

Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area

PROTECTING AND CELEBRATING WILDERNESS IN THE CITY OCTOBER, 2011



After two years of public consultation and review, the Province has designated Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

The new wilderness area protects close to 8,600 hectares (about 21,250 acres) of near-urban Crown land, between Highways 103 and 333, in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) (see map).

This is a rugged landscape of forest, barrens, wetlands, rivers and lakes, fringed by communities. Establishing Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area will protect nature in the city, contribute to air quality and watershed protection, and much more.

The new wilderness area protects typical examples of Nova Scotia's "South Mountain Rolling Plain" natural landscape, and will help provide natural connections between nearby parks and protected areas. It is home to a small population of endangered mainland moose, and other rare and uncommon species.

With its scenic views, natural setting, cultural history and near-urban location, the wilderness area offers superb opportunities for outdoor recreation like hiking, trail running, canoeing, trout fishing, hunting, and nature appreciation. It is also ideally suited for education and research.

The new wilderness area includes the entire Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail. This offers more than 30 km of backcountry trail for hiking, trail running and other uses.

Limited all-terrain vehicle access can be permitted on several routes in the wilderness area.

This new wilderness area contributes to the province's goal of legally protecting 12 percent of Nova Scotia by 2015. It also helps make HRM and our province attractive place to live, work and do business.

Protection of these lands supports HRM's "smart growth" approach, and complements the "Western Commons" regional park which HRM wishes to establish near Nine Mile River.

Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area joins a network of 38 wilderness areas across Nova Scotia. These areas protect nature and help ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience, learn from, and enjoy our province's special wild spaces.

BOUNDARIES - WHAT GOVERNMENT DECIDED

Government considered all available information and feedback from the consultation and a socio-economic study to make final decisions about boundaries.

At close to 8,600 hectares, Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area is about 330 hectares larger than the original boundary proposal released for public consultation in 2009.

In response to community interest, additional Crown land was added between Joshua Slocum Road and Upper Tantallon. This addition avoids an off-highway vehicle trail, currently under construction. Crown land was also added east of Flake Brook, at Birch Bear Run subdivision. A small strip of Crown land was added at Frederick Lake to bring an existing portage inside the wilderness area. The boundary along Highway 103 has also been improved. All of the Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, including the trail head, is within the wilderness area.

Boundaries were also adjusted to avoid affecting vehicle access along several sections of road and off-highway vehicle trail. Altogether, about 50 hectares were removed from the original boundary proposal, including lands near Long Lake, Dwyer Ridge and Powers Pond. As well, Joshua Slocum Road and the northern portion of the Fire Road are excluded from the wilderness area.



NEXT STEPS

Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area will be administered 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 to monitor the area, manage trails and carry out other projects.

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

Nova Scotia Environment will also work with the All-terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS) and Safety-minded ATV Association, with the goal of entering into a management agreement for off-highway vehicle use on sections of Old Coach Road and the Fire Road, within the new wilderness area. Other secondary routes within the wilderness area will be closed to recreational off-highway vehicle use.

Campsite lease holders will be contacted about licensing of vehicle access. Upon expiry, existing campsite leases will be renewed as wilderness campsite licenses under the *Wilderness Area Protection Act*. We will also work with owners of private

in-holdings, as needed, to consider any requests for access. Any illegal structures placed within the wilderness area will be removed.

As resources permit, the province will explore options for acquiring priority private lands, with landowner consent.

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

Wilderness areas are ideally suited for low-impact recreational, including hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and canoeing. Guidelines for recreational use of wilderness areas are available in our *Keep It Wild* brochure - available at local Environment and Department of Natural Resource offices, online at the

Nova Scotia Environment's website or by calling 902-424-2117.

Ideas and suggestions are always welcome on any aspect of Nova Scotia Environment's Protected Areas Program. For more information, please contact us or visit our website.

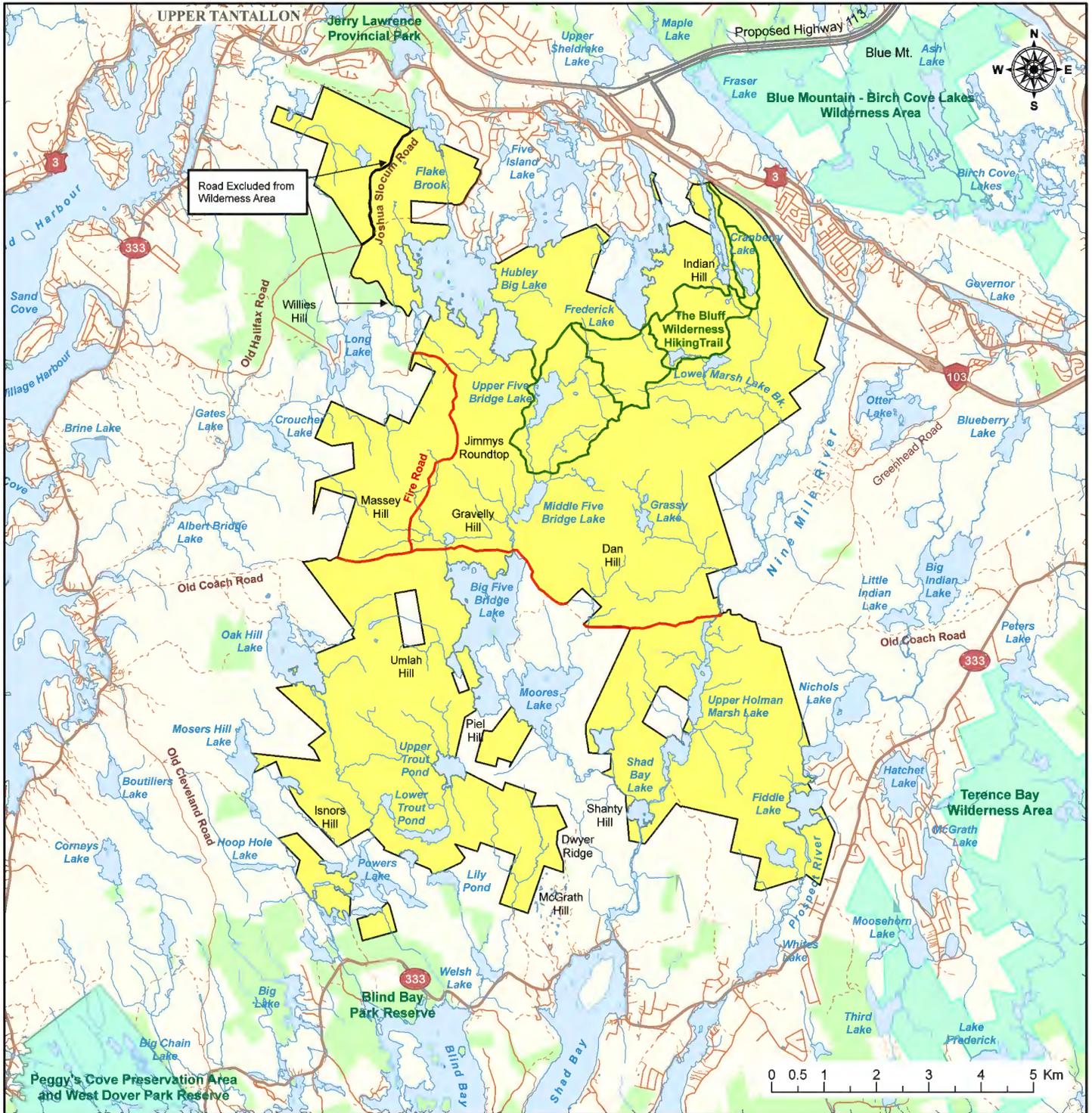
For more information please contact:
Protected Areas & Wetlands Branch
Nova Scotia Environment
Box 442, 5151 Terminal Road, Halifax, NS, B3J 2P8
Tel: (902) 424-2117 Fax: (902) 424-0501
email: protectedareas@gov.ns.ca

web: www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas

A Sincere Thank-you

Many people participated in the consultations over the past two years – thank you to all who shared information, ideas and their passion. The Province would especially like to acknowledge the role of local community groups in giving shape to Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area. For more than a decade, a coalition of groups worked towards protection of the area, bringing together local residents, naturalists, hikers, conservationists, canoeists, anglers, organized OHV users and many others.





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Crown Land

Other Protected Areas

Roads and Trails

- Arterial; Highway
- Collector; Ramp
- Local Road
- Resource/Recreation; Abandoned Road
- Trail/footpath/portage; Track
- Railway
- Hwy 113 (proposed)
- Proposed Off-highway Vehicle Trail Management Agreement

Map produced by the Protected Areas & Wetlands Branch of NS Environment, October 2011.

The information shown here was obtained courtesy of the NS Geomatics Centre (SNSMR) and the NS Department of Natural Resources.

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