

Kelley River and Raven Head Wilderness Areas

Summary of Public Consultation & Designation Decisions Newsletter # 4 - Spring 2012

Overview

After more than two years of review, public consultation and analysis, the province has made final decisions on designation of Kelley River Wilderness Area and Raven Head Wilderness Area under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. The designations were announced on June 6, 2012.

The two new wilderness areas protect about 26,220 hectares (64,793 acres) in Cumberland County. They protect the natural environment, while providing opportunities for wilderness recreation, camping, sport fishing, hunting, education, research, community stewardship, and other activities.

Decisions were made following public and stakeholder consultations, internal governmental review and socio-economic analysis. Details on the initial study area, candidate boundaries, and key issues are covered in previous newsletters. In this newsletter, we summarize public comments on the candidate areas, and detail government's designation decisions.

How You Participated

Approximately 150 people attended public open house meetings held in Southamptton, Joggins, Parrsboro, Advocate Harbour, Amherst, and Halifax. Staff also met with interested individuals and groups. In addition to ideas shared during many conversations, we received 120 written submissions. These opportunities to participate were advertised in Newsletter #3, a news release, newspaper advertisement, and an e-mail notice to interested individuals and stakeholders.

We heard from recreational users (bowhunters, off-highway vehicle riders, canoeing and kayaking groups), campsite lease holders, adjacent landowners, environmental groups, petroleum industry



Fly fishing

Photo: Irwin Barrett

representatives, the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, and others.

What You Said

It was clear from the consultation that Nova Scotians care deeply about these areas. Most respondents were supportive of wilderness protection in the area. Feedback on the proposed wilderness area boundaries was generally positive.

Part of this deep caring about the area comes from the recreational ties to these lands. Individuals and groups spoke of the value of the area for angling and hunting. We also heard about the importance of keeping valued trails and routes open to support vehicle access in the region.

Government also heard concerns from petroleum rights holders, about potential loss of access to their interests.

The Municipality of Cumberland County requested that a corridor be left along the Shulie Road, at Raven

Head Wilderness Area, to allow for a transmission line that may be needed to support future wind energy development in the region.

A variety of groups and individuals stressed the importance and value of land protection in the area for the endangered mainland moose and other wildlife. For additional protection, they encouraged adding more Crown land between the two proposed wilderness areas, and even connecting the two areas.

The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia identified the significance of the area for traditional activities and access, and the need to recognize the long-term cultural heritage significance of the area.

What Government Decided

Government considered all available information and feedback from the consultation in making final decisions about boundaries and designation.

Kelley River Wilderness Area includes most of the watershed of Kelley River and extends, northeast, to a tidal portion of Maccan River. The total area is 20,950 hectares, or about 51,770 acres. This is an area of extensive, mature and older forest; natural rivers and streams; and habitat for many species. Almost 400 hectares (1,000 acres) were added to government's initial boundary proposal, primarily north of Kelley River. The boundary now follows the Game Sanctuary boundary in this area. A small section of boundary along Maccan River was adjusted to avoid impacting motor boat traffic on the River. The shoreline of Maccan River in this area is within the wilderness area.

Raven Head Candidate Wilderness Area extends 36 km along the Bay of Fundy coast, between Shulie River and Apple Head. Extensive coastal cliffs alternate with sheltered coves, beaches and salt marshes. The total area is 5,270 hectares, or about 13,023 acres. About 500 hectares (1,250 acres) were added along the west side of Shulie Road, near Apple Head.

To support continued public access to coastal sections of Raven Head Wilderness Area near Apple Head, a corridor along a major established forest access road has been left out of the wilderness area (see map). Continued use and maintenance of this road will require that interested groups and individuals work with



government to develop a long-term plan for this road and coastal access. As well, the road corridor exclusion along Shulie Road, near Sand River, has been widened to accommodate potential future power transmission lines.

About 40 km of Crown forest access road corridors through Kelley River Wilderness Area are outside of the boundaries and will be available for continued vehicle access (see map). This includes the east-west Goodwin / Thunder Hill and Harrison Settlement roads; and the north-south road past Welton Lake.

Nova Scotia Environment is also willing to enter into trail management agreements under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* for use and maintenance of about 34 km of forest access road within this wilderness area. This includes the addition of a section of route 30A near Southampton. About 30 km of spur roads and secondary routes within this wilderness area will be closed to further vehicle use, including the spur to the Memorial Grove forest.

Government will work with the community to create additional signage on the more accessible Goodwin or Boars Back roads to support non-motorized access to the Memorial Grove.

Significant habitat of the endangered mainland moose has been included in the new wilderness areas. The Department of Natural Resources remains committed to managing adjoining Crown land under special moose habitat considerations.

Commercial forest harvesting is not permitted within wilderness areas. However, Government will allow a modified harvest up to 500 hectares (1,250 acres) of plantations within Kelley River Wilderness Area prior to legal protection, as proposed during the Spring, 2011 consultation.

This will provide some wood supply while restoring the natural forest. At least 25 per cent of trees will be kept to provide shade, habitat, and future woody debris on the forest floor. Only planted species will be targeted for cutting - natural regeneration of native species will not be harvested. No harvesting will occur in the Stewart McDonald Memorial Grove or within 300 metres of Kelly River or Atkinson Brook.

In addition, a harvesting agreement remains in effect with Wagner Forest Management Ltd. for lands purchased in 2010 from the company near Apple Head, now within Raven Head Wilderness Area. The agreement allows the former owner to harvest a defined amount of forest, to be completed no later than December 31, 2012. No harvesting will occur within 200 metres of the coast. This harvest will help the former owner meet wood supply commitments to other companies. This purchase and protection decision is an investment in long-term conservation and public ownership of our coast.

Although government has made decisions on designation of both Kelley River and Raven Head wilderness areas, legal designation under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act will come into effect once harvesting activities have been completed, later in 2012.

Next Steps

Kelley River and Raven Head wilderness areas will be administrated under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* by Nova Scotia Environment, in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources. We look forward to working with community partners and individuals to monitor the area, manage trails and carry out other projects.

Next steps include posting boundary signs at known access points, and planning and carrying out routine enforcement and monitoring.

Nova Scotia Environment will also work with provincial and local off-highway vehicle or other organizations, with the goal of entering into management agreements for the routes outlined on the map. Through trail management agreements, groups work to ensure the trails meet environmental and safety standards. The agreements allow members to use the trails. Other routes inside wilderness area boundaries will be closed to public vehicle traffic.

Campsite lease holders will be contacted about access to their sites. Upon expiry, existing campsite leases can be renewed as wilderness campsite licenses under the Wilderness Area Protection Act. We will work with owners of private in-holdings, as needed, to consider any requests for access.

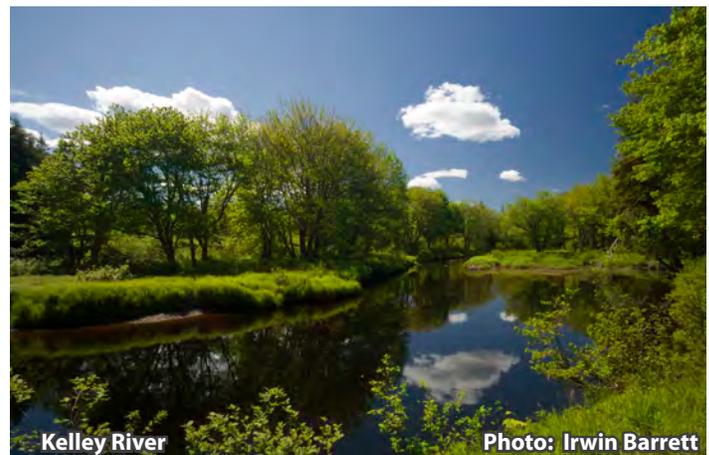
We expect to continue discussions with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia regarding management and use of the new wilderness areas.

Wilderness areas are ideally suited for low-impact recreational uses, including hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and canoeing. Guidelines for recreational use wilderness areas are available in our Keep It Wild brochure - available at local Environment and Natural Resources offices, or online at the Nova Scotia Environment's website.

For more information please contact:
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A Sincere Thank-you

Many people participated in the consultations over the past two years. Thank you to all who shared your time, thoughts, and passion. A special thank you, as well, to Department of Natural Resources staff who have managed Chignecto Game Sanctuary over the years, and who will continue to play a vital role in management of these new wilderness areas.



Kelley River and Raven Head Wilderness

LEGEND

- Wilderness Areas**
 - Kelley River and Raven Head Wilderness Areas
- Land Ownership and Designations**
 - Provincial Game Sanctuary Boundary
 - Town Lands
 - Indian Reserve Lands
 - Crown Lands
- Routes and Trails**
 - Excluded from WA
 - Proposed OHV Trail Management Agreement

