

## APPENDIX O



### Sandy Lake Protection History

2019

In 1971, nearly 50 years ago, a report by Paul Dean, Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service entitled Natural Environment Survey identified seven sites in the greater Halifax/Dartmouth area of regional significance for recreation and environmental protection. <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1971-PB-Dean-Environment-Report.pdf>.

Shortly thereafter, a second background study was prepared for the Metropolitan Area Planning Committee (MAPC). Entitled Growth Through Recreation, this study estimated the amount of land required to create seven regional parks in the areas identified in the Dean report <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1971-MAPC-Rec-Work-Group-Report-7-Regional-Parks.pdf>. A draft regional development plan was released in 1973, and it included the proposed regional parks system.

On the basis of these studies, seven 'Regional Parks' were designated in the Halifax-Dartmouth Regional Development Plan of 1975, to satisfy the stated objective: "to protect areas of unique natural significance against adverse effects and to reserve sufficient open space for recreational purposes". They were the Shubenacadie Canal, Hemlock Ravine, Long Lake, McNabs Island, Admirals Cove, the Cole Harbour Salt Marshes, and Sandy Lake. Each location was seen as unique from the others and outstanding in its own right. The Sandy Lake to the Sackville River proposal was referred to as the Sandy Lake Regional Park.

In 1976, MAPC approved the establishment of a Parks Advisory Group to carry out planning studies on the regional parks. The Parks Advisory Committee came back in 1979 with a full report describing each park, with references to bio-physical data, proposed development concepts, projected development and acquisition costs, boundary recommendations, and ownership details. A key conclusion of the report was for immediate acquisition of key privately held land parcels, as such lands could be lost to development <http://sandylake.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1979-Halifax-Dartmouth-Regional-Parks-Short-Report.pdf>.

In the intervening years, all six of the other regional park locations were preserved, but the Sandy Lake Regional Park proposal ran into difficulties of various kinds. At amalgamation, the Town of Bedford's work to acquire land and create the regional park fell by the wayside.

Previously, when Sandy Lake was in the County of Halifax (and not part of Bedford), the process for the Sandy Lake Regional Park lands to be designated as a regional park required that Halifax County, the City of Dartmouth and the City of Halifax all agree. A local resident offered to give 500 acres at the west end of Sandy Lake to the Municipality of Halifax County for the Sandy Lake Regional Park, on condition that the park be named after her deceased husband. At the same time, the county warden was looking to increase tax income, and Twin Cities Dairy (the 'Dairy', renamed Farmers Dairy and currently Agropur Cooperative Dairy) was looking for a site to relocate their dairy outside the city proper. The Dairy noticed that a large property along the southwestern shore of Sandy Lake which suited their needs (proximity to the city plus lake water) came up for sale. SLCA understands that the county warden chose to approve the Dairy to increase county taxes and declined the land offer for the regional park.

At the time, there were (even) fewer regulations to protect lakes and waterways, and people were generally unaware of the consequences of some of their activities. The Dairy cleared 50 acres and in-filled a roadway. They also added a culvert over the main lake feeder stream (visible on the Dairy access road) which caused such runoff that Sandy Lake was muddy brown for two years. The Dairy's plan was to dump the milk effluent into the lake as well. In response, the Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association was formed. The group hired consultants and worked with the politicians and the Dairy to get the plan to pump milk effluent into Sandy Lake dropped in favour of building holding ponds. These holding ponds are visible on the left of the Dairy access road. The Dairy (now Agropur) has been a good corporate citizen for the area and for Sandy Lake.

Despite the move toward industrializing lands around Sandy Lake, efforts to create the Sandy Lake Regional Park were proceeding. The impact of the Dairy's location so close to the lake was such a shock that the Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association began to work with the Town of Bedford (by then the Sandy Lake area was part of Bedford) to ensure that it became easier to protect the lake. The Mayor of Bedford, Francene Cosman, saw the importance of this area. By 1983, after failed attempts of various levels of government to create the Sandy Lake Regional Park, Mayor Cosman and the Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association hit upon a device for protecting the lake—a by-law that would allow no new development unless one owned 5 acres on a publicly serviced road that was a public road before October 9, 1991. This regulation was put in place and is still protecting Sandy Lake. (However, over the past 10 years, land assembly began as developers eyed Sandy Lake for residential development.)

Over the next few years further efforts to preserve the regional park ideal continued as Bedford purchased and acquired parts of the shore of Sandy Lake for the proposed park. In 1992 the Dairy gave 6 acres of shoreline to the Town of Bedford for the regional park with the requirement that there be no vehicular traffic permitted on that land.

The next development arose when the Bedford Lions Club expressed a desire to mark the millennium with a public project. The original proposed regional park plan (from the MAPC plans) had included a small beach park (where the Bedford Lions Beach Park now exists). HRM, the Province and the Lions Club donated \$500,000 for the recreational development. The result was a portion of the original proposed Sandy Lake Regional Park was designated as park land. While surveys of the Bedford and Hammonds Plains communities for recreational preferences all suggested that people wanted an indoor year-round 'swimming opportunity' and hiking trails, the beach plan was chosen.

There were numerous environmental protection challenges in the design of the Bedford Lions Beach Park – grades, drainage and backfilling plans had to be adjusted so that there would be no washouts and flooding. The plan to remove the trees and the natural shore berm and add tons of sand to make a bigger beach, which would have destroyed a protected fish breeding area, was altered to protect the shoreline and wildlife. Planners proposed flush toilets which

would have required cutting down a football-sized area of old growth Acadian forest along the shore to create the disposal field. The Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association was able to make the case for 'trailhead' peat toilets (similar to those used by Parks Canada and the US National Parks Service) which were installed and have worked well. The trees were saved, the ecosystem and the beauty of the area were preserved, and the beach has been a fine addition to Sandy Lake. Again, residents worked with decision-makers to see to the lake's needs.

Somewhere in the midst of all the meetings and activities around the beach project some in the Sandy Lake Ratepayers Association realized that there would always be issues that could harm the lake, and that, in the end, it was the quality of the water that had to be protected. So the Sandy Lake Watershed Association was started. For several years there was regular water testing carried out by the Bedford Water Advisory Committee...that was eventually cut from the city's budget. (SLCA understands that the will to continue to spend the ~\$3,500.00 a year for testing all lakes in HRM was lost somehow, so not only Sandy Lake suffered from that cut.) As the Bedford Lion's Club Beach Park progressed, the Sandy Lake Watershed Association successfully advocated for the elimination of a planned boat launch facility, reducing the number of motorized water craft using the lake and thereby further protecting the sensitive wildlife. It is important to note that this undertaking did not have the intention of removing motorized water craft from the lake, as it was recognized that a number of existing private landholders on the lake had (and continue to have) motorized water craft.

Under the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS 2006), some lands originally proposed as part of the Sandy Lake Regional Park were designated by HRM as urban settlement, with the intention of developing the lands within 25 years. The projected 'build out' population for Sandy Lake was identified as 12,000. The current projection is for up to 16,000 residents. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/101116cow3-217.pdf>. In 2009, CBCL carried out a Cost of Servicing Study on behalf of HRM. The Sandy Lake Watershed Association was not aware of the new designation or the study.

In 2006 the HRM-owned Jack Lake lands together with the Lions Club Beach on Sandy Lake were identified as lands for the Jack Lake Regional Park which is still to be formally designated. Those lands have their own special attributes and should remain protected, but about 1000 acres of the critical Sandy Lake to Sackville River corridor remain to be protected. Citizens have worked since the 1970s to protect this area and to finally achieve a comprehensive Sandy Lake Regional Park.



**Sandy Lake clear-cut in progress 2013, as seen from Lions' Club Beach**