

March 7, 2022

To: **The Honourable Tory Rushton**, Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables

From: **Paul Berry**, for the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Association/The Bluff Trail

Harry Ward, for the Five Bridges Heritage Trust

Nick Horne, for the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association

Re: **Exclusion of the Chebucto Peninsula from the Core Habitat in the 2021 Moose Recovery Plan**

We are writing as members of non-governmental organizations that served on the Steering Committee of the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition, formed in 2008 to seek protection for the Five Bridge Lakes area on the Chebucto Peninsula under Nova Scotia's Wilderness Protection Act. The Coalition included over 35 groups. That goal was realized in Oct of 2011. We later served with the Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Rails to Trails Association (BLT R2T) and the Safety-Minded ATV Association on the 5-member FBLWA Stewardship Coalition. This coalition was formed in 2013 to work with Nova Scotia Environment to share, plan, initiate, prioritize, fund, implement, and coordinate projects in the newly protected Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area.

Extracts from attached documents:

A Truly Significant Conservation Area [from attached document #1CWC]

The FBLWA is the largest block of land protected from development on the Chebucto Peninsula. It is well established in conservation science that larger areas can support and conserve more species over time than small areas. Just as important, the FBLWA occupies a large area in the centre of the peninsula and it will require relatively small steps to construct conservation corridors connecting the different blocks of protected land on the Chebucto Peninsula. That's what's needed now. Corridors would increase the species carrying capacity of all of the protected blocks of land on the Chebucto Peninsula, which collectively constitute a very significant conservation area.

Amongst the Challenges: Moose Conservation & Corridor Protection (from attached document #2WRWEO)

In a document, *Recommendations of the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition Steering Committee Regarding the Five Bridge Lakes Lands Proposed for Protection under The Wilderness Areas Protection Act* (May 31, 2010) the CWC urged that "[these] arguments for conserving moose habitat and enhancing connectivity be given serious consideration in relation to the drawing the final boundaries for the FBLWPA. The reasons may be summarized as follows:

- I. The Mainland Moose is a legally protected species, which requires protection of all groups, regardless of size.
- II. The small, more isolated groups could be very important for the long term survival of the Mainland Moose in N.S.
- III. Conservation corridors benefit all species and are critical for long term species richness of all of the protected areas on and adjacent to the Chebucto Peninsula.
- IV. The Chebucto moose are potentially an invaluable tool for promoting conservation, perhaps even for bringing additional funds.

“We further suggest that the following management strategies be implemented to preserve and strengthen the Chebucto moose group.

- I. Adopt an "adaptive management" approach in the development of specific management strategies and regulations. This approach integrates strategic design, management, testing assumptions, and making adjustments from what is learned.)
- II. Expand the Chebucto group of Mainland Moose by importing orphaned New Brunswick moose, which are of the same genetic stock as the N.S. Mainland Moose,
- III. Engage the public in the conservation of the Chebucto moose through public education and a management committee made up of community group representatives; the public education should stress the relevance of moose conservation to conservation to all species.

“In order to provide an appropriate environment for this endangered species, it is very important to include a much larger proportion of the crown land in the NW Quadrant as part of the FBLWPA.”

So from the beginning, moose conservation was a priority—and remains a priority—for our respective organizations.

The St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association initiated the successful *Buy Back the Mersey* campaign in 2012. The group continues to play a key role in the ongoing campaign to protect the Ingram River Wilderness Area, which lies within the Bowater-Mersey St. Margaret's Bay lands the government acquired on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia in 2012.

The Bowater-Mersey St. Margaret's Bay lands and the Chebucto Peninsula host a common group of moose, the ‘Chebucto herd’, which was identified in 2012 as one of four moose concentration areas, as shown in this map from the 2021 Mainland Moose Recovery Plan:

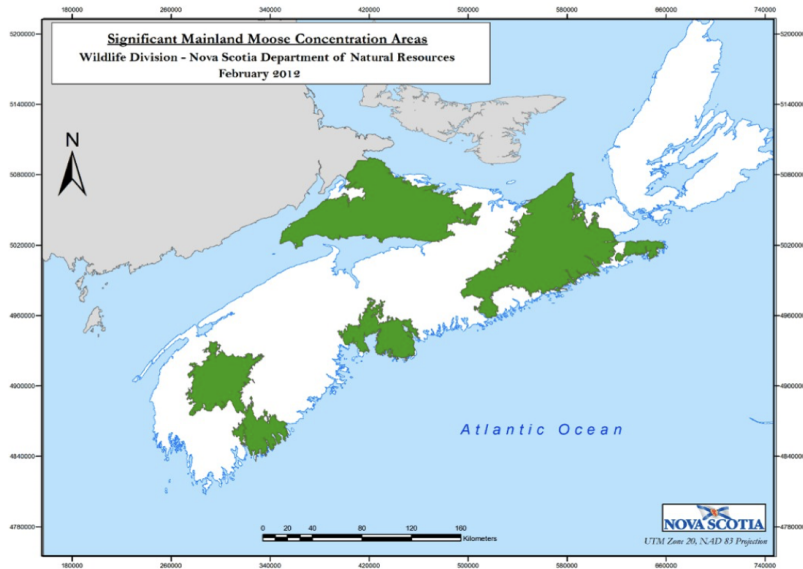


Figure 2. Mainland moose concentration areas within Nova Scotia.

However, while the Bowater-Mersey St. Margaret's Bay lands are retained as Core Habitat in the Mainland Moose Recovery Plan, the Chebucto Peninsula is excluded (as shown in this map 2021):

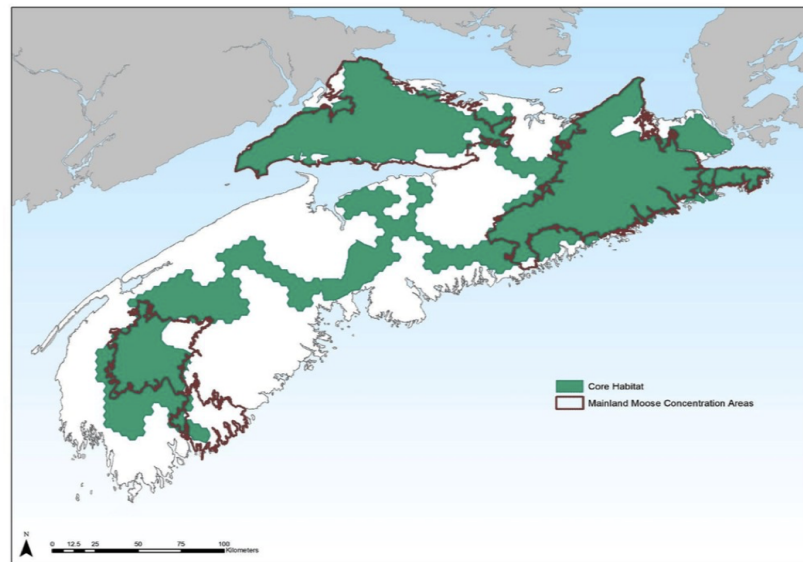


Figure 2. Core Habitat for Mainland moose in Nova Scotia and modelled Mainland moose concentration areas.

The reasons are a bit obscure but seem to be related to the Recovery Team's contention "that development has led to declines in the Chebucto Peninsula region" and "a loss of connectivity across the landscape." However, there is no evidence that the declines on the Chebucto Peninsula have been any more precipitous than across other areas of NS that have retained their Core area designations.

Furthermore, these comments do not recognize the demonstrated commitment of Halifax Regional Municipality, supported by its citizenry, to addressing habitat and connectivity issues, especially for the Chebucto Peninsula (see attached document #3HGNP).

We request a meeting with key members of the Mainland Moose Recovery Team including Donna Hurlburt and Prof. Karen Beazley to discuss this issue. We hope to correct any misunderstandings that may have led the Recovery Team to make this decision, or alternatively, to correct misunderstandings that we might have about said decision.

Respectfully,

Paul Berry

Nick Horne

Harry Ward

cc:

- Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister, NRR
- Donna Hurlburt, Manager, Biodiversity, NRR
- Prof Karen Beazley (Dalhousie University)
- Richmond Campbell (WRWEO Chair 1995-2009 & Co-Chair 2009-2014)
- David Patriquin (WRWEO Co-Chair 2009-2015)
- Mike Lancaster (Stewardship Coordinator, WRWEO/The Bluff Trail (2012-2022 ongoing)

Attached documents

1. CWC.pdf

2. WRWEO

3. HGNP.x