

WRWEO WATCH (Vol. 4, No. 2)

Newsletter for the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Tantallon Public Library on Tuesday March 25 beginning at 6:45 pm (registration and membership fee is \$10) to 8:45 pm.

In addition to the regular business, the meeting will hear from Raymond Plourde at Ecology Action Centre. He will speak in protection of wilderness areas under the Nova Scotia Wilderness Areas Protection Act. See below the Special Resolution to be put to the AGM on March 25.

This topic is of particular interest to WRWEO members since we have from our inception had a vision of securing legal protection for the large block of wilderness in and to the east of our watershed, altogether comprising some 9,800 hectares of public land. For a general map should the area of public land in question, go to www.publicland.ca and click on Site Map and then on Five Bridges Lakes. These are your lands to protect.

WRWEO was created in 1995 as the outcome of a grass roots effort to stop the development of public lands in this area. In particular we opposed “land swaps” between developers and the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources that can be carried out behind closed doors without timely public input. In March 2003 at one of the largest public meetings ever hosted by WRWEO, members voted on whether it would be better on ecological grounds to approve one of these swaps of land provided that the net area of public land in this block remained the same but the exchange provided more ecological valuable land for the less valuable. The outcome of the vote was sufficiently negative that the developer, who had committed himself respect public opinion, made no further efforts to persuade the province to make the trade.

Shortly afterward WRWEO completed the building of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail on these public lands under the authority of NS DNR. The primary aim in creating the hiking trail was to make the area accessible to the public in a way that is environmentally responsible and conveys to the public the immense intrinsic value of this land. The trail is restricted by order of NS DNR to hiking and cross-country skiing; no bikes or motorized traffic of any kind is permitted on the trail. The trail is attracting increasing numbers of visitors, all of whom have shown respect for it by packing out all that is carried in and in general practicing the principles of Leave No Trace, stated on all signs on the trail.

Other environmental organizations, notably the Five Bridge Wilderness Heritage Trust, have joined with WRWEO in taking advantage of this opportunity for planning and carrying out education and scientific activities on the trail in order to understand better the environmental values inherent in this public land. In light of these important steps and other considerations, including the widespread public interest in wilderness protection, the WRWEO Board is putting the following special resolution at the AGM.

Special Resolution

**of
Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization**

Whereas the continuous block of approximately 9,800 hectares of public lands within the boundaries of Highways 103 and 333, in the County of Halifax, Province of Nova Scotia, hereafter referred to as “the Public Lands,” provides the Halifax Regional Municipality with a pristine wilderness area within a 15 minute commute from downtown Halifax;

Whereas the said Public Lands have assets of great natural and historical value, such as the endangered mainland moose and the rare Mountain Sandwort (*Arenaria groenlandica*);

Whereas because of these assets the said Public Lands provide enormous opportunity for public education and scientific study;

Whereas the said Public Lands offer unique opportunities for recreation and eco-tourism within an urban context, including: (1) The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, (2) a large network of canoe/kayak routes consisting of some twenty lakes, streams, and rivers, and (3) traditional hunting and fishing;

Be It Resolved as a special resolution of the Members of the Society within the meaning of the *Societies Act., R.S.N.S. 1989 c.435* as amended, that the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization develop and carry out a strategy to protect the said Public Lands under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act. S.N.S., 1998, c. 27* as amended;

And Further Be It Resolved as a special resolution of the Members of the Society within the meaning of the *Societies Act., R.S.N.S. 1989 c.435* as amended, that the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization join a coalition of community groups within the Chebucto Peninsula and any other interested parties to develop and carry out a strategy to protect the said Public Lands under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act., S.N.S., 1998, c. 27* as amended.

To put this resolution into perspective and to give us feedback, please see vision statement and action plan of WRWEO that is posted on our website at www.wrweo.ca

For information call Paul Berry (Chair) at 876-7847 or other Board members listed on our website or Richmond Campbell (Co-founder) at 876-7847 (home) or 489-0457 (cell).

We would like to thank Councillor Reg Rankin (District 22) for the many ways that he has supported WRWEO this past year and before and in particular his interventions to keep parking for The Bluff Trail open and safe during this winter. We would also like to thank Bill Estabrooks (MLA Timberlea-Prospect) for his support in helping us develop a strategy for wilderness conversation.

