



Report #12 from the Steering Committee

March 25, 2011

CHEBUCTO WILDERNESS COALITION

Protection of FBLWA on Track



The 8,266 hectare (20,425 acre) Five Bridge Lakes candidate area is within the boundaries formed by Highways 103 and 333 just outside of Metro-Halifax.

The last report of the CWC Steering Committee was issued on September 24, 2009. A month later, on October 19, Sterling Belliveau, Minister of Environment, declared 8,266 hectares (20,425 acres) of Crown lands in the Five Bridge Lakes Area as a candidate for protection under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. Since then, with input from the Steering Committee, Nova Scotia Environment staff have been busy preparing a socio-economic study of the impact that legislated protection would have on the area.

On March 9, 2011 the Steering Committee met with the Protected Areas branch of the Department of Environment to learn of the progress of the study and to explore the what stewardship role, if any, the community might play to help achieve the benefits of a Wilderness Area.

Oliver Maass, Protected Areas Coordinator, reported that he expects the legislatively required socio-economic study to be released in early May, 2011. The procedure then provides a 30-day period of public consultation. After this, NSE staff will take their recommendation on designation to Minister Belliveau, who in turn will take his recommendation to Cabinet for approval. There are no indications that the socio-economic study will produce any surprises, and staff anticipates that the Five Bridge Lakes candidate area will soon be declared the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area (FBLWA).



In response to the Steering Committee’s question about what role community stakeholders might play relative to the FBLWA, Mr. Maass indicated that the terms, conditions, and standards relating to management of Wilderness Areas are contained in the legislation of the Wilderness Areas Protection Act, and that government not only welcomed but to some extent relied upon community groups to promote adherence to the provisions of the Act and to help achieve the benefits of wilderness area designation. Several possible models for community-government partnership in the FBLWA management were identified:

- Friends of the FBLWA
- Trail Agreements
- Maintenance Agreements
- Licensed Research Agreements
- Co-Management Agreements (Community and Government)



Hiking and geocaching are popular “leave no trace” activities in the FBLA.

While there are precedents for each of these arrangements, none was specifically endorsed or recommended, and everyone agreed that a Co-Management Agreement might involve more responsibility than community groups could handle.

The Steering Committee also suggested a number of possible roles for community stakeholders including

- Serving as environmental auditors/monitors
- Acting as “the eyes and ears” of the community on issues such as
 - Planning for Western Common (5 year Review of HRM Plan)
 - Threats to the environment (e.g., from the Otter Lake Landfill or the Carmichael Cemetery from the new borrow pit at the landfill)
 - Advocating changes to the FBLWA boundaries, especially in the Northwest quadrant and to include the first kilometre of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail
- Adding HRM lands to the FBLWA
- Brokering/advocating for acquisition of private lands to be added to the FBLWA
- Adding lands on the East side of Highway 333 to the FBLWA
- Fostering public education, especially with regard to “Leave No Trace” recreational activities Encouraging compliance with legislation and regulations governing water, land and trail use
- Ensuring continuity in the proposed community/government partnership



Old Growth in the FBLA. You’ve got to love it!

The group determined that a constructive step toward establishing a working partnership between NSE and community stakeholders would be to start with a channel of communication. Accordingly, the two parties agreed to hold quarterly meetings with the first meeting taking place within 30 days of the area’s designation as a Wilderness Area. Community representatives agreed to put forward the community’s preferred form of participation at the first meeting. Each meeting would then be followed by a report of the items discussed at the meeting circulated to government and community stakeholders.