 and 333, has the exceptional 30-kilometre Bluff Trail and other natural, historic and recreational values that demand protection.

Our members, the Eastern Shore Forest Watch and the Ecology Action Centre, have been advocating for a long time for the protection of the forest and lakes of Ship Harbour Long Lake area. Currently, the revised boundaries for the proposed Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area are open for public comment until June 19. We hope that Melvin Lake and Webber Lake will be included in this wilderness area and the final designation will come soon.

Creating these wilderness areas requires the perseverance of concerned citizens and community groups and political will from the government. Protecting our magnificent Nova Scotia wilderness for our enjoyment, for the habitat of the non-human species that share this province with us, and for our future generations is a legacy for which we should all be proud.

More information about these wilderness areas is available from the Nova Scotia Environment's Protected Areas branch and information about game sanctuaries and species at risk from the Department of Natural Resources. To learn more about the Nova Scotia Environmental Network, go to www.nsen.ca

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