

WRWEO Chair's Report for the 2021 AGM - Paul Berry, April 9, 2021



The WRWEO Board meeting with summer stewards and the BTSP coordinator for a board meeting at the trail head on August 25, 2020.

I am going to leave most of the reporting on the state of the trail to our Bluff Trail Stewardship Program (BTSP) Coordinator, Mike Lancaster. However, I want to thank him for his work and dedication to the Bluff Trail, as well as all his efforts to protect Nova Scotia forests. I also want to thank our Board member Allyssa Poulin for all her work to compile the BTSP trail report review of 2020.

The [Board of Directors](#) for this past year included: myself (Paul Berry) as chair and treasurer; Ben Armstrong as secretary; Allyssa Poulin; Omar Al Naseh; Abdul Nasser, Kathleen Hipwell and Matt Porter. All the Board members are reoffering for another year. We also have Ummar Alattar who is offering himself as a Board member.

The Board met six times in 2020, mostly via Zoom but we did meet in person at the trail head in August 2020. We also discussed various matters via email and we reviewed and discussed all of the financial information that came before the Board, trail maintenance that was outside of the scope of the BTSP, updated our information with the NS Registry of Joint Stocks, managed our online presence by continuing to purchase our domain names and website, and dealt with snow removal in the parking lot. We continue our membership with the NS Trails Federation who provide us with insurance through the Province of NS.

The current membership of 43 includes individuals from the following communities:

Bedford	5
Halifax	14
Hammonds Plains	1
Hubley	6
Parkdale	1
Peggy's Cove / Seabright	2
Prospect Bay / Terrence Bay	2
Timberlea	4
No data	8

Forty-seven (47) memberships expired in 2020 and were not renewed for 2021. Ninety-eight (98) memberships expired in 2019 and were not renewed afterwards (in 2020 or 2021). The increase in memberships in 2018 and 2019 was related to our “in-kind” memberships provided to volunteers who donated time and energy to monitoring and maintaining the trail. This initiative was very successful and created by former chair Kimberly Berry. This year we re-started that effort and provided 12 in-kind memberships to those who undertook trail inspections and filled out online reports.

We arranged for a new PO Box (unfortunately the UPS office in Tantallon closed permanently during the pandemic) our new address is:

WRWEO
223 – 3045 Robie Street, Unit 5
Halifax NS B3K 4P6

The pandemic has significantly impacted The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, we have had more people on the trail and many more people camping out on the trail. [WRWEO discourages camping in and around the trail](#) because of the harm that it causes, especially when Leave No Trace principles are not followed.

We undertook surface hardening maintenance on the trail - once again it was completed by Mike Lancaster. We also ensured dead fall was removed from all of the trail. Unfortunately we were not able to get any side of trail maintenance done in 2020, that will be the focus for 2021. The city of Halifax provides the funds to hire contractors, pay for plowing the parking lot, and pay for our office supplies. Halifax implemented an Administrative Order for funding which sets a \$10,000 maximum for maintenance of recreational trails but makes the process of accessing these funds easier. A side effect is that groups seeking funds no longer need to belong to the Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) and it seems like the demise of HRTA is not far away.

Board member Kathleen Hipwell repainted trail markers on the Pot Lake and Mi'kmaw Hill Loops. Board member Omar Al Nasleh purchased new plexiglas covers for a couple of intersection signs whose covers were broken. Matt Porter has taken on the task of collating [entries in our sign in book](#) on the trail at the end of the Pot Lake corridor.

As a Board of Directors we review the work of Mike Lancaster, the BTSP Stewardship Coordinator, and we set his priorities each year. This year his priorities were:

- Primary focus on directing & supervising the summer students
- Volunteer Steward training days (we are trying to create a program and train others to be able to deliver the stewardship training as well)
- Report writing
- Engagement with users on the trail

We were happy to have the financial support of NS Environment for the BTSP again this year. We hope to secure more funding for the BTSP and we will be making public appeals in the future. We are also grateful for the support and partnership provided by

the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association, which takes on the administrative tasks related to the coordinator's role as an employee.

I also wanted to thank Keltie O'Brien, one of our summer students, who has been working as a summer Steward for the past three years. She has been a great leader for the other students, has taken on great initiatives on the trail and has represented WRWEO in an exemplary fashion with trail users. Unfortunately she will not be returning as a summer Steward this year and will be sorely missed.

This upcoming year we intend to work on a major sign replacement initiative that will take several years to conceptualize, plan, seek funding for, and implement. We also have a large undertaking to replace the Boardwalks on the trail that are slowly falling apart. We hope to have everything in place to replace the Boardwalks over the next two to three years. Board member Kathleen Hipwell will continue repainting trail markers and will also work on filling the [buckets with the rebar way signs](#) at the intersections of the 1st and 2nd loops with concrete, as people are destroying the way markers and using the buckets as trash pails.

I want to cover one more item before I finish my report, and I want to thank one of WRWEO's founders for undertaking this project: Richmond Campbell has put together a proposal on behalf of WRWEO through Our HRM Alliance to advocate for the establishment of an Office for Community Based Wilderness Stewardship to support the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP). The proposal has the objective of fostering ecologically sensitive recreational use of the public open spaces that are integral to the HRM Regional Plan now under review in 2020-2022. Rich has shepherded this proposal through Our HRM Alliance approval (with the adept guidance of EAC staff member Meredith Baldwin) and he is now undertaking the herculean effort of getting municipal politicians and staff to listen to his pitch. The idea behind the proposal is based on our Bluff Trail Stewardship Program and was inspired by Mike Lancaster's BTSP presentation at last year's AGM. The focus of the Stewardship Office will be on educating users of Halifax's public spaces and wilderness, teaching users how to protect and steward these spaces and not degrade them through inappropriate use.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

