

Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (W.R.W.E.O.) AGM 2023 - Co-chair's report

We held 8 board meetings in 2022, one in person at the trailhead in June. We started biweekly virtual administrative working meetings over Zoom where we work on our website, membership list, funding applications, and other admin tasks. We renewed our Membership in N.S. Trails Federation as well as our liability insurance through them. We also renewed our partnership with Leave No Trace (L.N.T.) Canada, updated our RJSC society registration, and renewed our D & O insurance. We undertook side of trail maintenance on the Hay Marsh Loop (4th loop), provided by Mike Lancaster Trail Services (M.L.T.S.)

We prepared an Request For Proposals (R.F.P.) for the removal and replacement of the long boardwalk but did not receive any bids. We posted it on our website and sent it out to four contractors who work on wilderness trails. Our co-chair, Kathleen Hipwell, posted a sign calling for donations for the replacement of the boardwalk. The sign has generated hundreds of dollars of donations and several new memberships.

Mainland moose - the province published a moose recovery plan and the Chebucto Peninsula was omitted as core moose habitat. We wrote to the minister who indicated the Chebucto population is still protected but did not meet the criteria to be included in the core habitat. <https://wrweo.ca/wp/2022/04/14/re-exclusion-of-the-chebucto-peninsula-from-the-core-habitat-in-the-2021-moose-recovery-plan/>

We were disappointed by the response but will continue our efforts to obtain more detail on the movement of moose between the Chebucto Peninsula and the adjacent area of N.S. mainland that is still included as Core Habitat. We will also continue to promote public awareness of this population and of the need to increase connectivity for a wide range of species.

In April 2022 Mike Lancaster recruited five N.S. Community College (N.S.C.C.) interns for the month of May, to assist with a moose monitoring project - the monitoring is done and the data collected but the report is not prepared yet.

In early September Mike Lancaster came across a dead mainland moose cow in the Five Bridge Lake Wilderness Area. The carcass was located on the portage route that connects Upper Five Bridge Lake to Middle Five Bridge Lake. Mike estimated that the death occurred near the end of August or early September 2022. Mike found the carcass on Saturday September 3rd. The cause of death did not appear to be human in origin as there was still plenty of meat left on the shoulders and haunches of the animal but he was not certain. Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (D.N.R.R.) collected the remains of the moose for study.

Halifax Search And Rescue (H.S.A.R.) reached out to us in June 2022 in order to arrange for Drone training on the Bluff Trail. W.R.W.E.O. was supportive with the following provisos that they obtain N.S. Environment (N.S.E.) Protected Areas permission as drones are otherwise not allowed to be flown over protected areas such as the Five Bridges Wilderness Area. We asked

them to be particularly careful during bird breeding season - May to 1st week of July or so. Since there are some large birds around the bluff trail, we asked H.S.A.R. not to proceed if large birds are in the area. They obtained ministerial approval but did not conduct any training yet, but plan to do so.

There was one reported H.S.A.R. rescue on the trail in 2022 - a person injured their ankle and was taken out by boat on Cranberry Lake. They were part of a group of 6 and half the group were taken out including the injured person and the other half continued on with their camping.

Also in June 2022, the Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust (F.B.W.H.T.) reached out and indicated they would install a boot brush station at the trailhead. It should be installed soon.

A wildfire was inadvertently set by campers in July 2022, it wasn't on the Bluff Trail but was nearby in the wilderness area. Some campers accessed the wilderness area by canoe on Frederick Lake and they inadvertently set fire to the brush and woods during a fire ban, they had not checked whether a ban was in place before their trip. Halifax firefighters responded and were able to extinguish the fire. It burned over an acre of wilderness. In August a trail user wrote "Amanda was here" in permanent marker on several signs, and we had to use a strong solvent to remove the writing.

Hurricane Fiona hit N.S. and the Bluff Trail in September 2022 - caused some damage and cost about \$1800 to mitigate - much less damage than other trails, especially the rail to trails. W.R.W.E.O. and our stewards continue to struggle with trail users who use the trail when it is closed - this has been the case when it is closed due to high forest fire threats and when it is closed because of wind damage.

W.R.W.E.O. continues to advocate for the protection of important ecological areas, and for maintaining the wildlife corridor connections between them. In particular we support the protection of Sanday Lake and oppose its development, we support the protection of the Chebucto Backlands, and the Blue Mountain Birch Cove area. All these areas are integral to a healthy and vibrant wilderness in the Halifax area. Through our members and former board members, Richmond Campbell and David Patriquin we have worked with our sister organizations to protect these areas.

We continue our involvement with Our H.R.M. Alliance, and have prepared a submission to the Regional Plan review calling for a (Halifax Green Network Plan) H.G.N.P. coordinator, that the Regional Plan state clearly that environmental concerns take precedence over development and that the provinces approach to housing is not in line with slowing climate change and protecting natural spaces, that the Regional Plan include more about the province and Halifax collaborating in areas where provincial land is within Halifax boundaries, and finally that the Regional Plan deal with coastal protection as the provincial protection is not yet in force.