

APPENDIX V

Regional Plans 1975 to 2015: The Sandy Lake Mistake

The objectives for Regional Parks, as outlined in our 2014 Regional Plan, are “*to preserve significant natural or cultural resources, and to be large enough to support both ecosystem protection and human enjoyment at the same time.*” (page 57) Historical documents show the importance of including the Sandy Lake watershed within the park. If anything, its importance has elevated with the closing-in of development on all sides of the watershed, and also with the need for recovery of growth in the 300 acres of forest that were cut down in 2013.

All Regional Plans since the 1970s state the intent to create a regional park at Sandy Lake and to acquire lands for that park. However, a mistake was made. Housing development is now a serious risk to the watershed that protects the entire park. We have an opportunity to intercept harm now.

1975 Halifax-Dartmouth Regional Development Plan defines and separates regional parks and development areas and identifies seven unique areas to become regional parks: Hemlock Ravine, Schubenicadie Canal system, McNab’s island, Admirals Cove, Cole Harbour/Lawrencetown Beach, Long Lake/Chain Lake, and **the Marsh and Sandy Lakes, Sackville Flood Plain.**

1982 Halifax-Dartmouth Regional Development Plan states concerns about urban sprawl, and a shift from “*development at any cost*” toward quality of life. Metro has not been harmed by the industrial revolution, and has clean lakes and clean air. **Page 20-21 describes regional parks using similar descriptive words still found in the 2014 RP, and the seven proposed regional parks are again listed.**

2004 Town of Bedford Municipal Planning Strategy Environmental Policies:

“Policy E-18: It shall be the intention of Town Council to identify the Sackville River as a conservation corridor because of its importance as a salmon fish habitat and its significance as a natural amenity to the community, and to work towards improving the quality of water in the Sackville River, in cooperation with appropriate agencies.”

“Policy E-20: It shall be the intention of Town Council upon the adoption of this plan to undertake an in-depth environmental study of the Sandy Lake watershed which will include input from the N.S. Department of Environment as well as area residents, and shall examine present water quality, watershed land use practices increased rates of sedimentation, and the development of a recovery and protection program for Sandy Lake if warranted by the study.”

2006 Regional Plan identifies six areas for **future growth (housing) in HRM:** Bedford South, Morris-Russell Lake, Bedford West, Port Wallis, **Sandy Lake** and Highway 102 west corridor adjacent to Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Park. (*One has to ask what changed to make this happen. Where were the voices of the community and scientists who previously identified this as ecologically important? A mistake was made here that we must correct.*

- 2006-2010 Kingswood North is built west of Sandy Lake. Developers are land-banking.
- 2009 Developers submit applications for developing Sandy Lake west.

- 2009 CBCL Cost of Servicing Study to proceed, and developer proposes oversized sewer pipe.)

2011 Halifax Regional Municipality MPS for Bedford “Town Council shall continue working towards the establishment of major parks at Admiral’s Cove, **Sandy Lake**, and within the Waterfront Development Area (Policy P-6)” “...policies P-8 and P-9 indicate Town Council’s intentions to designate future parkland within the Jack Lake assembly...”p.126 “...the future development of existing open space is now seen as a higher priority than the acquisition of additional open space. Exceptions to this would be land acquired in relation to subdivision development, land for neighbourhood parks, specialized land for linkages or unique sites, **and Sandy Lake.**” p.128

2012 - A memorandum of Understanding was made between Armco and Halifax Water for Armco to contribute \$1mil of the \$3.1mil estimated cost of upsizing the wastewater pipes of Bedford West to accommodate possible future development at Sandy Lake. Item 5 of the MOU states, “Armco shall make the above-noted upfront payment recognizing and accepting that the decision to approve a secondary planning strategy for all or a portion of the Sandy Lake lands is ultimately in the sole discretion of HRM Regional Council”

July 3, Council Report, Wastewater Oversizing for Future Development of Sandy Lake Lands. “HRM is not a party to the proposed Armco-HWRD contract. As such, the terms and conditions do not commit a future council to any planning approvals in either Bedford West or the Sandy Lake lands.” p.1

2014 Regional Plan (RP+5) “The primary objective of a Regional Park is to preserve and protect significant natural or cultural resources. The essential feature of a Regional Park may include, but not be limited to, open space, wilderness, scenic beauty, flora, fauna, and recreational, archaeological, historical, cultural and/or geological resources.” p.26

“HRM intends to create additional Regional Parks at various locations throughout HRM including the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes, Feely Lake, **Jacks Lake**, Second Lake, and Porters Lake.” p.28

2.2.7: E-11 “(a) coordinating and managing a program to research, identify and designate potential natural areas, systems and distinct landscapes, natural corridors and critical ecosystem linkages, and significant natural habitats to guide future development (see Map 5, Significant Habitats and Endangered Species and Appendix C: Species at Risk in HRM 2013);

(b) coordinating and managing a program to research and identify potential public open space parks and corridors for the provision of quality open space for recreational and social development, restoration of natural corridor and urban ecosystem function, greenway networks to connect communities and provide mobility options and significant natural habitats to guide considerations of future development;

(c) establishing selection criteria, investment and management guidelines for public open space lands, infrastructure and sustainable natural open space management strategies;

(d) examining criteria for classifying and developing HRM parks including comprehensive criteria for designating regional parks;

(e) assessing opportunities to further the development and establishment of management plans for the 1975 Regional Park System, the new Regional Parks proposed under this Plan, and other areas identified for their potential as regional parks;

(f) *developing an evaluation methodology and criteria for determining land capability and functionality in meeting standards for the delivery of public open space services, open space conservation, community development and growth management;*

(g) *developing a system of interconnected public and natural undisturbed open spaces throughout HRM to include HRM parks, coastal areas and watercourse shorelines, water route and land-based greenways as illustrated on the Trails and Natural Network Map (Map 3), multi-functional streets, environmental and cultural conservation areas, schools, natural corridors, habitats as well as other public and community facilities;*

(h) *establishing a green-way network that includes a variety of corridors such as linear parks, hiking trails, nature trails and scenic loops;*

(i) *including a comprehensive planning approach for the retention of coastal and freshwater lake access and incentives for the protection of watercourse buffers;*

“Policy E-12 – HRM shall prepare a Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priorities Plan and preserve connectivity between natural areas and open space land, to enable their integration into sustainable community design, to help define communities, to benefit the municipality’s economic and physical health of its people and to reflect and support the overall purposes of this plan.”

(Note: All of these points are directly relevant to SL-SRRP.

2015 Halifax Municipal Strategy for Bedford The wording is exactly the same as in 2011, but the pages are 122-125. *“...shall continue working towards the establishment of major parks at Admiral’s Cove, **Sandy Lake**, and within the Waterfront Development Area (Policy P-6)” ...Policies P-8 and P-9 indicate Town Council’s intentions to designate future parkland within the **Jack Lake assembly**... ”* *...” the future development of existing open space is now seen as a higher priority than the acquisition of additional open space. Exceptions to this would be land acquired in relation to subdivision development, land for neighbourhood parks, specialized land for linkages or unique sites, and **Sandy Lake**.”*

The Sandy Lake and area is clearly still seen as important park land, but watershed that protects those park assets is now on a parallel path toward housing. Protecting the Sandy Lake watershed from development is critical to the entire park/watershed through to Sackville River and basin. We have a mistake to correct.