



December 7, 2014.

To: Mayor Mike Savage and Councillors, HRM

Subject: **Potential loss of HRM's Premiere "Wilderness Trail" related to Landfill changes**

Dear Mayor Savage and HRM Councillors,

We have just seen the documents for Item No. 3 for the Committee of the Whole meeting of December 9, 2014 relating to the Integrated Solid Waste Resource Management Strategy, and note the condition attached to increasing the vertical height of existing and future cells in recommendation 1 (page 2) "**....subject to maintaining the visible isolation of the cells as outlined by the SNC Lavalin Environment balloon study...**". Also we note in the Technical Review by Conestoga-Rovers & Associates (only made publicly available in the last few days) the statement: "**Vertical expansion can be implemented while maintaining all environmental protection and controls (e.g., aesthetics, odour, groundwater)**"

In a letter to the Mayor and Councillors on September 23, 2013, and on September 10, 2014 to Councillor Reg Rankin (Councillor for the Otter Lake area, Timberlea, Beechville and Clayton Park West and Member of the Halifax Waste Resource Society) copied to the Mayor and Councillors, we pointed out that the SNC Lavalin study did not take into account the visibility of the landfill from The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail:

"Obviously no attempt was made to determine whether the view planes of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail would be affected since even now the landfill is visible from the trail, for example from the ridge at the south end of Cranberry Lake where the first and second loops of the trail join. This spot is heavily visited since it is at the place where the first loop joins the second and most visitors hike just the first loop (2-3 hours hike) and see the landfill now in the distance. The sense of a wilderness experience would be badly compromised by increasing the height of the landfill in the manner proposed to extend the life of the landfill.



A photo from our letter of Sept. 10, 2014

“The landfill is visible also from other places, such as The Bluff plateau on the third loop, The Bluff loop, from which the trail derives its name. An increase in height would in effect undermine the purpose of the trail: to give residents and tourists an opportunity to experience the beauty of wilderness next to a major urban centre. Instead of a tourist destination, it could become a destination to avoid.”

These letters can be viewed at <http://wrweo.ca/landfillletters> The 2014 letter includes maps and photos documenting the current visibility of the Landfill from The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail.

We can only underscore that The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail is a popular wilderness hiking trail and major tourist destination located in HRM that has been rated as one of the 8 best Urban Escapes in Canada. With vertical extension and a prolonged lifetime of the Landfill, its legitimacy as a wilderness trail will be completely undermined. The negative impact would be of such significance that the trail could no longer be properly called a wilderness trail and HRM and the Province could no longer boast of having “one of the eight best urban escapes in Canada” (May 2008, Explore: Canada’s Outdoor Magazine).

Only a few days ago, a CBC radio program about “Rewilding” (<http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/popupaudio.html?clipIds=2613956050>) cited efforts to rewild areas in the Netherlands and how it is essentially impossible to re-establish true wilderness areas because there is always a reminder of man-made landscapes; a Dutch family would come regularly to true wilderness areas in Canada so that their children could realize a genuine wilderness experience. Halifax is possibly unique, and certainly one of the very few major cities where such experiences are available close to the city core. The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail is a big draw in this regard. Do we really wish to deliberately begin down the road to loss of such invaluable assets?

Thus we appeal to you to reconsider the cell height issue in this context, both because it clearly should have been considered in the Technical Review by Conestoga-Rovers & Associates, as well as in the earlier SNC Lavalin study, and because of the broad economic consequences of ignoring this issue.

The viability of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, as a first-class wilderness experience on the doorstep of Halifax, is an issue that affects all Nova Scotians because it bears on our collective economic future. Increasingly, young talented

entrepreneurs, regardless of where they originate, want to live in an urban center with the active, ecologically responsible life style that this trail serves so well. By degrading this valuable asset, we degrade our economic future.

At a time in our history when HRM needs desperately to attract a new generation of economic leaders, do we want to be stepping backward and sacrifice a key element of our distinctiveness?

Sincerely,

David G. Patriquin, Co-Chair of WRWEO

Nanci Lee, Co-Chair of WRWEO

*Richmond Campell, Past Chair and Co-Chair and founder of WRWEO
& The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail*

Paul Berry, Chair of the Trails Committee, WRWEO

“On behalf of all the wild things that make this land their home and with reverence for the First People who preserved this land before us, we dedicate The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail to wilderness preservation. We do this in trust that we can learn its deep beauty, in trust that we can understand and delight in the wildness in ourselves that we share with the rocks, earth, water, and teeming life and spirits that surround us, and in trust that we will work together to protect this sacred heritage.” – *At the dedication of The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail in 2005 and posted on a sign at the Pot Lake Loop junction.*

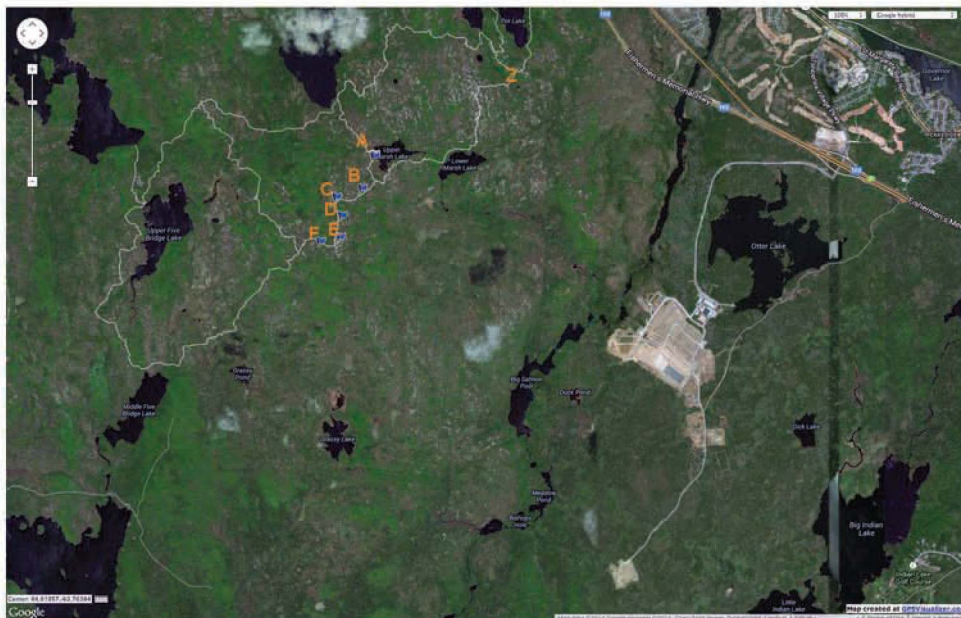


Figure 1. Sites on The Bluff Trail from which photos were taken (A-F on Sep. 4, 2014; Z on July 10, 2014), and Google image of the Otter Lake Landfill.