



Honourable Tory Rushton
Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables
P.O. Box 698
Halifax, NS
B3J 2T9

Re: Stop proposed forest harvest HX210251 at Sackville River Wilderness Area

April 11, 2022

Dear Honourable Tory Rushton:

Sackville Rivers Association (SRA) is confused and upset by your department's decision to redirect public lands recommended for addition to Sackville River Wilderness Area towards forest harvesting. Our community has clearly stated that we want these lands protected as part of our local wilderness park, not destroyed by industrial forestry activities.

As the champion of the Sackville River, SRA has been working to protect Sackville River Wilderness Area for years. This site contains important forests and wetlands, and habitat for rare species, including Wild Atlantic Salmon. Members of our community use this park regularly to walk their dogs, go for a bike ride, paddle on the river, swim in the lakes or spend time hunting and trapping. These lands provide opportunities for nature education at the nearby Girl Guides Lewis Lake Camp and for nature tourism at local businesses and campgrounds.

We have been waiting much too long for our wilderness park to be designated. This site was included in the *Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan* back in 2013. Then, we waited until February 2021 for the government to finally announce it would move forward with a legal designation. This is an important place for the residents of Upper Sackville and we want to see these lands protected forever. Our patience is wearing out.

During the final public consultation period, our community spoke up loud and clear for Sackville River Wilderness Area. Hundreds of letters were submitted to government expressing support for the protected area and an expanded boundary. The Sackville Legion wants a bigger park. The Sackville Lions Club wants a bigger park. The Sackville Business Association, which represents more than 500 local businesses, wants a bigger park. Local HRM councillors Lisa Blackburn and Paul Russell and MLAs Steve Craig and Brad Johns want a bigger park. Yet, your department has overruled all of these people, and decided that the best use for these public lands is to cut its forests down. This is unacceptable.

Our partners at the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-NS) have completed extensive fieldwork in the wilderness area and on adjacent public lands. From their surveys, we recommended to your department and Nova Scotia Environment that 226 hectares of public lands on the eastern side of the park be added to the protected area boundary. This will help our community easily access the north end of the park near Beaver Bank and protect more important ecosystems, including vernal pools and natural red pine stands.

With the massive community support and important conservation values at Sackville River Wilderness Area and surrounding public lands, SRA is very disappointed that your department would ever consider allowing forestry activities here.

Your department needs to immediately terminate the proposed harvest HX210251 and we want written assurances to this regard. We also want the legal designation of Sackville River Wilderness Area to be finalized, with the bigger boundary as our community has asked, without any further delays.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to receiving a written response addressing our concerns.

Best regards,

Walter N. Regan
President
Sackville Rivers Association
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