

WRWEO Annual General Meeting
February 17, 2010
Tantallon Public Library from 7 pm – 9 pm

AGENDA

1. General welcome and introductions – 5 minutes
2. Approval of the March 25, 2009 Minutes (previously circulated; p. 7, below) – 5 minutes
3. Approval of Reports (previously circulated) – 30 minutes
 - A. Chairs' report – Richmond Campbell & David Patriquin (p. 1)
 - B. Treasurer's report – Robert McMahon (sep. document)
 - C. Trail report – Richmond Campbell (p. 3)
 - D. Aquatic Habitat and Water Quality Report – David Patriquin (p. 4)
4. Election of New Board – 10 minutes (p. 6)
5. Keynote speakers: David Patriquin and Dusan Soudek
"Candidate Wilderness Area by Land and Water" – 45 minutes
6. AOB
7. Adjournment

WOODENS RIVER WATERSHED ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION
Annual General Meeting February 17, 2010

CO-CHAIRS REPORT

Today we celebrate the completion of fifteen years of volunteer service. The past year has been one of innovation and outreach as well as of *reflection and consolidation*

Five Bridges Lakes Wilderness now Candidate for Protection Surely the biggest news affecting our watershed, The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, and all the wilderness on Crown land surrounding both, is that on October 19th the Province of Nova Scotia designated some 9000 hectares of Crown Land west of the Nile Mile River as an official Candidate for protection under the 1998 Wilderness Areas Protection Act. The Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust had worked for many years to form a stewardship agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to conserve this land. After these efforts were unsuccessful, WRWEO called a series of meetings in late 2007 that resulted in WRWEO and FBWHT passing motions at their 2008 AGMs to form a coalition of volunteer community groups within the Chebucto Peninsula that would work toward formal protection of these lands. The Chebucto Wilderness Coalition (CWC) formed and it quickly grew to over 35 community groups. Soon CWC met with the Minister of Environment and following his advice sought and received the endorsement of the HRM Regional Council as well as tentative endorsement of the Minister of Natural Resources. Support continued to grow this past year with endorsement of the opposition parties and CWC published regular reports of this progress available on our website. Dave Patriquin and Nick Hill (our last year's keynote speaker) conducted a field study of old growth stands of oak and red spruce in the area to be protected. After the formation of the new government, CWC met with Ministers Belliveau (Environment) and MacDonnell, (Natural Resources) and their Senior Staff to review the reasons for protection, as reported in Report #10 from the CWC Steering Committee, which includes representatives from BLT Rails-to-Trails Assoc., FBWHT, Safety Minded ATV Club, St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Assoc., and WRWEO. Declaration of Candidate Wilderness Area status two months later was the next momentous step toward the fulfillment of our dream to have this wilderness area protected for future generations. This evening Dave and Dusan Soudek of Canoe Kayak Assoc. of N.S. will provide a guided tour of the area by land and water to acquaint everyone present with the significance of these lands and the reasons for the Province to take the final step and formally protect the lands.

Improvements and Capital Projects on The Bluff Trail This year, besides the usual maintenance work of brush cutting two loops a year to keep the wilderness trail easy to follow and removing deadfall across it, we installed coloured coded trail markers to identify the loops between our junction signs and built stone tread in twenty drainage areas over all four loops. We are now in the process of replacing all nine junction signs with ones that reflect the colour coding of the loops and contain better and more up-to-date information. All work has been done through the auspices and generous financial support of the

Halifax Regional Trails Association and the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection, to whom we give our collective thanks. For details and more information, please see the separate report on The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail.

Restructuring of Operations As reported in the July issue of our newsletter WRWEO WATCH, the Board has changed the everyday mode of operation in ways that are more efficient yet still consistent with our by-laws and mission statement. The Board meets only five or six times a year now (instead of 12) and the daily burden of work falls to committees, who report to the Board. We have consolidated our focus of work to three areas: trail work, protection, and water quality. Protection work with CWC is done now by the two chairs, the trail work is led by Richmond (with advice and other help from a dozen member committee) and the water quality committee is led by Dave (with advice and help from various members who have been intensely involved with different aspects of it over the years). In the past WRWEO has been involved in other concerns, such as forestry and fishing practices in the watershed, and we would welcome further initiatives by members in such areas.

New Treasurer For personal reasons two dedicated WRWEO members, Brian Saulnier and Mark Reed, resigned from the Board. Brian had been treasurer for two and half years and we thank him for his long service in this demanding position. As permitted by our by-laws, the Board was able to appoint another member to serve in Brian's place, and Robert McMahon became our new treasurer on November 15th.

Aquatic Habitat and Water Quality The issues here include the aeration project at Sheldrake Lake, an algal bloom on Black Point Lake, the status of the spring mayfly hatch, challenges to fish habitat on the Woodens River, the implications of wilderness protection for water quality, and on-going challenges to conserving water quality in the Woodens River Watershed. For the details see Dave Patriquin's separate report on water quality.

Fishing Derby Every year in June for more than ten years WRWEO has hosted a fishing derby on a day in June when families can fish without a license. Though the derby has been very popular, WRWEO has been concerned about reports of abuses (e.g., illegally fishing at night before the derby and over-fishing) and concerned that the derby is by its nature not in keeping with our environmental values. The experience this past June was especially worrisome. The Board therefore, regretfully, decided not to host a fishing derby in 2010. Please see WRWEO WATCH for details.

Website: www.wrweo.ca or www.blufftrail.ca WRWEO took out a second domain name on the suggestion of a WRWEO member that blufftrail.ca is easier to remember than wrweo.ca; it's also especially appropriate for signs on The Bluff Trail. The website has been completely revamped and now offers regular updating of news about events, ecological information, new initiatives, trail improvements, opinions on controversial environmental issues, safety notices, and so on, with photos to delight the eye. Also on the site are details about The Bluff Trail, our board minutes, past newsletters, a photo gallery, and useful links. On behalf of all members, Richmond expresses our appreciation to his co-chair Dave Patriquin, who has brought this essential device of communication to its present level and continues to maintain the site. Feedback is sought and welcomed. We especially welcome contributions of photos or links to photos in the Woodens Watershed, The Bluff Trail and the larger Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area.

Respectfully submitted by:
Richmond Campbell and David Patriquin, Co-Chairs, WRWEO

Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization
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Report on The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail

WRWEO completed building The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail in 2005, comprising 32 kilometres of trail in the shape of four stacked loops beginning at the headwaters of the Woodens River watershed. The trail is challenging, designed for experienced hikers, and very popular, being voted in 2008 by the national magazine *Explore* to be one of the eight best “urban escapes” in Canada. The purpose of the trail is to provide the Nova Scotians with a wilderness experience that will awaken in them a deep appreciation of the beauty of the land and water in and around our watershed and move us all to work together to conserve this treasure for future generations.

In the past few years the trail committee has struggled with two problems requiring capital expenditures, and both have been satisfactorily resolved with the generous financial support of the Halifax Regional Trail Association (HRTA). First, many hikers have complained that it is difficult to keep their bearings. They sometimes can become confused about which loop they were traveling on. Maps are posted at each of nine trail junctions and we ask all hikers to bring map and compass. For example, we have posted a red warning sign at each trail junction beyond the first that reads: DANGER: REMOTE LOOPS DIFFICULT. BRING WATER, MAP, COMPASS, EMERGENCY GEAR. ALLOW 3-4 HOURS EACH LOOP. Still the problem has persisted. Second, many drainage areas crossing the trail make the trail extremely wet and muddy in places, so much so that hikers begin to create new trails to avoid these wet areas. This problem was serious at 22 sites over the four loops.

We have resolved the first problem by installing markers at intervals along the trail that are colour coded to correspond to the loop being traveled. The map on the website, www.wrweo.ca or www.blufftrail.ca has colours for the loops matching the markers and can be easily downloaded. Further each trail junction sign post has a sign explaining the colour code. We began working on the drainage problem by building two boardwalks over two of the wet areas near the beginning of trail. Then, thanks to the advice from members of HRTA, we found a Nova Scotian trail builder, Garnet McLaughlin, who treats drainage areas by using large found stones in the area and building a stone tread that permits the drainage to continue but also allows the hikers to walk on the stone rather than through the water. Though the construction of this kind of tread is labour intensive, it has significant advantages over boardwalks: stone tread does not rot and hence is low maintenance, it is less expensive to install, it is in keeping with the feel of a wilderness trail, and it is friendly to the environment, eliminating tree cutting for timber and wood preservatives. When properly constructed it does not impede the drainage.

We arranged for competitive bidding for these jobs following HRM guidelines and the Board awarded McLaughlin’s company Cobequid Trail Consulting contracts to do the work on the first two loops and another company Community Forests Canada to do the last two loops. The total cost with taxes for 20 drainage areas of about 50 feet each was \$22,080.20. Boardwalks at all those sites are estimated to cost many times that amount. Adding the cost of two boardwalks and sign production (Pulse Signs) and installation, the total capital expenditures for trail work in 2009-10 were: \$32,422.40 including HST.

Maintenance work on the trail, involving removal of deadfall, brush cutting to keep the right of way clear, and replacing out-of-date signs was also awarded through competitive bidding (unless the cost was below \$1000). That work is complete, except for the sign replacement to be done this weekend. The contractors involved were Vernon Woolsey (deadfall and brushing cutting), Pulse Signs (sign design and production), and Community Forests Canada (sign installation). The budget for these jobs, insurance costs, and incidental infrastructure expenses totals \$6,007 and will be spent in full. Another maintenance cost for which we received an extra budget from HRTA is the trail parking lot snow removal at 2890 St. Margaret’s Bay Road at a cost of \$60 plus tax for each storm. The contractor is DZEKS Limited. I should add finally that all workers hired live in Nova Scotia except for Vernon Woolsey from Alma, New Brunswick. Most of the work requires camping on the trail, often during inclement or winter conditions. We have found all the workers highly skilled, dedicated, ethical, and resourceful.

We normally have two major trail events: in June the International Trails Day celebration usually involving a nature walk on the trail, and in the late summer or fall, a guided hike over one or two loops of the trail arranged in conjunction with Parks Are For People sponsored by the Dept. of Natural Resources. The first event was held on June 7th, led by David Patriquin. The latter event, scheduled in collaboration with the Halifax Field Naturalists and the Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society, was rained out on both its scheduled date and the rain date but we have now rescheduled it for 2010 (see website).

Many volunteer hours are expended on trail work, including all the communication for arranging for bidding on contracts, inspecting work on remote parts of the trail, preparing grant applications and correspondence with government, planning new projects, dealing with problems such as sign vandalism or ATV incursions, answering email inquiries, guiding hikes, and so on. The number of volunteer hours must be reported each year to HRTA: the total for the 2009-2010 budget-year is 1625 hours. On behalf of WRWEO, I extend warm thanks to the volunteers who put in these hours.

Finally, I would like to express special thanks for the continued support of Councillor Reg Rankin in dealing with problems around the trail parking lot, for the support of The Honourable Bill Estabrooks in addressing land issues regarding trail protection, and for the support of The Bluff Trail Committee, especially Natalie Leonard, Hildi Konok, Jim Muir, Jim Carwardine, and Paul Berry. WRWEO is also grateful for the financial and moral support of HRTA, chaired by Holly Woodill, and the HRM staff with HRTA: Paul Euloth, Director of Regional Trails, Jessie Debaie, Dawn Neil, and Don Ambler.

Respectfully submitted,

Richmond Campbell
Chair, The Bluff Trail Committee
WRWEO

Report from the Aquatic Habitat & Water Quality Committee for 2009 (WRWEO AGM, Feb. 17, 2010)

The Woodens River watershed is a mosaic of 19 lakes, riverscape and various streams, ponds, wetlands (bogs, fens, marshes), granite barrens, and mixed and evergreen forest. Residents and visitors value the watercourses and the landscape at large for low impact recreational use, the pristine vistas, and their inherent qualities and support of native species. There are significant pressures on this system, notably development pressures in the upper part of the watershed and near its mouth on Saint Margaret's Bay, acid rain combined with low acid neutralizing capacity associated with shallow soils and granitic bedrock, and increasing recreational activity. Since its inception, WRWEO has been active in monitoring of aquatic habitat and water quality, promoting protection of the landscape and in remedial and other activities to improve aquatic habitat and water quality. Of note during the past year are the following:

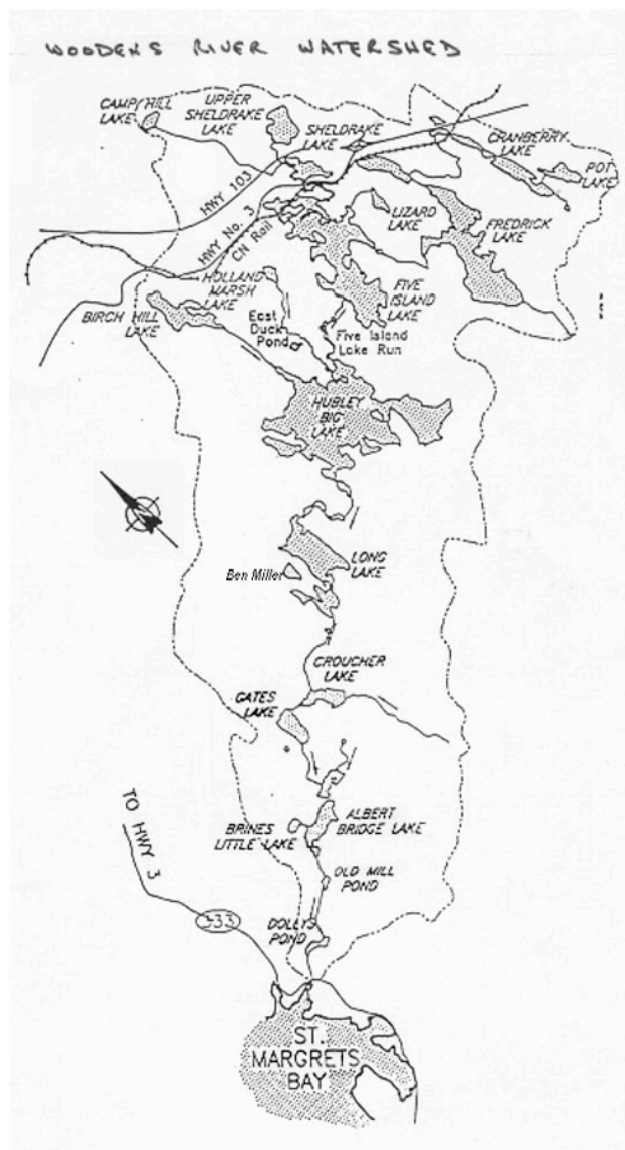
Sheldrake Lake

In the spring of 2009, the aerator on Sheldrake Lake was put into working order by members of the Sheldrake Lake Homeowners Association. The system is intended to aerate deeper water without disturbing the thermocline, the goal being to raise oxygen levels to those required by trout; aeration may also lower release of P from bottom sediments. The system consists of an oxygen generator/compressor on shore with lines to a float supporting a "full lift hypopimnetic aerator" at the deepest point of the lake. Bob Chambers volunteered to monitor oxygen and P (phosphorus) levels to determine if the aeration system is actually aerating the deeper waters as intended and whether there is any evidence for reduced P levels associated with aeration. We are grateful to Bob for this work, to volunteers from the Sheldrake Lake Homeowners Association who assisted and to David Bryson, long time member and supporter of WRWEO, for donating funds to cover direct costs for maintenance of the YSI oxygen probe and for P analyses. Bob's testing in 2010 provides some evidence that P levels have declined compared to 2000-2002 and 1991 but further monitoring is required to confirm that trend. Monitoring of oxygen levels showed that while the compressor was working and O₂ enriched air was being pumped continuously into the distribution box, oxygen values below the thermocline remained low. i.e., as currently configured, the aeration system is not working as intended. The compressor was turned off in early July. Tim McGee has suggested several modifications of the float that might improve the oxygen

flow. These remain to be implemented. We plan to hold discussions with the Sheldrake Homeowners Association on how to proceed in 2010.

Algal Bloom in Black Point Lake

Bob Chambers also reported on an algal bloom in a cove in Black Point lake fed by a Stream from Lizzard Lake. P levels were elevated in the stream compared to both Lizzard lake and Black Point lake, evidently from natural, organic sources. Bob concludes that this bloom is associated with natural phenomena and is likely to reoccur. Fortunately, on the small scale in which it occurs, the algae can be raked up and used as fertilizer for gardens.



PCBs and other factors affecting fish and fish habitat in the Woodens River

A meeting was held on March 18, 2009 to discuss the health of fish populations in the Woodens River system; it was a follow-up to a meeting on Jan. 27, '09 at which Jacques Whitford (now Stantec) consultants presented results of the 2008 Fisheries Resource Study of the Woodens River Watershed. Both meetings were organized and chaired by Beth McGee of Five Bridges Trust. Five Island Lake was historically contaminated by PCBs from a salvage yard in the community of Five Island Lake; the salvage yard was closed in 1989. Fish have been monitored for PCB levels since 1994. Cautions related to fishing in the watershed were advised in 1995; catch and release regulations have been in effect for most of the system since 2001. In 2007, PCB levels in some (but not all) fish in Hubley Big Lake, Sheldrake Lake, and Five Island Lake were above critical levels. The 2008 studies indicated that PCB levels of fish in lakes lower in the river system (Long, Ben Miller, Croucher, Gates, Millyard, and Albert Bridge Lakes) were below critical levels for consumption and wildlife. However the consultants noted that pH levels in several of the lakes were sufficiently low to be an appreciable stressor for fish, particularly trout, also that trout populations were generally low.

The March 18th meeting was wide ranging with a lot of discussion and input by 15 participants including the chair (Beth McGee), two Stantec consultants and officials from DOT and Inland Fisheries, and local residents and fishers with an intimate knowledge of the river system; five participants were WRWEO members. Amongst the various aspects brought up at the meeting were: the history of fires in the area; an incident in 2004 following a clearcut when a lot of silt went into the river, likely killing fry and perhaps older fish; the still mysterious collapse of the spring mayfly hatch in 1989 and continuing erratic numbers; the need to sample to capture the pH (acidification) spike at snowmelt; oxygen depletion in deeper areas of lakes; competition of trout with yellow perch and possible invasion by introduced bass; technical issues related to monitoring water quality variables; the need to collate the disparate data on the Woodens River system. Overall it was considered a highly constructive meeting;

all agreed on the need to obtain reliable data on the river system and its inhabitants and were willing to contribute; two participants followed up with some through-the-ice water pH sampling. Stantec consultants indicated that their 2009 study (Five Island Lake, Hubley Big Lake, Long Lake, Ben Miller, Croucher, Gates, Millyard and Albert Bridge) would include observations on pH, invertebrates and spawning sites and examination of historical data in an effort to determine more about the health of the trout population and habitat. They took advice from fishers on where to sample and received other inputs of data, informal observations etc. We look forward to their report on the 2009 study.

Also to be noted in relation to monitoring: the Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Network at Saint Mary's University is putting together a water testing kit and certification program that should be of great assistance to community groups involved in water quality monitoring. See their website for updates (www.envnetwork.smu.ca).

In response to a posting about mayfly on our website (May 12, 2009) we received a report from George Taylor of Trout Nova Scotia that "this year on the lower section below Long Lake the numbers looked better than in the last 8 to 10 years." (See website posting for more details.) We ask residents and visitors to the Woodens River Watershed to forward such observations, whether about lack of mayfly or new abundance, in 2010. Please see website for contact details.

Wilderness Protection

On October 19th, 2009, the province designated the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area a candidate for protection under the Wilderness Protection Act. Once realized, this will ensure that landscape surrounding Pot Lake, a small portion of the landscapes adjacent to each of Five Island Lake and Long Lake and major portions of landscapes adjacent to Cranberry Lake and Hubley Big Lake will be protected.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Even with formal protection of the Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area, most of the Woodens River Watershed remains under private ownership and parts of it are under development or other pressures. Ongoing acidification by acid rain, threats to trout populations from increased temperature and exotic species, and reports of algal blooms, physical damage and siltation in certain areas point to a continuing need for coordinated monitoring and community based efforts to minimize human disturbance of the Woodens River system.

Respectfully submitted,

David Patriquin
Chair, Aquatic Habitat & Water Quality Committee, WRWEO

SLATE OF NOMINATIONS TO THE 2010 WRWEO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richmond Campbell – Co-Chair	Paul Berry
David Patriquin – Co-Chair	Hildi Konok
Robert McMahon – Treasurer	Tim McGee
Barbara Klass – Secretary	Jim Muir

The By-Laws allow up to 15 persons to be members of the Board. Further nominations may be made from the floor at the AGM. If no more than 15 persons are nominated in total, they are declared elected by acclamation.

Minutes of Wooden's River Watershed Environmental Organization
2009 Annual General Meeting
March 25, 2009
Tantallon Public Library

Present: Richmond Campbell (Chair), Brian Saulnier (Treasurer), Barbara Klass (Secretary), Hildi Konok, Paul Berry, David Patriquin, Jim Muir, Bill Matheson, Tim McGee and some 35 others (list available on request).

Agenda:

- 1) Welcome and Approval of Agenda (Richmond Campbell)
- 2) Approval 2008 AGM minutes
- 3) Reports:
 - a. Chair's Report – Richmond Campbell
 - b. Treasurer's Report – Brian Saulnier
 - c. Chebucto Wilderness Coalition Report – Jim Muir
 - d. Aquatic Habitat and Water Quality Report – Dave Patriquin
 - e. The Bluff Trail Report – Hildi Konok & Natalie Leonard
- 4) Election of New Board
- 5) Keynote Address – Dr. Nick Hill on “The Ecology of the Chebucto Wilderness”
- 6) Adjournment

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

1) Welcome and Approval of Agenda

Chair Richmond Campbell welcomed guests and members. The Agenda was approved.

2) Approval of 2008 AGM Minutes

After Brian Saulnier asked that Chartered Accountant Jim Horwitz name be corrected to Jim Horwich, Paul Berry moved the 2008 AGM minutes be approved, seconded by Catherine Klefenz. Approved.

3) Reports (See attachments):

- a. Chair's Report (Richmond Campbell)
- b. Treasurer's Report (Brian Saulnier)
- c. Chebucto Wilderness Coalition Report (Jim Muir)
- d. Water Quality Report (David Patriquin)
- e. The Bluff Trail Report (Hildi Konok & Natalie Leonard)

4) Election of New Board (chaired by Bill Matheson)

Slate of nominations made by the retiring Board:

Richmond Campbell and David Patriquin – Co-Chairs

Brian Saulnier – Treasurer

Barbara Klass – Secretary

Hildi Konok (member) Tim McGee (member)

Jim Muir (member) Paul Berry (member)

Jim Muir nominated Dr. Mark Reed to the Board

Nominations were closed with no more nominations made after three calls for further nominations.

The above nominees were declared elected by acclamation.

5) Guest Speaker: Dr. Nick Hill

Dr. Nick Hill spoke on “The Ecology of the Chebucto Wilderness” and the effects on watersheds by development.

6) Adjournment

At 9 p.m. Bill Matheson moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Barbara Klass. Agreed.

Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization
Annual General Meeting of March 25, 2009

A) Report from the Chair:

This past year WRWEO has concentrated its energies in three areas: (1) the protection of the Chebucto Wilderness, (2) Aquatic Habitat and Water Quality in the Woodens River Watershed, and (3) The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, called one of the eight best urban escapes in Canada by *Explore: Canada's Outdoor Magazine* (May 2008). There will be reports from members of the Board covering each of these areas.

In the course of pursuing work in these areas it has become clear that WRWEO is not structured to operate as efficiently as it might, since most of the day to day work of the organization is done by a few individuals who do double duty as members of the main committees and the Board. Our by-laws do not require this mode of operation and the Board is recommending to the incoming Board that WRWEO operate differently: first, that it meet half as often, maybe five times; second, that the committees not meet unless there is a special reason, communicating instead via the internet and concentrating their energies on specific tasks. The result should be more efficiency and fairness in workload distribution and thus less "burn out" among volunteers.

Other noteworthy changes are: (1) we have reorganized our website to make it easier to navigate and also easier for Board and committee members to keep the site up-to-date (thanks to John Bignell). (2) Our annual fishing derby takes place on the first Saturday in June when no fishing license is required and has been very popular, but it has always been held always outside the watershed. This year we have already taken steps, thanks to Tim McGee, to hold the derby within the watershed on Cranberry Lake next to The Bluff Trail where we celebrate International Trails Day (that falls on the same day). Our plan is to reorient the event so that its focus is on environmental values. We plan to teach "catch and release" and the importance of conserving fish habitat. It will be a chance also to promote Tim's plan of teaching kids how to raise salmon at their schools.

Our work has been supported by local politicians, notably District 23 Councillor Reg Rankin and Timberlea-Prospect MLA Bill Estabrooks. Work on The Bluff Trail has been funded by HRM through the Halifax Regional Trails Association. I express special thanks to WRWEO volunteers, especially for work of Hildi Konok and Natalie Leonard on The Bluff Trail, David Patriquin, Tim McGee, Barbara Klass, Bob Chambers, Frank Hope, and Brian Saulnier on water quality, Jim Muir and Bill Matheson on the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition (CWC), Paul Berry on organizing WRWEO Watch, John Bignell on the website, Brain Saulnier as Treasurer, and Barbara Klass as Secretary. Finally I am grateful to Tom Musial, Chair, CWC, and Beth McGee, Chair, Five Bridge Wilderness Heritage Trust, for their leadership and wisdom in meeting our mutual challenges.
 Richmond Campbell, Chair
 Chebucto Wilderness Coalition

C) Update – Mar 25, 2009 - submitted by Jim Muir

- WRWEO's history of recognizing the natural value of the Chebucto Wilderness Area goes back close to 10 years.
- WRWEO built the Bluff Trail as a way of exposing the community at large to this wilderness experience, and thereby gaining wider public support in protection of 9800 hectares of wilderness on the city's doorstep.
- WRWEO recognized that progress in protecting the lands would be limited without broadly based public support. A coalition of organizations and key individuals was needed to move this initiative forward politically.
- The Chebucto Wilderness Coalition was established 1 year ago. The original members were drawn from WRWEO and The Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust, quickly joined by The St. Margarets Bay Stewardship Assoc., BLT Rails to Trails, the Safety-Minded ATV Club, the Resource Opportunities Centre, and others.
- A small team of 8-9 people, from the start-up Coalition, chaired by Tom Musial, meets regularly. The idea was, and is, to have a small, fast-acting team unburdened by formalities and digressions. A small team would not let itself get bogged down with procedural details, and would be narrowly focused. We inform supporting organizations and individuals through an on-going series of news bulletins.
- We reached out to numerous community organizations and individuals. Some 35 community, recreational and environmental organizations have formally signed on with their written support, plus HRM Council as a whole, MLA's, selected Provincial Ministers, and our MP.

- This groundswell of support has been further enhanced with face-to-face meetings with MLA's and Ministers of Environment and of Natural Resources and with the leaders of the current Opposition parties. We have been encouraged by our reception with all of the political leaders we have met with, and received follow-up letters from all of them that have been consistently supportive.
- The CWC initiative nicely complements the strategy of the Provincial Government to set aside and formally protect 12% of Crown lands in the province permanently. We feel we can and should form part of that 12% with the Chebucto Wilderness.
- By any measure, our progress has been steady and promising to date. It can easily be a 5-10 year process to protect lands in NS. Currently, the Province is preparing the environmental analysis of the lands needed prior to moving on to a political decision.
- Politicians has repeatedly told us that our approach of including a very wide range of supporting groups, right from the start, is extremely helpful to them. The CWC's work continues, and we are greatly encouraged by the support received, and the reception we have been given, to date.

Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization
Annual General Meeting of March 25, 2009

d) Report from the Aquatic Habitat & Water Quality Committee

The Woodens River watershed is a mosaic of lakes, and various streams, ponds, wetlands (bogs, fens, marshes), granite barrens, and mixed and evergreen forest. Residents and visitors value the watercourses and the landscape at large for low impact recreational use, the pristine vistas, and their inherent qualities and support of native species. There are significant pressures on this system, notably development pressures in the upper part of the watershed and near its mouth on Saint Margaret's Bay, acid rain combined with low acid neutralizing capacity associated with shallow soils and granitic bedrock, and increasing recreational activity. Since its inception, WRWEO has been active in monitoring of aquatic habitat and water quality, promoting protection of the landscape and in remedial and other activities to improve aquatic habitat and water quality. Of note during the past year are the following.

- Bob Chambers prepared a detailed report on key limnological properties of 10 lakes in the upper part of the watershed examined in 2000-2002. This is important baseline data against which we can monitor effects of development, climatic change and conservation efforts.
- Continuing support of the Sheldrake Lake aeration project: feedback by Bob Chambers on results of community based monitoring in 2008 will help to improve that monitoring.
- A Jacques/Whitford/Nova Scotia Transportation report released at a public meeting on Jan. 27, '09 indicates that contamination of fish in the Woodens River Watershed from PCBs released into Five Island Lake has now dropped below critical levels for fish consumption. The same report raised concerns about low pH values and abundance of brook trout populations. In a subsequent meeting chaired by Beth McGee (March 18, '09) concerned parties discussed these issues and took tangible steps towards collaboration between fishers, residents, conservationists and government in the monitoring, protection and improvement of aquatic habitat and water quality in the several watersheds of the Chebucto Peninsula.
- An overview of aquatic habitat and water quality issues and the role of wilderness protection was prepared for the CWC Steering Committee; wilderness protection is critical for the health of the Woodens River and other watersheds.
- David Patriquin began to compile and review documents pertaining to aquatic habitat and water quality in the Woodens River. Key documents are being posted on a password protected website. At this stage, access is restricted to WRWEO Board members, but as much of it as possible will be moved to a fully public website.

We express special thanks to Frank Hope for his work over the years compiling documents and actively pursuing aquatic habitat and water quality issues for WRWEO.

e) **The Bluff Wilderness Trail Report: WRWEO AGM, March 25, 2009**

In early fall, Brian Lynch was hired to construct a barrier of large boulders at the end of The Bluff Trail parking lot to prevent ATVs from using the parking area to access the trails. A passageway just wide enough to provide wheel-chair accessibility to the Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea (BLT) Trail was allowed. We wish to thank Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) for allocating the amount of \$1921 to cover the cost of this project.

In September, on the advice of HRTA (Halifax Regional Trails Assoc.), we wrote a letter to HRM requesting that the city assume responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the parking lot. As volunteers, we find that we do not have the resources to deal with ongoing issues such as the reconstruction of a culvert that has serious drainage issues, garbage collection, vandalism, and the clearing of snow during the winter months. We wish to express our thanks to Catherine Klefenz (BLT Trail) who helped to co-ordinate the construction of the parking lot barrier and has been supportive of our efforts to deal with the parking lot issues.

Vernon Woolsey was contracted to proceed with the maintenance work required on the trails (brush-cutting/windfall clearing/ boardwalk and sign repairs) for the amount of \$7376. In addition, he was to build new signage and boardwalks in problem areas (capital expenditures) for the amount of \$17,300. (We wish to thank HRTA and our chief funding source, HRM, for approving our funding requests.)

Unfortunately, due to a hand injury sustained in October, as well as unusually difficult winter conditions, Vernon was unable to begin his work until late January. He has completed the new signage and trail markers on all four loops, as well as the routine maintenance work, but has been unable to do the boardwalk work, which will be done in the upcoming months with improved weather conditions.

We attend monthly meetings of HRTA who supports us in marketing The Bluff Trail, gives funding advice, keeps us informed on trails issues locally, provincially and nationally and is a strong lobby group for the establishment and sustainable maintenance of trails in our region.

In early May, The Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust conducted a guided hike along Pot Lake Loop with lichenologist, Frances Anderson. Over a dozen people attended to observe and learn (on hands and knees, with magnifying glasses) all about the secret lives of lichens!

In June, we celebrated International Trails Day by greeting hikers at the trailhead, handing out maps of The Bluff Trail, supplying bottles of water, and promoting responsible use of the trails. There were over fifty people using the trail that morning. In September, Natalie Leonard and Hildi Konok led a dozen hikers on Pot Lake and Indian Hill Loops as part of the Parks Are for People program.

The Bluff Trail is a jewel in the local trails system. The community and visitors love the trail and are using it in increasing numbers. We receive many testimonials from enthusiastic hikers like Sheila Davis who wrote:

“Four of us went on a hike (of the first two loops of The Bluff Trail) on Thanksgiving afternoon. It has now become our “hike to show off Nova Scotia to guests”. What a spectacular trail and so close to the city... We’ve included descriptions and photos in our weekly email letter to friends and family in BC, Ontario, Quebec, England, Germany, and Italy.”

No surprise then to hikers like Sheila that The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail was named as one of eight best “urban escapes” in Canada in the May issue of the prestigious, *Explore: Canada’s Outdoor Magazine*.

Respectfully submitted by:

Hildi Konok and Natalie Leonard (Co-Chairs: Trails Committee)