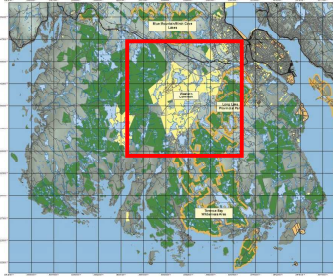


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



- The **Western Common** 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 EDM 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.
- 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.

- **Chapter 7 is an expansion to the Master Plan presenting a vision for the Chebucto Peninsula** that addresses some of the most pressing recreational and ecological issues on a significant portion of the Crown Lands on the Peninsula. Since it would require the Province's leadership, it is separate from the Wilderness Common Master Plan and is included for discussion purposes only. The Chebucto Peninsula Concept Plan could provide HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia with a world-class multi-use trail experience for tourist and local residents, while also protecting the habitat of the Mainland Moose, an endangered species—all within an area less than 30 kilometers from downtown Halifax. The expansion outlines a wider vision for the Chebucto Peninsula as it relates to the Wilderness Common. This vision, which has been presented to HRM staff, Provincial departments and NGOs, defines a possible solution to the divergent issues of OHV use in the area and the presence of the endangered Mainland Moose

- **Stakeholder groups** such as the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition, the St. Margarets Bay Safety Minded ATV Association, the Ecology Action Centre and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society have reviewed and shown support for the Concept Plan, and HRM's Western Common Advisory Committee has endorsed its further development.

- **The Chebucto Peninsula Concept Plan has four components:**
 - a) Wilderness Conservation Area,
 - b) Regional Park Reserve,
 - c) Regional Park,
 - d) Multi-Use Trail System.The trail system, which includes motorised and non-motorised sections, would allow access to communities throughout the Chebucto Peninsula, and would

minimize human disturbance of the moose by gradually redirecting human activities to the periphery of the moose habitat area.

The Concept Plan provides a pragmatic, integrated planning approach to accommodating human recreational needs while fostering survival of the Mainland Moose on the Chebucto Peninsula. Further cost/benefit analysis will be required to calculate natural capital costs associated with the potential loss of the Mainland Moose, as well as potential trail-related financial benefits such as tourism revenues.