



**Natural Resources and Renewables**  
**Office of the Minister**

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April 13, 2022

Paul Berry, Co-chair  
Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization  
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Upper Tantallon NS B3Z 1H3

Sent via email: [jpaulberry65@gmail.com](mailto:jpaulberry65@gmail.com)

Dear Paul Berry:

I am responding to your letter of March 7, 2022, regarding the Chebucto Peninsula and Mainland Moose core habitat.

Core habitat identification for Mainland Moose was a complex exercise that occurred over a year-long period and considered several key elements within the *Endangered Species Act*.

The Mainland Moose found within the Chebucto Peninsula have not been excluded from management related to species recovery. All Mainland Moose are subject to the prohibitions under Section 16 of the *Endangered Species Act* regardless of where they occur (Crown and private lands), as are all species listed as threatened or endangered. The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables acknowledges that there are animals in that area and that they have been for a long period of time, and they will continue to be included in future status assessments. Further, the majority of the actions identified in the recovery plan could also apply to these animals and threats in this area and are not necessarily restricted to core habitat. Mainland Moose in the Chebucto area will continue to be a component of Integrated Resource Management reviews, environmental assessment review and mitigation, and *Endangered Species Act* permitting. Special Management Practices, which will subsequently be revised to be in alignment with the goals or recovery and the prohibitions under *Endangered Species Act*, will continue to apply to Crown lands.

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The recovery plan provides a viable status for recovery of Mainland Moose; this is the population and distribution objective required for Mainland Moose to no longer be at risk. The recovery plan sets out a series of actions designed to address key threats and answer knowledge gaps, which includes the identification of core habitat, to work towards recovery of the species based on those objectives. The area of land included in core habitat was calculated to ensure that it would support the desired objectives. The Chebucto area and many other areas of the province were not needed to achieve the objectives despite there being relatively recent moose observations for those locations.

Section 16(3) of the *Endangered Species Act* tells us that "Core habitat shall not include the entire geographic range that can be occupied... unless inclusion is considered essential for the survival of the species." The calculations mentioned above makes it difficult to justify the need to add more area to identified core habitat. Further, the recovery plan only identifies core habitat, the area that is essential to recovering Mainland Moose and that needs to be subject to regulated management to achieve recovery. At present, core habitat is not designated, so activities occurring within core habitat are not regulated to support moose recovery.

There are serious habitat quality issues based on the Habitat Suitability Index work and road indices in the Chebucto area that discounted the inclusion of the area as core habitat. In particular, there is a high road density risk and due to the presence of major highways isolating the area from the rest of the mainland, the Mainland Moose Recovery Team felt it was unlikely that moose within the Chebucto Peninsula would be able to assist with the connectivity components associated with the recovery objectives and that it would be very difficult to remedy the existing situation.

There remains key knowledge gaps regarding the Chebucto group of moose. For example, given the presence of relatively few animals and isolation of the area, is the Chebucto area acting as an ecological sink and would the area be able to contribute to the required population growth to support Mainland Moose recovery? Action 5.2.1 acknowledges this information gap and provides an opportunity to study the area further - "*Allocate resources to undertake on the ground research to help understand factors influencing population sizes and demographic parameters. Distribution/locations and population sizes of remnant groups of moose represent critical knowledge gaps for recovery planning which is a data requirement for recovery planning metrics.*" The recovery team in their discussions have flagged that this area warrants more discussion in the future, including an assessment of the relative health of the herd, but also deeper consideration of the options for ensuring connectivity or even moving existing animals

to other areas to ensure they can be contributors to the Mainland Moose population. Given the widespread distribution of the species, the complex suite of threats, and the one-year timeline for recovery planning, the recovery team has not yet had the opportunity to fully evaluate the role of remnant groups in recovery and just noted some high level thoughts for future consideration.

Finally, recovery plans are not static and are living documents. They are reviewed every five years at a minimum and can be revised as needed. Should information come to light that the Chebucto moose should be included in core habitat, it is possible to update identified core habitat, in addition to specify additional actions that address the issues in the area.

I hope this helps you understand how core habitat was derived and why the Chebucto Peninsula was not included at the present time. Should you wish to discuss this further, please contact Mark McGarrigle, Species-At-Risk Biologist, Wildlife Division (and liaison to the Mainland Moose Recovery Team), at 902-679-6091 or [mark.mcgarrigle@novascotia.ca](mailto:mark.mcgarrigle@novascotia.ca).

Thank you for your interest in Nova Scotia's species-at-risk.

Regards,



Tory Rushton  
Minister

c Karen M. Gatien, Deputy Minister  
Mark McGarrigle, Species-At-Risk Biologist, Wildlife Division