



WERAC

*Wilderness and Ecological
Reserves Advisory Council*

*Advising government on the creation and management
of wilderness and ecological reserves*

Annual Report 2014-15

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Message from the Chair and Vice-chair

As Chair and Vice-Chair for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) and in accordance with Government's commitment to accountability, we hereby submit our 2014 – 2015 **Annual Activity Report** detailing the activities of the Advisory Council from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015. We sign this report on behalf of the entire council. The council is responsible and accountable for the results contained within this report.

Under the authority of the *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*, our Council advises Government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. Our duties generally involve consultations with interested government departments, industry stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, other civic bodies and the general public, and reporting to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council through the responsible Minister. Using the best scientific information available and the most comprehensive understanding of social and economic impacts of conservation areas, we advise Government on matters related to wilderness and ecological reserves.

WERAC is committed to identifying and examining areas of the province for reserve designation and to ensuring that all public and private interests are considered when reserves are being planned and established. This past fiscal year WERAC was reconstituted after a few years of inactivity. The Council is very happy to be re-appointed and the membership of the Council is very energized and enthusiastic.

WERAC met once during the 2014-2015 fiscal year, in St. John's. In addition, we established a Labrador subcommittee, and worked with the Communications Director in the Department of Environment and Conservation to establish a process for having WERAC harness social media (Facebook and Twitter) to better communicate with the public. We also had a strong presence at the Hospitality NL conference and were featured in local media on the Burin Peninsula.

In 2014-2015, WERAC had a single meeting as a council and did not undertake any community consultations. Although current WERAC members were appointed April 1, 2014, our first meeting did not occur until early in 2015. Nonetheless, we had a fruitful first meeting, and have an energetic and engaged Council. We are particularly grateful that Deputy Minister Jamie Chippett met with us both days in St. John's and that Minister Crummell was also able to meet with us to have a frank discussion. We collectively are energized by the idea that "WERAC is back" and look forward to increasing our momentum in the coming year.

In conclusion, we acknowledge WERAC members for their interest in and generous commitment to the protection of our province's natural heritage. Furthermore, we thank the staff of the Parks and Natural Areas Division for their constant support and wise guidance.



Yolanda Wiersma, Chair



Graham Wood, Vice-chair

1. Overview

The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) advises Government through the Minister of Environment and Conservation on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. The Council consists of 11 members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a three-year term. Presently, all seats on the council are filled and appointments are up-to-date.

Council members serve as volunteers; however, travel, accommodations and related costs are covered by the current account budget of Parks and Natural Areas Division, Department of Environment and Conservation. Expenses incurred by WERAC are included in the financial statement of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Typically, the council meets four times a year, for one to two days each time at various locations around the province. The Secretariat is provided by the Parks and Natural Areas Division in the person of:

Erika Pittman, Natural Areas Planner
Natural Areas Program, Parks and Natural Areas Division
Department of Environment and Conservation
P.O. Box 550,
Corner Brook, NL, A2H 6E6
werac@gov.nl.ca
Twitter: @werac_nl

Together, WERAC and the Division work together to ensure that all public and private interests are considered when reserves are being planned, established and terminated. WERAC makes its recommendation on reserve creation/termination to Government with Government itself making the final decision.

Current Membership

| Name | Role | Residence |
|----------------------|---|---------------|
| Dr. Bill Montevecchi | Member | Portugal Cove |
| Dr. Luise Hermanutz | Member | Portugal Cove |
| Mr. Graham Wood | Vice-Chair | Grand Bank |
| Mr. Keith Frampton | Member | St. John's |
| Mr. Victor French | Member | Bay Roberts |
| Ms. Barbara Genge | Member | Main Brook |
| Mr. Joseph Goudie | Member, Chair of Labrador Sub-committee | Mud Lake |
| Ms. Victoria Neville | Member | St. John's |
| Mr. Thomas Philpott | Member | Corner Book |
| Dr. Yolanda Wiersma | Chair | St. John's |
| Dr. Len Zedel | Member | St. John's |

2. Mandate

The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*, under *Section 7*, provides for an Advisory Council to advise the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. The Council's duties include consultation proceedings with interested government agencies, the general public, and other stakeholders on the establishment of a reserve, and preparation of a report to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the advisability of the establishment of a reserve. Please refer to Appendix B for details of the legislated mandate of the WERAC.

3. Lines of Business

WERAC's singular line of business is to provide advice to government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves in the province via the following activities:

- Examines areas of the province in order to determine which areas are suitable for the establishment of a reserve (i.e., three criteria guide reserve creation; large wilderness areas, ecosystem representation and rare natural phenomena)
- Accepts recommendations from the public in relation to the establishment of, change to, or termination of a reserve (i.e., through presentations, letters of nomination, etc.)
- Consults stakeholders and conducts public hearings to consider submissions, representations and objections respecting the establishment, change to, or termination of a reserve
- Reports to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, through the Minister, on the advisability of reserve establishment. This will include a review of the benefits and disadvantages of the establishment, and with a review of public hearing proceedings.
- Makes recommendations to the Minister on the management of existing reserves.

4. Values

Using an open and consultative process, WERAC accepts the following values:

| Values | Action Statements |
|----------------|--|
| Transparency | The Council will exercise due diligence when considering the opinions and points of view of different parties for the purpose of advising the Minister on matters related to ecological and wilderness reserves. |
| Accountability | The Council is dedicated to providing accurate and timely information to |

primary clients and to working within legislated timeframes.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Responsibility | The Council will work to ensure that the interests and concerns of the public are considered and accurately represented. The Council will use a comprehensive understanding of ecology, and the social and economic impacts on reserves when advising the Minister. |
| Stewardship of Our Natural Heritage | The Council is dedicated to ensuring long term conservation and preservation of our natural heritage, using best available science and local knowledge. |
| Appreciation of Our Natural Heritage | The Council will work to ensure appreciation of protected areas. This will include engaging the public and supporting appropriate activities in reserves. |

5. Primary Clients

The WERAC's primary clients include the following:

- Lieutenant-Governor in Council
- Minister of Environment and Conservation
- Department of Environment and Conservation
- The Public (including private citizens, non-governmental organizations and industry representatives)
- Provincial and Federal Government departments and agencies
- Local Service Districts, town councils and local governments
- Aboriginal governments and organizations

6. Vision

The vision of the WERAC is the conservation and preservation of natural landscapes and seascapes in Newfoundland and Labrador for current and future generations through the timely establishment of a functioning network of protected areas throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

7. Mission Statement

Advising on the creation and maintenance of a network of properly designed and legally designated protected areas is one of the key ways WERAC intends to do its part to ensure the

preservation of Newfoundland and Labrador's natural heritage. WERAC will support the development of a Natural Areas Systems Plan (NASP). To facilitate this mission WERAC will hold Council meetings at least twice annually, in various parts of the province, review and identify priority areas and evaluate public submissions and consult various stakeholders.

Mission: By 2017, WERAC will have advanced the establishment of a network of functionally connected protected areas throughout the province.

Measure: Advanced the establishment of a network of functionally connected protected areas throughout the province

Indicators:

- Public consultations are conducted for the establishment of reserves
- Points of view of the stakeholders are considered in the development of recommendations
- Recommendations are brought forward to the minister regarding reserve establishment
- Connections among protected areas are explored and prioritized
- WERAC continues to support community efforts to establish protected areas

8. Shared Commitments

WERAC continued to work closely with Parks and Natural Areas Division, within the Department of Environment and Conservation. Through the WERAC Executive Secretary, Parks and Natural Areas Division provided administrative, planning and mapping support to the council.

In accordance with the Minister's commitment on the establishment of a NASP, during the first WERAC meeting in February 2015, WERAC requested that access to the Natural Areas System Plan (NASP) be provided to the council. In the 2014-2015 reporting period, WERAC did not have an opportunity to review and identify priority areas, review public submissions or consult stakeholders. These activities will be a focus in the 2015-2016 year.

9. Highlights and Accomplishments

Meetings

The Advisory Council met once during the 2014-2015 fiscal year. The first meeting was held in St. John's on February 10-11, 2015. As the first meeting of WERAC in some years, the first meeting focused on orientation of members to the purpose of WERAC, the role of PNAD, and

updates on past WERAC activities. As well, this meeting was used to draft the 2014-2017 Activity Plan and draft an initial letter to the Minister. WERAC was very pleased to have Minister Crummell and Deputy Minister Chippett join us for part of our meeting. Business minutes are recorded and placed on file with WERAC's Secretariat.

In addition to the council meeting this fiscal, WERAC's Vice-Chair, Graham Wood, was invited to present on issues related to Wilderness and Ecological Reserves at the Hospitality NL meeting on February 25, 2014 in Gander. His presentation was well received.

The re-establishment of WERAC was also noted in local media. The creation of a Labrador Subcommittee, with Member Joe Goudie as Chair, was featured in *The Labradorian* (25 March 2015).

In addition to the above activities, WERAC Chair, Yolanda Wiersma, met with the ENVC Communication Director to discuss parameters around using social media to communicate WERAC messages to a broader public. To that end, Dr. Wiersma now manages WERAC's Twitter account (@WERAC_nl) and member Victoria Neville has set up a Facebook page for WERAC (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wilderness-and-Ecological-Reserves-Advisory-Council-WERAC-NL/846818648698446>).

Candidate Areas

Throughout this reporting period, WERAC did not have a chance to progress on candidate areas addressed by the previous WERAC. In March 2013, during the period when WERAC was inactive, Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve was established. It is no longer considered to be an active file. Active files for the 2014-15 fiscal include: Lawn Islands Archipelago Provisional Ecological Reserve, Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve, Cape Norman Study Area and the Indian Arm Area of Interest. Each of these files is at a different stage of the reserve establishment process. The following outlines WERAC's status of the progress of the provisional ecological reserves:

(i) Lawn Islands Archipelago Provisional Ecological Reserve

On January 14, 2011, the Advisory Council, as per Section 17 of the *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*, recommended the establishment of the Lawn Islands Archipelago Provisional Ecological Reserve as Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve. The proposed reserve is located near Lord's Cove on the Burin Peninsula and is the only known North American colony of Manx Shearwaters. At end of fiscal year 2014, WERAC informally received word from ENVC that a decision on formal establishment was pending.

(iii) Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve

Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve (731 km²) protects extensive bogs and barren, as well as mature boreal forest that is prime habitat for the threatened Newfoundland marten. On

February 11, 2004, a public discussion was held on the proposed management plan and on January 25, 2005, a report detailing WERAC's recommendations on establishing the area as an ecological reserve was submitted to Government for review. Outstanding tenure issues are under review by Government and a decision on reserve establishment has not yet been made.

Study Areas and Areas of Interest

Creating and maintaining a network of properly designed and legally designated protected areas is one of the key ways WERAC works to ensure the preservation of Newfoundland and Labrador's natural heritage. WERAC continues to support the development of a NASP. To accomplish this, WERAC reviews priority issues for candidate areas and helps promote the benefits of protected areas by consulting with interested stakeholders, responding to correspondence and conducting presentations for stakeholders.

In the case of NASP study areas and areas of interest brought forward outside of the NASP, WERAC continued to assist as per the council's mandate. The new WERAC membership began the discussion of next steps for the sites under review. WERAC will continue to provide information regarding the establishment process and to assess area of interest nominations for protection, and to support and facilitate the establishment process with preliminary site assessments and discussions on the benefits and concerns of legislated protection. WERAC plans to develop a framework of criteria and tools to guide prioritization of establishment of the NASP sites early in our 2015-2016 fiscal year.

10. Issues

This Activity Report marks the first year for the 2014-2017 Activity Plan. As PNAD staff were fully occupied with developing the Mistaken Point UNESCO World Heritage Site Nomination Dossier through to January 2015, the first WERAC meeting took place in February 2015. The following table outlines objectives, measures, and indicators identified in WERAC's 2014-2017 Activity Plan and highlights accomplishments achieved for the fiscal year 2014-2015. The objectives reflect WERAC's vision and mission statement and are based on the advancement of proposed protected areas through the government system, and increased public awareness and participation in the activities associated with the establishment and management of protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador. These activities help government achieve its strategic direction to enhance management of our Province's natural environment. The extent to which WERAC is able to achieve these objectives, measures and indicators is connected to the larger process of development of a NASP. WERAC will continue to report on these same objectives, measures and indicators in 2015-2016.

1. Establishment and Management

Objective 1: By March 31, 2015, WERAC will have advised government on the establishment

and management of wilderness and ecological reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Measure: Advised government on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador, as required.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided reports to the responsible Minister of the results of the assessments and recommendations, as required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No assessments or recommendations required |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised Parks and Natural Areas Division on reserve management, as required | <p>Indicator achieved: In a letter to the Minister dated 18 February 2015, the Advisory Council recommended official Ministerial announcements of the establishment of Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve and Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve, and recommended reinstating staff for Burnt Cape, Cape St. Mary's Witless Bay, Funk Island and Baccalieu Island Ecological Reserves.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public submissions received |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted public consultations and feedback processes as needed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public consultations required |

2. Education and Awareness of Protected Areas

Objective 2: By March 31, 2015, WERAC will have promoted an awareness and understanding of protected areas around the province and the role of the Council.

Measure: Promoted awareness and understanding of protected areas and the role of the Council.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicated knowledge about protected areas and WERAC through public consultation and correspondence and discussion with primary clients | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation made by Vice-Chair Wood at Hospitality NL. • Newspaper article in <i>The Labradorian</i>. • Establishment of a WERAC presence on social media (Twitter and Facebook) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted outreach activities in communities interested in proposed and established protected areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator not achieved due to time limitations between first meeting of WERAC and fiscal year end. |

11. Opportunities and Challenges

WERAC only became active in the last month of the 2014-2015 Fiscal year. We are exploring opportunities to pick up on ground work carried out by the previous Council to realize some progress on establishment of reserves. For example, some groundwork and mapping was carried out at Cape Norman, and so there may be an opportunity to move quickly on proposing an Ecological Reserve there.

Our meeting with the Minister was a very good opportunity for a frank conversation. We appreciate the Minister's commitment to WERAC and look forward to productive collaboration in the near future.

In terms of challenges, given the reappointments to WERAC, the first meeting in February was devoted mainly to orientation. Now that we have a revitalized WERAC, we look forward to moving forward on opportunities in the coming years.

A clear challenge is staffing numbers in the Parks and Natural Areas Division. Support for WERAC is provided through Parks and Natural Areas Division. Resourcing within the Division means that WERAC must carefully assess and prioritize the number of issues/candidate areas that can be dealt with at any one time. WERAC members were appointed April 2014, but did not meet until February 2015. The delay was largely due to the fact that PNAD was balancing multiple priorities, including the Mistaken Point UNESCO nomination. WERAC remains committed to pursuing its mandate and acknowledges competing priorities and resourcing are a reality.

Appendix A: Legislated Mandate

Mandate (Source: *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*)

Advisory council

6. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council is continued for the purpose of advising the Lieutenant-Governor in Council through the minister on matters in relation to the establishment, management and termination of reserves and for the better administration of this Act.

Powers of council

- 11.** (1) The advisory council may examine an area of the province in order to determine which areas are suitable for the establishment of a reserve.
- (2) The advisory council may accept recommendations from the public in relation to the establishment of or a change in a reserve.

Duties of council

12. (1) The advisory council shall give information on the areas determined as suitable for the establishment of a reserve under section 11 to interested departments of the governments of the province and Canada and to interested Councils, commissions or other bodies, whether incorporated or unincorporated, members of which or the members of the Council of management or Council of directors of which, are appointed by an Act or by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

(2) Where, in the opinion of the advisory council, the comments received under subsection (1) from the interested departments and bodies do not change the opinion as to the suitability of the area for the establishment of a provisional reserve, the advisory council shall give a report to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

Information on reserves

15. Within one year from the date of the establishment of a provisional reserve, the minister shall prepare and publish, in a newspaper in circulation in the area of the provisional reserve, a notice that contains

- (a) a boundary description of the area of the proposed reserve;
- (b) an outline of the management plan of the proposed reserve; and
- (c) a statement indicating that the minister requires written notice within the next 30 days where a member of the public intends to participate in a public

hearing on the establishment of the reserve.

Public hearing

16. (1) The minister shall set a time and place for the holding of a public hearing by the advisory council to consider submissions, representations and objections respecting the establishment of a reserve including the boundary description and management plan of the proposed area.

(2) The time of the holding of a public hearing shall be within 90 days of the date of publication of the notice referred to in Section 15 but after 30 days notice has been given to the public of the time and place of the hearing.

Report to Lieutenant-Governor in Council

17. (1) The advisory council shall report in writing to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, through the minister, on the advisability of the establishment of a reserve including a review of the benefits and disadvantages of the establishment, and with a review on public hearing proceedings held under section 16, including its assessment of objections or reservations raised at the hearing.

(2) A report under subsection (1) shall be made within 120 days of the public hearing.

(3) Where the advisory council in its report made under subsection (1) recommends the establishment of a reserve, it shall include in that report

(a) the boundary description, management plan and proposed regulations in relation to that proposed reserve as revised in consideration of the public hearing;
and

(b) comments on the rights and interests affected by the establishment of a reserve and an estimate of the compensation for those rights and interests.

Appendix B: Fiscal Statement

The Council is not required to provide an audited financial statement.

| Statement of Expenditures 2014-2015 | |
|---|------------------|
| One WERAC meeting, expenditures for Council members (travel, accommodations, document courier fees and per diems) | \$3019.48 |
| Meeting Room Rental/Catering | \$689.70 |
| Total | \$3709.18 |

The above stated Expenditures are certified as correct.