



WERAC

*Wilderness and Ecological
Reserves Advisory Council*

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

Activity Plan 2008 - 2011

Message from the Chairpersons

The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), a body that advises government through the Minister of Environment and Conservation on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province, is a Category 3 government entity as defined in 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. As Co-chairs of WERAC, we attest that the Council is accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the specific objectives contained herein.

In accordance with the Minister's strategic direction on the release of a Natural Areas System Plan (NASP), 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. An outline of this strategic direction is documented in Appendix A.



John McCarthy, Co-Chair



Christine Doucet, Co-Chair

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1. Overview

The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* (1980, *Section 7*) provides for an Advisory Council to advise government 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 (LGC). 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.

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 Reserves 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 provided by the current account budget of Parks and Natural Areas Division (PNAD), Department of Environment and Conservation. During the fiscal year 2008-09, WERAC's budget was \$44,000.

Typically, the council meets four times a year, for two days each time at various locations around the province. The WERAC Secretariat, consisting of an Executive Secretary, operates from the PNAD's headquarters in Deer Lake. Information for WERAC's review can be forwarded to the WERAC Secretariat or by contacting their e-mail address; werac@gov.nl.ca.

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 Government, Government itself makes the final decisions.

2. Mandate

The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*, 1980, under *Section 7*, provides for an Advisory Council to advise government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. The Council's duties include consultation proceedings with interested government departments, industry stakeholders, the general public, and other bodies 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 fuller details of the legislated mandate of the WERAC.

3. Lines of Business

The WERAC provides the following line of business:

1. Advises government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves in the province:
 - Examines areas of the province in order to determine which areas are suitable for the establishment of a reserve (ie. 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 or a change in a reserve (ie. through presentations, letters of nomination, etc.)
 - Hold consultations with stakeholders and public hearings to consider submissions, representations and objections respecting the establishment of a reserve
 - Within 120 days of the public hearings report 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, including its assessment of objections or reservations raised at the hearing

4. Values

WERAC will consider all public submissions on the identification, establishment, management and decommissioning of wilderness and ecological reserves. Using the best scientific information available, the most comprehensive understanding of social and economic impacts on protected areas and through an open, transparent 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 stakeholders 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 when advising the minister on the establishment of reserves

5. Primary Clients

The WERAC's primary clients include the following:

- Members of the Public (including private citizens, ENGO's, and industry representatives)
- Federal Government
- Local service districts, town council and local governments

6. Vision

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

7. Mission Statement

Creating and maintaining 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. By 2011, WERAC will focus on supporting the development of a Natural Areas System 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 review public submissions and consult various stakeholders.

Mission: By 2011, WERAC will have supported the development of a protected areas plan in accordance with government direction.

Measure: Supported the development of a protected areas plan

Indicators:

- Points of view of the stakeholders are considered in the development of recommendations
- Recommendations are brought forward to the minister for the promotion of candidate areas for reserve status

8. Strategic Issues

In keeping with WERAC's mission statement, WERAC will review priority issues for candidate areas, review priority issues associated with the Natural Areas Systems Plan, and actively promote the benefits of protected areas and make recommendations with respect to development of a strategy to ensure connectivity among protected areas.

To facilitate these objectives, WERAC will consult with interested stakeholders, meet to review priority issues, respond to correspondence and conduct presentations for stakeholders who may have an interest in the benefits of protected areas (i.e. the Premier's Business Advisory Board, Government's Economic Policy Committee, Town Councils, etc.). The following objectives identify the priorities of WERAC for the fiscal years 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11.

Objective 1: WERAC will complete assessments and make recommendations to the LGC on selected candidate areas.

Measure: Completed assessments

Indicator:

- Reports provided to the LGC via the responsible Minister of the results of the assessments and recommendations

Objective 2: WERAC will review priority issues associated with the Natural Areas Systems Plan.

Measure: Recommendations to the Minister

Indicator:

- Reports provided to the Minister outlining WERAC's review of issues

Objective 3: WERAC will have promoted the benefits of protected areas.

Measure: Promoted the benefits of protected areas

Indicator:

- The benefits of protected areas are communicated to government committees during consultation processes
- Information regarding benefits of protected areas is provided through correspondence with stakeholders

Objective 4: WERAC will make recommendations to the Minister with respect to development of a strategy to ensure connectivity among protected areas to ensure their long term viability.

Measure: Recommendation to the Minister

Indicator:

- Reports provided to the Minister outlining a strategy to address connectivity among protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador.

9. Appendix A: Strategic Directions

In accordance with the Minister's strategic direction on the establishment of a Natural Areas System Plan (NASP), 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.

1. **Title:** Natural Areas System Plan
Outcome: Protection of representative areas of the Province's ecoregions.
Areas of Focus: Public Consultations; Finalized Natural Areas System Plan; Implementation strategy.

10. Appendix B: 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.