



**WERAC**

*Wilderness and Ecological  
Reserves Advisory Council*

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

## Activity Plan 2014 - 2017

## Message from the Council

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We are pleased to present the activity plan for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017. WERAC is a body, established under the *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act (1980)* that advises the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC), through the Minister of Environment and Conservation on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. The Council is a Category 3 government entity under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. In keeping with the legislated requirements of the Act, the following activity plan, developed by WERAC, directs our activities for a period of three years. Through regular council meetings, drafting of correspondence, consultations with interested government departments, industry stakeholders and the general public, the Advisory Council is confident that objectives of this planning period are achievable. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council is accountable for the preparation of the plan and the achievement of its objectives.

WERAC is committed to identifying and examining areas of the province for reserve designation and ensuring that all public and private interests are fairly heard and considered when reserves are being planned and established. The Council has considered the strategic directions for government and found the strategic direction for Environmental Sustainability to be applicable to the Council's mandate.



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Yolanda Wiersma, Chair



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Graham Wood, Vice-chair

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# 1. Overview

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The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* (1980, Section 6) provides for an Advisory Council to advise the Lieutenant-Governor in Council through the Minister on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. This Council consists of eleven (11) members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (LGIC). A minimum of six (6) of these members must represent the public and all members serve for a period of three (3) years. Members are eligible for re-appointment. Members are selected from various regions of the province to ensure representation of all areas.

Minimal qualifications for the appointment of individuals to WERAC include:

- significant training, experience or employment in the field of natural resources
- appreciation of the role of the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council and the reserve establishment process
- interest in and commitment to the protection of our natural heritage
- ability to work in a committee setting and time to commit to the working of the Council

Council members serve as volunteers; however, travel, accommodations and related costs are supported by the current budget of Natural Areas Program, Parks and Natural Areas Division (PNAD), Department of Environment and Conservation. The Division also provides WERAC Secretariat support to the Council through the Natural Areas Planner.

A standing Labrador subcommittee provides a focus to address protected area establishment and management in Labrador. The sub-committee consists of a Chair and other Council members as desired.

Typically, the Council meets four times a year, for two days each time at various locations around the province. The WERAC Secretariat operates from the PNAD's headquarters in Corner Brook. Information for WERAC's review can be forwarded to the WERAC Secretariat by e-mail at [werac@gov.nl.ca](mailto:werac@gov.nl.ca) or by phone at 709-637-8051.

Together, WERAC and the Division work together to ensure that all public and private interests are fairly heard and considered when reserves are being planned, established and terminated. WERAC makes its recommendation on reserve creation/termination to the provincial government; however government itself makes the final decisions.

## **2. Mandate**

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The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act, 1980*, 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**

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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. Primary Clients

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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

## 5. Vision

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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.

## 6. Values

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

<b>Values</b>	<b>Action Statements</b>
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.

**Values                      Action Statements**

**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.

## **7. Mission Statement**

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The activities of WERAC, as directed by their mandate, support government’s strategic direction of environmental sustainability with the focus area of parks and natural areas. Advising on the creation and maintenance 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 establishment of this network by holding Council meetings at least twice annually, in various parts of the province, reviewing and identifying priority areas and evaluating public submissions and consulting various primary clients, as per the parameters of WERAC’s role and mandate.

**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. Activities

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In keeping with WERAC's mandate and mission statement, the following areas have been identified as the key priorities for the 2014-2017 planning period. WERAC will continue to evaluate candidate areas and make recommendations on the establishment and management of a functional network of protected areas on the Island and Labrador, and actively promote the benefits of protected areas.

To facilitate these objectives, WERAC will consult with interested stakeholders, meet to review priority issues, respond to correspondence and meet with primary clients who may have an interest in protected areas.

*The following two areas of activity will be the priorities of WERAC for the fiscal years 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17. These priority activity areas will be reported on annually.*

### 1. Establishment and Management

The mandate of WERAC is to provide advice to Government on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves. WERAC's role in protected area establishment supports numerous provincial and federal commitments, including: the 2003 and 2007 Bluebook commitments to complete a Natural Areas System Plan, Canada's commitments under the UN Convention of Biodiversity, the provincial Climate Change Action Plan, sustainable development, the Northern Strategic Plan, the Provincial Tourism Strategy, the Provincial Wellness Plan and the Recreation Strategy. WERAC will continue to implement this key part of the mandate throughout this 3-year planning period. These objectives will be applied in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

**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:**

- Provided reports to the responsible Minister of the results of the assessments and recommendations, as required
- Advised Parks and Natural Areas Division on reserve management, as required

- Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection
- Conducted public consultations and feedback processes as needed.

## 2. Education and Awareness of Protected Areas

Protected areas conserve natural and cultural capital. Benefits are ecological, economic, social and cultural, extending beyond provision of biological diversity and ecosystem services to providing opportunities for spiritual, economic, scientific, educational growth and community sustainability. In order for WERAC to function as a public advisory council on wilderness and ecological reserves, the public has to be aware of the importance of protected areas and the role that WERAC plays in their establishment.

**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:**

- Communicated knowledge about protected areas and WERAC through public consultation and correspondence and discussion with primary clients
- Conducted outreach activities in communities interested in proposed and established protected areas

## **Appendix A: Strategic Directions**

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WERAC's activities support the department's strategic direction of environmental sustainability as outlined in the Department of Environment and Conservation's Strategic Plan (2014-2017) with a particular focus on Parks and Natural Areas (see strategic direction chart below). Through its activities WERAC supports the "enhanced management of our Province's natural environment." By making recommendations on the establishment of protected areas, WERAC supports the departmental goal of "enhanced management of natural heritage in Newfoundland and Labrador."

### **Strategic Direction # 1: Environmental Sustainability**

**Outcome:**

Enhanced management of our Province's natural environment

**Focus area:**

Parks and Natural Areas

	<b>Component is addressed by the Entity's:</b>		
<b>Component of Strategic Direction</b>	<b>Activity Plan</b>	<b>Operational Plan</b>	<b>Work Plan</b>
Parks and Natural Areas	X		

## **Appendix B: Legislated Mandate**

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**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.