



WERAC

*Wilderness and Ecological
Reserves Advisory Council*

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

Annual Report 2018-19

Message from the Chair and Vice-Chair

The Honourable Gerry Byrne
Department of Fisheries and Land Resources
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Byrne:

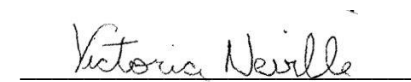
As Chair and Vice-Chair for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), we are pleased to submit the Annual Performance Report for WERAC for April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019. This report meets the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a Category 3 entity.

Under the authority of the **Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act**, WERAC 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 made progress towards its annual objectives as outlined in the WERAC Activity Plan of 2017-2020. WERAC's activities are 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 WERAC, we accept accountability for the preparation of this report and the achievement of its objectives. Our signatures on behalf of WERAC signify WERAC's accountability for the reported results of its activities for 2018-19.



Graham Wood, Chair



Victoria Neville, Vice-chair

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Overview

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.

WERAC consists of 11 members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a three-year term. As of March 31, 2019 members of the WERAC were:

Name	Residence	Term
Mr. Graham Wood, Chair	Lewisporte	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Ms. Victoria Neville, Vice-Chair	St. John's	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Mr. Joe Brazil	Pasadena	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Ms. Lanna Campbell	Prince Edward Island	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Dr. Evan Edinger	St. John's	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Dr. Luise Hermanutz	British Columbia	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Dr. Bill Montevecchi	Portugal Cove	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Mr. Stanley Oliver	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Mr. Thomas Philpott	Corner Book	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Ms. Erin Stapleton	St. John's	6/30/2017-6/30/2020
Mr. Bryn Wood	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	6/30/2017-6/30/2020

In addition to the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair, WERAC members may participate in subcommittees as required. Over the past fiscal year there were three subcommittees:

Subcommittee Name	Members
Labrador Subcommittee	Mr. Stanley Oliver, Mr. Bryn Wood, Dr. Luise Hermanutz
Bay du Nord Subcommittee	Ms. Victoria Neville, Mr. Thomas Philpott
Social Media Subcommittee	Ms. Erin Stapleton, Ms. Lanna Campbell

The Labrador subcommittee exists to provide a Labrador perspective to the work completed by

WERAC. The Bay du Nord subcommittee is following up on the conditions of release from Environmental Assessment for the construction of NL Hydro TL 267 as related to the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve. The Social Media committee works with various social media platforms to distribute content related to the activities of WERAC and the promotion of protected areas in general.

WERAC 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 (FLR). Expenses incurred by WERAC are included in the financial statement of FLR. Please refer to the WERAC financial information.

Typically, WERAC meets several times a year at various locations around the province and through conference calls. This fiscal year, WERAC met once by conference call in January 2019. During this fiscal year, WERAC worked with Natural Areas Program staff to continue development of the Natural Areas System Plan (NASP) for the Island of Newfoundland. Additionally, WERAC followed up on activities related to changes in the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve boundary, and continued to work on the Indian Arm Brook proposed protected area.

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
Phone: (709) 637-8041
Fax: (709) 627-2586
werac@gov.nl.ca
Twitter: @werac_nl

Copies of this report can be obtained in alternate format at the address above.

Together, WERAC and Natural Areas Program staff 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.

Mandate

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, organizations and the general public 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 A for details of the legislated mandate of WERAC.

Highlights and Partnerships

During this reporting period, WERAC continued to work with the staff of the Natural Areas Program, within FLR. Through the WERAC Secretariat, the Natural Areas Program provided administrative, planning and mapping support to WERAC.

The Way Forward

The Provincial Government 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 WERAC 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 and making management recommendations aimed at maintaining protected area integrity. 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 and guide management 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 recommending the establishment of a system of 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 a large part of our tourism branding and 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. WERAC 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.

Report on Performance

During the 2018-19 fiscal year, WERAC continued to focus on three main areas: continuing work associated with boundary changes to Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, a proposal to protect the Indian Arm Brook Study Area, and work in support of development of the NASP for the Island of Newfoundland. Project timelines are necessarily longer than one year, due to the complexity of work and legislated timelines under the WER Act.

Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland

WERAC's main focus this year was in supporting the development of a NASP for the Island portion of the Province. Advising on the development and management of a system 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 the NASP, assessing changes and making recommendations for individual areas for protection, advising on the proposed system as a whole.

Bay du Nord

On August 19, 2016, changes to the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve were gazetted and the boundaries of the reserve were changed to accommodate the construction of new transmission line, TL 267, and add 45km² to the southern boundary. Prior to release of the TL 267 construction project from the environmental assessment process, NL Hydro was required to submit a decommissioning plan. This plan was approved by the Minister of the Department of Environment and Climate Change in June of 2016.

The Bay du Nord Subcommittee had previously conducted an assessment of almost 200 water crossings, including bridges and culverts that were installed as part of the construction phase, to determine which ones should be removed post construction in order to help protect the integrity of the reserve. The recommendations developed as a result of this assessment were communicated to NL Hydro. During a field visit in June 2018, a Natural Areas staff member validated these decisions in the field and NL Hydro supported these requests. As construction of TL 267 wraps up, WERAC will continue to monitor the Bay du Nord decommissioning plan to ensure the actions required under this plan are completed.

Indian Arm Brook

As part of the public consultation held in 2016, WERAC made a commitment to stakeholders to hold a follow-up public information session once a Question and Answer document was developed and distributed. The Indian Arm Brook Question and Answer document was completed and approved by WERAC in 2017-18. Planning for a public information session is in progress.

Objective Indicators for the 2018-19 Year

The following objectives and indicators outline accomplishments achieved for the 2018-19 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 the NASP for the Island of Newfoundland. The following objective and indicators will be applied in 2019 and 2020. WERAC reports on these objectives annually.

1. Establishment and Management

WERAC advises government on the establishment, termination and management of the provinces wilderness and ecological reserves. WERAC succeeded in meeting this objective over the 2018-19 reporting period.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2019, WERAC will have advised government on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 reports were required since no public consultations were held for reserve establishment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised Land Management Division on reserve management, as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WERAC advised the Land Management Division on management of Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve related to post-construction mitigation for TL267 through the reserve. • WERAC discussed changes to the draft NASP, especially with respect to representation of all the natural regions in the province.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no public submissions for new protected areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted public consultations and feedback processes as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public consultations or feedback processes were held in 2018-19.

2. Education and Awareness of Protected Areas

During the 2018-19 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, 2019, 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">Communicated knowledge about protected areas and WERAC through public consultation and correspondence and discussion with primary clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WERAC maintains a presence on social media (Twitter: @WERAC_nl and Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Wilderness-and-Ecological-Reserves-Advisory-Council-WERAC-NL-846818648698446/). Social media presence is geared toward communicating knowledge about protected areas and WERAC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conducted outreach activities in communities interested in proposed and established protected areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No outreach activities were conducted in 2018-19.

Opportunities and Challenges

During the 2018-19 fiscal year, WERAC advised government on management of existing protected areas, and continued to monitor development adjacent to Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve. The development of the NASP was a main focus for WERAC discussions.

WERAC anticipates receiving feedback and making progress on these issues during the upcoming fiscal year.

WERAC continues to work toward developing a comprehensive system of protected areas for the Province, and continues to work with Government to prioritize the 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.

Financial Information

WERAC does not have a stand-alone budget and as a result, audited financial statements are not required. Expenses associated with WERAC members are funded through FLR. WERAC met once during the 2018-19 fiscal year. This meeting was a conference call and did not have any associated financial costs.

Appendix A: Legislated 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.