



Report from the Steering Committee

January 20, 2009

CHEBUCTO WILDERNESS COALITION

Endorsement of the Department of Natural Resources

As we reported in a previous Report of the CWC Steering Committee, a CWC delegation including representatives of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and the Ecology Action Centre (ECA), met with David Morse, Minister of the Department of Natural Resources, on October 21, 2008, to discuss the potential designation of Crown lands on the Chebucto Peninsula as a wilderness area. Near the end of the meeting, Minister Morse asked the DNR staff to review the Crown lands within the area bounded by Highways 103 and 333 and report the results of its work to the CWC. On January 6, 2009, the CWC received the DNR report.

In a cover letter written on behalf of the Minister, Patricia McNeil, Executive Director of the DNR Planning Secretariat, pointed out that while no clear boundary lines for the proposed wilderness area have yet been identified, the department worked on the basis that the area of interest is the same Crown land block that has been of interest to the Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust for the past seven years.

Ms. McNeil also indicated that once the Department of Environment designates these lands as a candidate and before they can actually be protected under the *Wilderness Area Protection Act*, a socio-economic analysis would have to be prepared. The attached DNR preliminary assessment was not conducted at the level of the required socio-economic analysis.

Based on the DNR's preliminary assessment, Ms. McNeil reported that **"...the department supports, in principle, CWC's desire to have these lands considered for designation under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act."**

Ms. McNeil's letter concluded, "Should Nova Scotia Environment identify these lands as a candidate wilderness area, including the identification of proposed wilderness area boundaries, DNR staff would undertake a more rigorous analysis through the required socio-economic analysis. Subsequent formal comment and endorsement by DNR would be based on the outcome of this socio-economic analysis."

The preliminary analysis is attached.

On January 7, 2009, Minister Morse was appointed Minister of the Department of Environment.



PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Chebucto Peninsula - Five Bridges Crown Land Block. December 2008

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR's) Integrated Resource Management process has identified these Crown lands as C2, "multiple and adaptive use". The department has a high priority to maintain and manage this public land under the C2 classification, mainly as a recreational area as high population growth and restricted use wilderness areas surround the block.
- The values identified are: recreational, wildlife (endangered mainland moose, Brook Trout, Atlantic Salmon), rare and endangered plant species (Mountain Sandwort, Jack Pine) and wetland swamp bogs and fens.
- The area is home to an isolated population of the endangered mainland moose. To maintain a viable population of moose, it may be necessary to manipulate the vegetation to provide food and shelter for the moose in a mosaic of age classes.
- The proposed block of land has commitments for 10 campsite leases, and one recreational lease on the western edge.
- The department must follow government policy when addressing campsite leases in protected areas and candidate protected areas. The 10 campsite leases located on the lands do not appear to present a significant obstacle should these lands become a candidate wilderness area.
- There are many private parcels of land with camps among the Crown portion. These camps are accessed by ATV's on the trail system.
- This has been an active recreational area for many years, including hunting, fishing and A TV use. There is abundant vehicle and A TV use throughout the block. As A TV use would be curtailed if this were to become a wilderness area, this may present a challenge.
- The Woodens River was contaminated by PCB's in the 1980's. The river was closed to all recreational fishing and is currently a catch and release fishery only.
- This area has not been managed for resource extraction, wood supply or minerals.
- There is one metallic mineral occurrence documented in the area, however, it is not likely of economic interest.
- There are two exploration licenses issued to the same individual in the area of Big Lake, immediately north of Dover. DNR is not aware of any active exploration occurring in this area.
- The lands in question are underlain by granite and may, therefore, have some potential for building stone and aggregate.