



**WERAC**

*Wilderness and Ecological  
Reserves Advisory Council*

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

**Annual Report 2016-17**



## Message from the Chair and Vice-chair

As Chair and Vice-Chair for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), we are pleased to submit the Annual Performance Report for WERAC for April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017. This report meets the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a Category 3 entity.

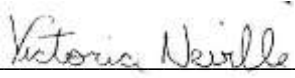
Under the authority of the **Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act**, our Council advises government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. WERAC is committed to examining areas of the province for reserve designation and to ensuring that all public and private interests are considered when reserves are being planned and established. WERAC was successful in achieving its annual objectives as outlined in the WERAC Activity Plan of 2014-17. Progress towards the achievement of the commitments of Government related to the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources, including those outlined in **The Way Forward**, have been described in this report. WERAC's activities as a council were in support of efforts to make progress on climate change, to support healthy environments and living, and improve upon tourism travel experiences.

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 Natural Areas Program for their support and guidance. We are excited about the opportunities of the coming year to advance the system of protected areas in our beautiful province. As the Chair and Vice-Chair, and on behalf of the entire Council, we accept accountability for the preparation of this report and the achievement of its objectives. Our signatures on behalf of the Council signify the Council's accountability for the reported results of its activities for 2016-17.



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Graham Wood, Chair



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Victoria Neville, Vice-chair

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# 1. Overview

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The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) advises Government through the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province.

The vision of 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.

The Council's duties include consultation 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 <http://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/w09.htm> for details of the legislated mandate of WERAC.

The Council consists of 11 members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a three-year term. As of March 31, 2017, members of the WERAC were:

Name	Role	Residence	Term
Dr. Bill Montevecchi	Bay du Nord Subcommittee	Portugal Cove	5/1/2014- 4/30/2017
Dr. Luise Hermanutz	Labrador Subcommittee	Portugal Cove	
Mr. Graham Wood	Vice-Chair	Fortune	
Dr. Yolanda Wiersma	Chair and Social Media	St. John's	
Mr. Victor French	Member	Bay Roberts	
Mr. Keith Frampton	Member	St. John's	
Mr. Joe Goudie	Labrador Subcommittee	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	
Ms. Victoria Neville	Social Media and Bay du Nord Subcommittee	St. John's	
Mr. Thomas Philpott	Labrador Subcommittee	Corner Book	
Ms. Barb Genge	Member	Main Brook	
Mr. Len Zedel	Member	St. John's	

Council members serve as volunteers; however, travel, accommodations and related costs are covered by the current account budget of the Natural Areas Program, Land Management Division, Department of Fisheries and Land Resources. Expenses incurred by WERAC are included in the financial statement of the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources. Please refer to Appendix A for the WERAC financial statement.

Typically, the Council meets four times a year at various locations around the province. WERAC met twice in person and twice by conference call during the 2016-17 fiscal year. The Council conducted a public consultation and submitted its recommendation on proposed changes to the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve. It conducted a public information session as part of the process to assess the establishment of an ecological reserve in the Indian Arm Brook area. WERAC also continued to develop its public profile through an active social media presence,

with 500 people now following WERAC activities through Twitter and Facebook.

The WERAC Secretariat is provided by the Natural Areas Planner:

Natural Areas Planner  
Natural Areas Program, Land Management Division  
Department of Fisheries and Land Resources  
P.O. Box 2006,  
Corner Brook, NL, A2H 6J8  
[werac@gov.nl.ca](mailto:werac@gov.nl.ca)  
Twitter: @werac\_nl

Together, WERAC and the Natural Areas Program work together to ensure that all public and private interests are considered when reserves are being planned and established. WERAC makes its recommendation to Government with the Lieutenant-Governor in Council making the final decision.

## **2. Highlights and Partnerships**

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During this reporting period, WERAC continued to work closely with the Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources. Through the WERAC Secretariat, the Natural Areas Program provided administrative, planning and mapping support to the Council.

### **The Way Forward**

The Provincial Government recently developed a vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador entitled **The Way Forward**. The document does not make specific reference to establishing and maintaining protected areas in the province, however, there are a number of ways in which the activities of the council support the actions therein.

**The Way Forward** speaks to the need to reduce provincial greenhouse gas emissions and work on making progress on climate change. WERAC supports efforts to address climate change by protecting areas. Protected areas help reduce climate impacts by storing carbon and supplying ecosystem services for disaster risk reduction, water supply and public health. The efforts of WERAC to establish new protected areas can play a supportive role in provincial efforts to mitigate climate change.

**The Way Forward** also focuses on creating policies, practices and environments that are supportive of health and well-being, and taking actions for healthy living. Natural areas and contact with nature is critical for our physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing. WERAC supports the goal of healthy people and communities by establishing new protected natural areas for the public of Newfoundland and Labrador to experience and enjoy.

Lastly, **The Way Forward** describes the need to improve upon the delivery of tourism travel experiences in the province. The document references the need to deliver desirable travel

experiences that highlight the core experiences of nature and wilderness. Wilderness and ecological reserves are among some of this province's significant 'travel demand generators', particularly Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve/UNESCO World Heritage Site and Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve. The Council regularly advises on management of wilderness and ecological reserves to support the goal of enhancing the experience of visitors to reserves and the maintenance of the ecological integrity of these sites.

### **3. Report on Performance**

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WERAC's work this fiscal focused primarily on three areas: a proposal to change the boundary of the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, a proposal to protect the Indian Arm Brook Study Area, and work in support of development of a Natural Areas System Plan (NASP).

#### **Bay du Nord**

On May 1, 2015, Newfoundland Labrador Hydro submitted a request to the Natural Areas Program, subsequently amended on June 2, 2015, to remove area from the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve to allow construction of a third transmission line from Bay d'Espoir to Western Avalon (TL 267). The Council was asked to review the proposed project in accordance with s. 21 (2) of the **Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act** (The Act) which stipulates the process to decrease the area of a reserve. This was the first time in the history of the Act that the process to remove area from a reserve was initiated.

During the 2015-16 fiscal year the Council established the Bay du Nord subcommittee to represent WERAC in discussions with NL Hydro and to lead the assessment of the proposal and the development of recommendations. As per the Act, WERAC held public consultations on October 29, 2015 in Milltown-Head of Bay d'Espoir on removal of a 40 m x 13 km parcel from the Wilderness Reserve and the addition of a 45 km<sup>2</sup> parcel to the southern boundary of the reserve.

Subsequent to this public consultation, NL Hydro amended the first request to add the removal of access trails and quarries from the reserve. A second round of public consultation was then held in Milltown-Head of Bay d'Espoir on April 8, 2016 to request public comments on the revised proposal.

On June 29, 2015, WERAC submitted a letter with its initial recommendations regarding the Environmental Assessment for the transmission line project. WERAC continued to work extensively with the Environmental Assessment Division and NL Hydro on their submission and on WERAC recommendations for the proposed work. The project (Environmental Assessment Registration number 1803) was released from Environmental Assessment (June 17, 2016) under the conditions provided by WERAC and the Natural Areas Program.

WERAC submitted its formal recommendation report on changes to the reserve to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on June 1, 2016. This report included recommendations for changes to the management plan, boundary and **Wilderness Reserve Regulations**. On August 19, 2016, the proposed changes to the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve were gazetted and the

boundaries of the reserve were changed to accommodate the proposed new transmission line and add the 45km<sup>2</sup> to the southern boundary.

The council has continued to receive updates from NL Hydro on the construction process and anticipated completion date. NL Hydro is also responsible for providing in-kind support for site visits by WERAC representatives on a seasonal basis during project construction to the construction sites.

### **Indian Arm Brook**

At the April, 2016, WERAC meeting, the council decided to organize a public information session to discuss the proposal to protect Indian Arm Brook as an ecological reserve. Government issued a media release, letters were sent to Town Councils of surrounding communities and posters were posted around the community. Additionally, WERAC Vice-chairperson Graham Wood spoke on several radio shows. The public information session was held on June 16, 2016, in Lewisporte, with approximately 50 people in attendance. As a result of the information session, WERAC decided that a follow-up public information session was necessary and that more information (i.e. a Q and A document) would need to be provided.

### **Natural Areas System Plan**

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 continued to support the development of a Natural Areas System Plan and in 2016-17 continued to be engaged on this file.

## **Objective Indicators for the 2016-17 Year**

The following Objectives and Indicators outline accomplishments achieved for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The two following objectives (1-Establishment and Management and 2-Education and Awareness of Protected Areas) reflect WERAC's vision 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 objective of enhanced management of our Province's natural environment. The extent to which WERAC is able to achieve these objectives and indicators is connected to the process of development of a Natural Areas System Plan (NASP). WERAC reported on these objectives each year of the three-year planning period.

### **1. Establishment and Management**

WERAC advises government on the establishment, termination and management of the provinces wilderness and ecological reserves. WERAC succeeded in meeting each of the indicators for this objective over the 2016-17 reporting period



**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2017, WERAC will have advised government on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador.

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided reports to the responsible Minister of the results of the assessments and recommendations, as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WERAC submitted its formal recommendation report on the proposed changes to Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve Management Plan and the Wilderness Reserve Regulations.</li> <li>• The Council provided recommendations to the Minister regarding the Indian Arm Brook nomination process and ecological representation of the Central Newfoundland Forest Ecoregion.</li> <li>• The Council has continued to provide advice to government on the establishment of the Natural Areas System Plan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advised Parks and Natural Areas Division on reserve management, as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WERAC advised the former Parks and Natural Areas Division on management of Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve.</li> <li>• During meetings WERAC provided various recommendations to the Natural Areas Program on management of Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve, Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve and Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WERAC received a letter nominating the Hodge/Rocky River area for protection as an ecological reserve. WERAC conducted an initial review and responded to the proposal with a request for more information.</li> <li>• WERAC continued to evaluate the Indian Arm Brook proposal brought forward to the Council by the Notre Dame Rod &amp; Gun Club.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted public consultations and feedback processes as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WERAC's Bay du Nord sub-committee conducted a public consultation regarding the revised NL Hydro proposal. The feedback from this public consultation was incorporated into the recommendation report.</li> </ul>

## 2. Education and Awareness of Protected Areas

During the 2016-17 reporting period, WERAC increased public awareness and participation in activities associated with the establishment and management of protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador. WERAC succeeded in meeting each of the indicators for this objective.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2017, WERAC will have promoted an awareness and understanding of protected areas around the Province and the role of the Council.

Indicators	Accomplishments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicated knowledge about protected areas and WERAC through public consultation and correspondence and discussion with primary clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a continued WERAC presence on social media (Twitter: @WERAC_nl and Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Wilderness-and-Ecological-Reserves-Advisory-Council-WERAC-NL-846818648698446/">https://www.facebook.com/Wilderness-and-Ecological-Reserves-Advisory-Council-WERAC-NL-846818648698446/</a>)</li> <li>The Bay du Nord public consultation was advertised in newspapers and with local posters. Information about WERAC was presented at the consultation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted outreach activities in communities interested in proposed and established protected areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WERAC hosted a public information session to discuss the Indian Arm Brook proposal. The public information session was advertised with a media release, letters and posters, as well as being publicized over the radio. Information about WERAC was presented at the session.</li> </ul>

## 4. Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

WERAC was active throughout the 2016-17 fiscal year. The Council advised government on proposed changes to Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, on management of existing protected areas and on the establishment of the NASP. WERAC also took actions to advance establishment of proposed reserves outside the NASP. The Council continued to increase public awareness of WERAC through public outreach and communications, and to encourage public interaction with the council through education on the role of WERAC and the public in reserve establishment.

As with many volunteer public bodies and given the scope of activities undertaken by WERAC, support capacity presents a challenge. WERAC continues to assess and prioritize the number of issues/candidate areas that can be dealt with at any one time in consideration of available resources. WERAC remains committed to pursuing its mandate and acknowledges competing priorities and resourcing are a reality.

Finally, the nature of protected area establishment means there are ongoing issues with other land use interests that create a challenge for the implementation of the NASP. Resolution of issues with other resource interests is something the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources is addressing through internal discussions and discussions with other government departments and that WERAC addresses through its public information and consultation efforts.

## **Appendix A: Financial Statements**

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The Council is not required to provide an audited financial statement. Expenditures for this year represent a decline from previous years. This decline was due to the focus of the Council on the Bay du Nord file, which was worked on primarily through a subcommittee. The workload associated with this file significantly decreased the ability of the Division and WERAC to organize and conduct regular in-person council meetings.

<b>Statement of Expenditures 2016-17</b>	
Expenditures for Council members (travel, accommodations, per diems)	12,343.46
Meeting Expenses	814.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,158.16</b>

The above stated Expenditures are certified as correct.