**COCO Meeting Notes**

Date: Nov. 15, 2017

Present: Kimberly Berry – WRWEO, Tom Musial – FBWHT/BLTR2T, Beth McGee – FBWHT, Mike Lancaster – SMBSA

Regrets: Mike Marriot

Next COCO Meeting: Tentatively set for Tuesday, Jan. 23rd

**Kimberly – WRWEO/Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail**

* Kimberly opens the meeting and completes a Mi’kmaq land acknowledgment and shares her recent experience at the Mi’kmaq Friendship Centre where she attended a workshop on reconciliation. One of her experiences was that the word “healing” was very prominent and at the forefront of desired outcomes of the reconciliation process.
* Great news – the Bluff Trail Stewardship Program has done tremendous work towards the goal of increased monitoring, presence and visitor engagement on the trail and furthering the goals of reducing the prevalent impacts and ecological harms that the trail has seen in recent years
* Bad news – the BTSP (Bluff Trail Stewardship Program) is running out of money – we are coming to the end of our available funding and there are currently no funds secured for the continuation of the program. We are hoping to collaborate with the FBWHT for, at least, a portion of funding that would be required. We will also be seeking funding from NSE, WWF and MEC (to whom we have submitted a grant application)
* Without the financial support that is needed for the BTSP, WRWEO may be forced to pull out of the management of the Bluff Trail in the coming years

**Meeting of BLT and SMB Rails to Trails Associations**

• Tom recently attended a meeting w. representatives from SMBARTA (St. Margaret’s Bay Area Rails to Trails) and members of HRTA (Halifax Regional Trail Assoc.). The meeting was largely focused on the partnership and ongoing collaboration between the BLT and SMB Rails to Trails.

• The two trail associations reached consensus on the following points:

‣ HRM does not recognize the importance of the trails in the life of their respective communities (health, active transportation, social connections, etc.)

‣ HRM does not recognize the potential of the trails for economic development through tourism.

‣ HRM does not recognize the contributions of the associations in terms of volunteer time, expertise, and fund raising.

‣ There seems to be a jurisdictional disconnect between the municipality and the province with regarding to adequate support of the trails.

‣ Two principle issues are at the root of most of the problems that the trails face: an appropriate funding mechanism and a program of enforcement of trail regulations.

‣ A meeting needs to be arranged with representatives of both jurisdictions to resolve these is-sues.

‣ In the absence of an effective funding and enforcement, the two Associations should consider relinquishing their Letter of Authority to manage their trail.

**Western Commons Community Advisory Committee (WCAC)**

Western Common Advisory Committee (WCAC) voted unanimously not to support an HRM proposal to replace and expand the HRM Composting Facility at 61 Evergreen Place (Case 21209). Following an ex-tensive review of documentation relating to this issue, the WCAC cited the following reasons:

1. Location

The area has a history of contamination difficulties and offensive smells. Such problems are not good for a sensitive environment, the local community, or a wilderness recreational park.

2. Zoning

The expansion would require rezoning. Designating a sensitive wetland area I-3 (General In-dustrial) would be inappropriate and would set a precent for future heavy industrial use in the area.

3. Environmental Assessment

A thorough environmental assessment by qualified individuals would be required before such a project could be undertaken and Nova Scotia Environment has not conducted an en-vironmental assessment of the proposed site of the new facility.

4. Encroachment

The Western Common was set aside as designated Park land in part so that it would not be used as a “land bank” from which to borrow land anytime a need might arise. The proposed facility would require encroaching on designated Park land. Encroaching on designated Park land would contravene this principle and would set a precedent for future encroach-ment on Western Common lands.

5. Financial Incentive

The proposal to replace and expand the present facility does not acknowledge the contami-nation or smell issues that the present site has experienced, does not indicate what remedi-ation (if any) would be carried out, and does not provide any safeguards that would prevent these issues from recurring on an even larger scale. While HRM was offering the Park and the local community a $1m incentive to endorse the project, the WCAC believed that no amount of financial incentive would provide adequate compensation in exchange for the possible perpetuation of these issues.

Beth – FBWHT

* Allison Lawler – chair of the Prospect Peninsula Residents Coalition – has recently written/published the book “A Royal Couple in Canada”
* Beth met with Krista Whitehouse and Steve Cop and went on a hike to visit some of the cemeteries – the Carmichael plot and Greenhead Road - the cemeteries are in dire need of cleaning-up in order to facilitate access
* There is a deer blind close to the Greenhead Rd cemetery so folks may want to keep clear of the area until after hunting season
* The bridge installment at the Nine Mile River has been completed – Beth suggests that there be a site visit that celebrates the completion
* There are a few minor corrections for “Walking Guide to the Old St. Margaret’s Bay Road” that are being made by the publishers and the final product will soon be online
* There have been some issues identified in the use of Nad83 and UTM in lieu of latitude and longitude with some of the users of the ‘Walking Guide..’ having issues with the conversion from one to another –FBWHT are investigating solutions .

Mike – SMBSA

* The proposed housing development for Upper Tantallon had a cancelled consultation meeting because too many people showed-up – it will most likely be re-scheduled for March of next year
* Mike wants to ensure that proper language is used when referencing the development and that is not referred to as a “seniors housing” development as there are currently no restrictions for the development to be limited to such
* Mike and Geoff LeBoutiler recently met with Env. Minister Iain Rankin, MLA Hugh MacKay and DNR and NSE staff to discuss the SMBSA proposal for the designation of the Ingram River Wilderness Protected Area (an area composed of a roughly 20,000 ha parcel of the former “Bowater-Mersey” lands, north of the 103 between Exits 5 and 6 – [IRWA]) and to offer assistance in the designation process of the St. Margaret’s Bay Island Nature Reserve as well as the expansion of the Panuke Lake Nature Reserve – the latter of which have been pending for years
* Our hope with this meeting was to get NSE to commit to staff-time to look into the possibility of the designation of IRWA but this did not occur – prepared for this setback, the SMBSA will continue to work on this initiative and will be requesting collaboration and support from other SMB community organizations
* With the help of their dedicated volunteers, the Troop Island Stewardship Program removed between 3-4 thousand lbs. of treated wood from the brackish marsh on Troop Island – about half of which remains on the island and will be removed next year
* Mike hi-lighted the events of the “Forest Funeral” as put on by the Healthy Forest Coalition – a forest health advocacy organization that is officially supported by both the SMBSA and WRWEO – the next step in the process of advocating for the reform of sustainable forestry policies in Nova Scotia is to make submissions to Dr. Lahey – the man who is completing the review on forestry in NS
* Mike also stated that through his observations – from the recent application from the Mining Association of Nova Scotia to operate mines from within Wilderness Protected Areas (WPAs) and conversations with NSE staff – NSE Protected Areas Branch would benefit from more community organizations making submissions and public statements that support the benefits of WPAs – i.e. ecological, economic, cultural, community, social, quality of life, tourism

The meeting is adjourned with the next meeting date set for the new year with a an actual day to be determined