



Public Meeting

Presentation of Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan

HRM is seeking public input on the draft Master Plan for the Western Common Wilderness Common. The Western Common is situated between Highway 103 and Highway 333 (Prospect Road) extending west from the Ragged Lake Business Park to the area around Nine Mile River. The Wilderness Common is a proposed 1600 hectare portion of the Western Common that will become a Regional Park.

A public open house meeting will be held on the following date:

Wednesday, April 14 from 6:30-9:00 pm

•Brookside Jr. High School, 2239 Prospect Road

Copies of the plan and maps are available for download at:

<http://www.halifax.ca/RealPropertyPlanning/WCWA/index.html>

The public is also invited to comment on the plan via e-mail. Please submit your comments to parkplan@halifax.ca no later than April ~~14~~, 2010. New Deadline: April 25

For further information please contact John Charles, Planner, Real Property Planning, HRM Infrastructure and Asset Management at: 490 5771.

Background



- The Western Common (area shown above in yellow within red box) extends over lands owned by HRM between Highway 103 to the north and Highway 333 (Prospect Road) to the south. It extends from the Ragged Lake Business Park in the east to the Nine Mile River in the west.
- The Wilderness Common comprises the western half of the Western Common. It includes seven lakes, extensive rivers and streams, historical trails, special habitats and culturally significant areas complementing a variety of urban land uses in the south (Prospect Road and vicinity) and the Halifax Mainland in the east.
- Drawing up a Wilderness Common Master Plan was recommended as one of four major elements of the Western Commons Concept Land Use Plan presented in the 1999 study 'Planning for the Western Common'. Considerable change has occurred since the study was published. HRM was less than three years old when it was completed, and the Otter Lake Solid Waste Management Facility only began operations in 1999, as the report was being reviewed and presented to the public. The HRM Regional Plan consultation process began three years later, and the resulting plan was adopted in August, 2006.
- The goals of the current study are to review the 1999 Concept Plan, conduct a community consultation process, and develop a Wilderness Common Master Plan that provides a sustainable vision for future park development by preserving the ecological integrity of the Wilderness Common while supporting outdoor recreation activities, enhancing regional context, ensuring connectivity to other parks and open spaces, and adopting best management practices to maintain the integrity of edge relationships with human and wildlife communities bordering the park.

- As recommended in the 1999 study, an advisory committee, entitled the Western Common Wilderness Advisory Committee, was formed to facilitate citizen involvement in developing and managing the Wilderness Common. The committee's oversight has been key to the Master Plan's successful development.
- Chapters 1 to 4 of the Master Plan were prepared between the project's late July 2008 inception and October 2008. In November 2008, the first phase of the master planning process was completed with the publication of the 'Wilderness Common Situation Assessment Report'. It contains a thorough review of the 1999 study and associated land-use planning documents completed in the past decade. It includes an extensive collection and interpretation of geographical information system (GIS) site data, as well as field assessments of forest and archaeological site conditions. The report also documents information gained through consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders.
- The area was assessed using Land Suitability Analysis, which determines the fitness of land for a specific use. Chapter 5 outlines the analysis and its results.
- In Chapter 6, the Master Plan is presented in five phases, with an outline of park amenities, waterways and trail systems to be developed. The Plan also includes cost estimates and an implementation timeframe. Wilderness Common's development as a regional park will be phased over a period of twenty years, with the exception of areas currently occupied by the Otter Lake Solid Waste Management Facility, which will likely require a sixty-year operational and closeout monitoring period to enable it to be fully incorporated within the park.

Highlights from the Master Plan

- The ongoing operation of the Solid Waste Management Facility and an extended closeout monitoring period are considerations for the Master Plan. The new designation of "Regional Park Reserve" ensures that the facility and surrounding exclusion area lands will eventually become part of the regional park.
- The Master Plan also deals with forest management. The main recommendation is that a detailed forest management plan be prepared. Forest management planning for the Wilderness Common should be developed following principles of sustainable management such as those identified by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Forest management standards for the Wilderness Common should be consistent with those adopted by HRM for the Point Pleasant Park Comprehensive Plan.
- Conservation of cultural heritage is a key element of the Master Plan. Further research concerning cemeteries and farmsteads in the former Greenhead Settlement will be conducted in order to preserve and interpret the area's cultural heritage. The potential of pre-contact archaeological sites will also be considered throughout the regional park's development.