



An open letter from the Saint Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association

The people of the Bay have benefitted from easy access to the ocean and forests for generations. To many, when the province bought the Mersey Bowater lands, it felt as if their birthright to a forested backyard had been secured. Instead, our elected governments are treating the forests simply as a source of lumber, pulp and biomass. The lands behind the Bay traditionally used for fishing, camping, swimming, skiing and hunting are being mowed down in the only logging approach apparently in use in recent years, clear-cutting.

Why is SMBSA proposing a park next to Westwood Hills ?

In late January 2016, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) posted harvest allocations equivalent to 600 football fields in the St. Margaret's District. The area is heavily used for recreation and contains the Old Annapolis Road hiking trail, a world class fish ladder (recently built by Nova Scotia Power), stands of mature red spruce, a Scout Camp, protected wetlands and 3 nature reserves. The public had 3 weeks to respond to the postings and respond we did. Faced with public outrage, on March 16th, DNR "deferred" the harvest on 30% of these areas, but clear cuts are set to proceed on the remaining blocks. The deferred status means that DNR will consider these areas for harvest once public attention abates. The lands are classified as having multiple values (recreational, ecological, historical, sociological and forest resource). Although DNR's official documents commit to engaging with communities, DNR's management has simply been top-down: the community is told what is best and our voices are only heard in opposition. SMBSA would rather act in a proactive, collaborative fashion.

The SMBSA believes that this area provides a perfect location for a "front country" park (see attached map), being close to the 103 and 30 minutes from downtown Halifax. Local residents have made extensive use of these lands for generations. Families from the Bay "always" go there by canoe, bike, cross country skiing or ATVs. Ray Ivany's seminal report, *Our New Economy*, identified tourism as a major growth area. We believe that **a recreational park in this area would enhance tourism in Nova Scotia**. The proposed park has archaeological, historical, ecological and recreational attributes that could attract tourists, **BUT, tourists don't want to visit clear cuts**. This park would be designed to continue current usage patterns such as ATV rallies, hiking,

"To preserve and enhance the bay's natural environment, its heritage and its quality of life based on the community values of the people who live in the St. Margaret's Bay area."

Core Values – Community Involvement, Responsibility, Transparency

fishing, and camping. The use of camps on Island Lake would continue. With the view of preserving this excellent recreational area, we are planning the park with other community groups that share our desire to preserve the heritage and quality of life in the St. Margaret's Bay area. Clearly this area's attractive features would be lost if the harvest blocks within the proposed park were clear-cut. Finally, while in the rest of Nova Scotia, 30% of crown land is protected or in parks, within the former Mersey lands in the St. Margaret's district there are **no parks** and less than 10% of the land is protected.

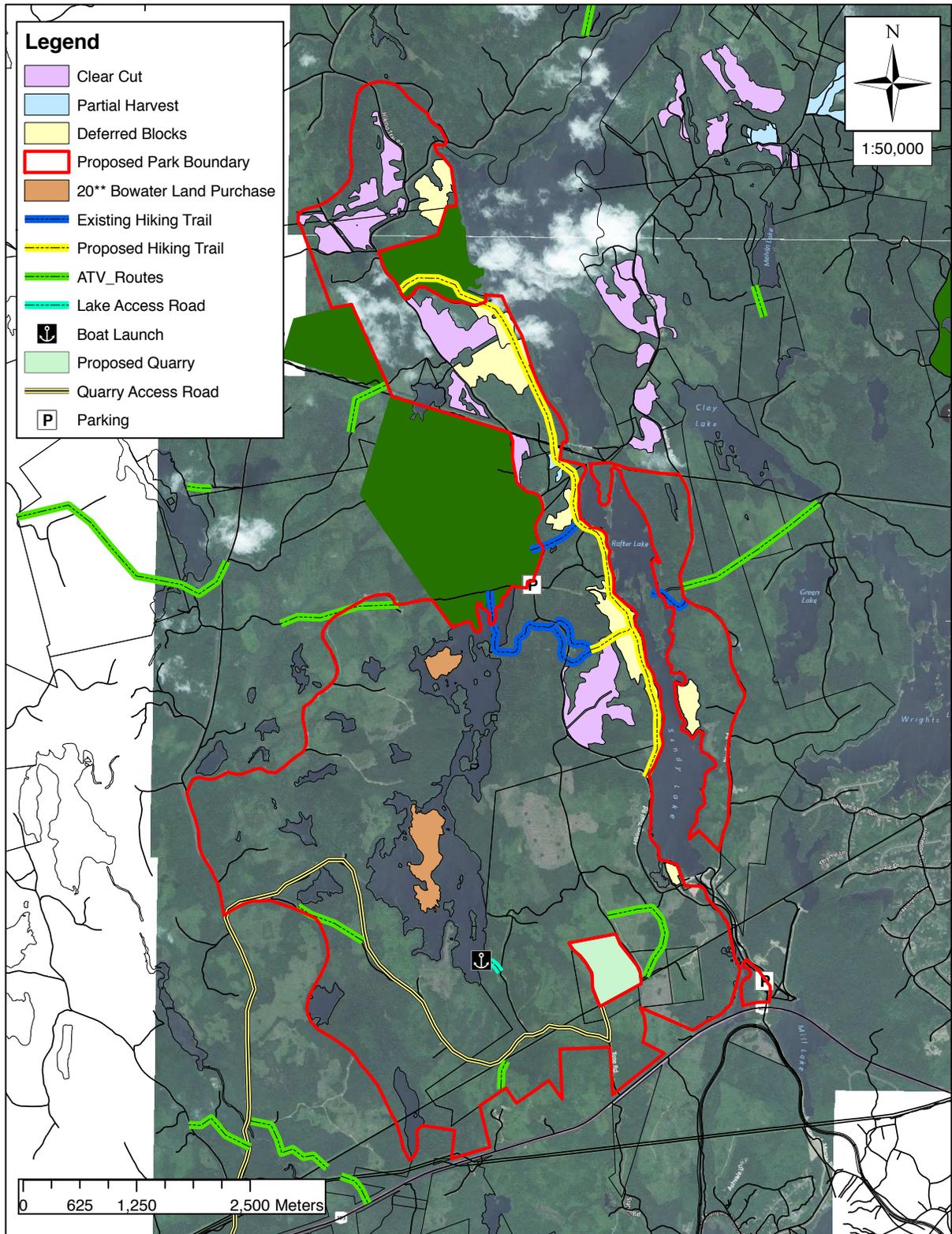
The St. Margaret's Bay community has worked hard to try to help manage the St. Margaret's district forests. In 2013, efforts by the people of St. Margaret's Bay to establish a Community Forest received backing from Halifax's mayor and councillors, from 60 prominent NGO's and community organisations, and from hundreds of residents, but the proposal was rejected. More recent efforts to participate in the management of this forest were marginalized. As we see it, DNR manages these public lands solely for extractable resources such as biomass and aggregate, even though these lands are classified as having multiple values. We have asked DNR to collaborate with communities, but our requests have fallen on deaf ears.

Given this impasse, the SMBSA is appealing directly to our elected officials to stop the clear-cuts (and any other logging) within the proposed park. Now, we are asking you, the people of the Bay, to champion our proposal for a park that will allow multiple uses of these lands by current and future generations. Our proposed park encompasses approximately 3000 ha, along the watershed north of the water towers next to the 103 and surrounds most of Sandy Lake and Island Lake. SMBSA considers a park to be the highest and best use of these lands. Clearly many details of such a park remain to be established, but the basic need is clear. This park would recognize and protect established patterns of extensive recreational use.

For more information about the proposal and for access to names and emails of people to contact about this park proposal please go to SMBSA's website at: <http://www.heartofthebay.ca>

“To preserve and enhance the bay's natural environment, its heritage and its quality of life based on the community values of the people who live in the St. Margaret's Bay area.”

Core Values – Community Involvement, Responsibility, Transparency



“To preserve and enhance the bay’s natural environment, its heritage and its quality of life based on the community values of the people who live in the St. Margaret’s Bay area.”

Core Values – Community Involvement, Responsibility, Transparency