

## **Council of Community Organizations Meeting held on November 19, 2009**

The November COCO Meeting was held on November 19 at the Lakeside Community. Dusan Soudek of Canoe Kayak NS was the Chair of the meeting. Information about a number of community events and issues were shared. Councillor Reg Rankin and MLA Bill Estabrooks were in attendance to hear the issues and to provide information about HRM and provincial endeavours. Councillor Peter Lund was ill and sent his regrets.

Approximately half of our two hour meeting time was taken with presentations about the Five Bridge Lakes Candidate Wilderness Area and updates on the plan for the Western Common Wilderness Common Plan.

**Tom Musial, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition**, used a map of the Candidate Wilderness Area (WA) as provided by Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) and gave an outline of what lands had been included, lands that had been excluded and reasons given us for the exclusions. Roads to continue to be used but excluded from the WA were also highlighted. Several folks had questions about access to the lakes by the hard packed roads. The Old Halifax Road, DNR's fire road (Joshua Slocum Trail) and the Old St. Margaret's Bay Road are to have continued usage and are outlined clearly on the map. **Beth McGee, Chair of the Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust** gave a presentation about the access points to the Candidate Wilderness Area and requested help in identifying others not known to the Coalition at this time.

**Richmond Campbell, Co-Chair of Wooden's River Watershed Environmental Organization**, highlighted some of the points of history of the work of community groups over the years, noting that the declaration of the FBLCWA was a partial fulfillment of the purpose of building The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail. When the Stewardship initiative was set aside by DNR in late 2007 WRWEO presented the idea of forming a coalition which was adopted by the Trust and other community groups. The work of the Coalition over the past 18 months has brought us to this juncture. Considerable discussion ensued about matters such as road access, land usage and activities permitted in a Wilderness Area, the hope that the Crown Lands in the northwest area in Upper Tantallon could be added following resolution of a connector trail for the ATV community from the rail bed to the Joshua Slocum Trail. There was some discussion about what work the coalition might be able to do during the Consultation Phase. The reports from the Coalition were given high accolades for their value in keeping citizens apprised of the work with government.

Representatives from various area homeowners associations and citizens from the communities on the Hwy 103/333 loop were in attendance to learn more about the Wilderness Area. Some citizens were connected with folks from organizations where work of interest to them was going on.

We are awaiting some dates for Public Consultation from the staff at the NSE.

**John Charles, HRM Planner**, gave highlights from the report about the Western Commons Wilderness Common plan presented in October to the members of the Western Common Wilderness Common Advisory Committee. The committee did not reach consensus about the content of the plan. John reviewed the main features of the draft plan noting that a Wilderness Common Regional Park is being proposed for part of the area with a series of 5 year phases to be

undertaken to complete planning for Big Indian Lake, Blueberry Lake and Otter Lake. The Nichols Lake area will be featured in the first five years followed in the next five to ten years by planning for Big Indian Lake and environs. The Advisory Committee is being asked to have ongoing oversight of the management of these plans. One WCWCAC member noted that the Committee did not understand that their role would extend beyond being advisors to the creation of the plan for the area at the time they agreed to sit on this committee.

Clarification of WCWC boundaries in the Nine Mile River area that are shared with the FBLCWA was given. Recent land purchases by HRM was also outlined. A question arose about HRM's experience in operating a wilderness park in a rural area. Point Pleasant Park was cited as the closest example.

**Catherine Klefenz, Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Rails to Trails**, advised that the BLT Rails to Trails system is in good shape and enjoying added use with the Nordic Walking Programs. Active negotiation about funding for trails in HRM is going on between HRM and DNR.

**Mike Marriott, Safety Minded ATV Club and ATVANS**, reported that 26 kilometres of the St. Margaret's Bay Rails to Trails from Hubbards to the bridge over Hwy 213 had been regraded and recompacted.. The ATV Club members are working on the details to give them access from the rail bed across Hwy 3 and with a land use agreement that will allow them to pass over private land to reach the connector trail on Crown Land. They hope to have this work completed as soon as possible. When the connector trail's details are finalised they are in support of these Crown lands being added to the FBLCWA.

They do have concerns about K roads currently under the jurisdiction of the province being changed to another level of government jurisdiction. They are in strong support of these remaining under the jurisdiction of the province so that all persons can continue to use them.

A Shel Drake Lake resident raised concerns about the number of fish removed from the lakes during the Annual Fishing Derby 2009 sponsored by WRWEO. Since there were no fisheries officers to provide oversight to the 5 fish limit on the Fishing Derby Day when no fishing licence is required it was noted that some persons were suspected of taking more than 5 fish. WRWEO Co-Chair Richmond Campbell spoke to this matter and advised that for this reason and a number of others WRWEO would no longer sponsor a fishing derby.

**Beth McGee reported on FBWHT activities** by advising that the November edition of The Bridge is now available online. Hard copies were also available at the COCO Meeting.

**John Cascadden, McDonald Lake Residents Association**, advised of three upcoming public meetings: Eco Expo held on the weekend of November 20; a public meeting on HRM Wind Energy, and an RCMP Open House, both being held at the St. Margaret Centre, December 2 at 7 p.m.

**Richmond Campbell, WRWEO**, updated the meeting on the new technique for trail building on The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail. A system utilizes found stone and no machines to fill in low areas to enable water to drain and giving hikers less reason to create new trails in wet areas. This

method is environmentally friendly, looks natural, is cheaper than using wood, is durable. This method was used by Community Forests International to refurbish 12 sites on the third and fourth loops of The Bluff Trail. This type of work was conducted on the first two loops with 8 sites refurbished by Cobequid Trails Consulting.

**Geoff leBoutillier, St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association**, outlined the ongoing planning for Upper Tantallon. WM Fares has donated 18 acres of land to SMBSA contiguous with the public lands adjacent to the Candidate Wilderness Area. He outlined the disappointment of SMBSA that the Crown lands adjacent to the Fares lands had not been included in the FBLCWA. There has been discussion with HRM about creating parklands with trails along the East River. Other options might also emerge as planning goes forward. Geoff leBoutillier spoke about the efforts of SMBSA to devise a plan for purchase of Troop's Island on St. Margaret's Bay that would enable the lands to be held in public ownership and accessible to all Nova Scotians.

**Shelley Thomas, Resource Opportunity Centre, and The Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee**, reported that a decision could be made on re-zoning of right of way lands used by residents to access The Terence Bay Lighthouse area at the November 23 meeting of Western Region Community Council. This decision will have a direct impact to ongoing public access across a Right of Way to reach this Heritage Site. This issue is a very important one for the citizens of Terence Bay.

Councillor Rankin noted that this matter will come before WRCC on November 23. He also indicated there were other areas in his jurisdiction that required HRM to have a review of the zoning. Some areas have zoning that is not in keeping with environmental thinking of today and should be rezoned.

**Dusan Soudek, Canoe Kayak NS**, reported on the October 23 canoe trip made by a group of canoeists travelling from Blind Bay to Hubley Lake. He also asked about the possibility of including Crown lands on the coast at Blind Bay in the FBLCWA. There was discussion about what was meant by a Park Reserve designation.

The **Next COCO Meeting** will be held at 7 p.m. on **Thursday, January 19, 2010** at the Brookside Junior High School.. Host group is the Resource Opportunities Centre at Terence Bay.