



WERAC

*Wilderness and Ecological
Reserves Advisory Council*

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

Annual Report 2017-18

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:

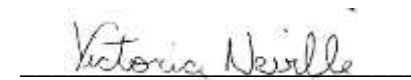
As Chair and Vice-Chair for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), we are pleased to submit the Annual Performance Report for WERAC for April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018. This report meets the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a Category 3 entity.

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 was successful in achieving its annual objectives as outlined in the WERAC Activity Plan of 2017-2020. WERAC's activities 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 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 2017-18.



Graham Wood, Chair



Victoria Neville, Vice-chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview.....	5
Mandate.....	6
Highlights and Partnerships.....	6
Report on Performance.....	7
Opportunities and Challenges	10
Financial Statement.....	11

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.

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.

WERAC'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.flr.gov.nl.ca/natural_areas/wer/adc/index.html for more detailed information on WERAC's role, values and lines of business.

WERAC consists of 11 members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a three-year term. As of March 31, 2018 members of the WERAC were:

Name	Role	Residence	Term
Mr. Graham Wood	Chair	Lewisporte	6/30/2017- 6/30/2020
Ms. Victoria Neville	Vice-Chair	St. John's	
Mr. Joe Brazil	Member	Pasadena	
Ms. Lanna Campbell	Social Media	St. John's	
Dr. Evan Edinger	Member	St. John's	
Dr. Luise Hermanutz	Labrador Subcommittee	Portugal Cove	
Dr. Bill Montevecchi	Bay du Nord Subcommittee	Portugal Cove	
Mr. Stanley Oliver	Member	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	
Mr. Thomas Philpott	Bay du Nord Subcommittee	Corner Book	
Erin Stapleton	Social Media	St. John's	
Mr. Bryn Wood	Labrador Subcommittee	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	

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 statement.

Typically, WERAC meets four times a year at various locations around the province. This fiscal year, WERAC met once in person (in September 2017) and once by conference call (in March 2018). During this fiscal year, WERAC worked with Natural Areas Program staff on development of the Natural Areas System Plan 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) 637-8051
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 <http://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/w09.htm> 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. In November 2017, WERAC members Bill Montevecchi and Graham Wood were invited to appear as specialists on VOXM radio to discuss ecosystem protection, and communicated the role of WERAC to the public.

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

WERAC's work this fiscal focused primarily on three 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 Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland. Project timelines are necessarily longer than one year, due to the complexity of work and legislated timelines and requirements.

Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland

WERAC's main focus this year was in supporting the development of a Natural Areas System Plan 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 Plan, making recommendations for individual areas for protection, advising on the proposed system as a whole, and reviewing the draft public document. Due to the scale and significance of this project, this left less time and capacity for meetings and other priority issues.

Bay du Nord

On May 1, 2015, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro submitted a request to the Natural Areas Program 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). 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 45km² to the southern boundary.

Throughout the 2017-18 fiscal year, WERAC continued to receive updates from NL Hydro on the construction process and its completion. The Bay du Nord Subcommittee has conducted an assessment of almost 200 water crossings, including bridges and culverts that were installed as part of the construction phase. This involved both in office assessments as well as a site visit in the field. NL Hydro has submitted its revised decommissioning plan, which needs to be approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment. WERAC plans to review and make recommendations on this revised plan during the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Indian Arm Brook

In response to a 2016 public information session regarding the establishment of Indian Arm Brook as an ecological reserve, WERAC met September 2017 with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff to better understand land use conflicts in the area. WERAC had made a commitment to stakeholders that a follow-up public information session would be held once a Question and Answer document was developed and distributed. The Indian Arm Brook Question and Answer document has been drafted and reviewed by WERAC. It is currently in the final stages of approval and will be posted to the public in 2018.

Objective Indicators for the 2017-18 Year

The following objectives and indicators outline accomplishments achieved for the 2017-18 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 Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland. The following objectives and indicators will be applied in 2018, 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 each of the indicators for this objective over the 2017-18 reporting period.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2018, 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"> • WERAC provided recommendations to the Minister regarding ecological representation of the Central Newfoundland Forest Ecoregion. • WERAC has continued to provide advice to government on the development of the Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland.
<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. • During two regular WERAC meetings WERAC provided various recommendations to the Natural Areas Program on management of Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve, Watt's Point Ecological Reserve and Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WERAC received a letter nominating the Crémaillère Bay area for protection as an ecological reserve. WERAC conducted a review of the proposal and responded to the proponent. • WERAC completed its assessment of Hodge/Rocky River nominated area, after additional information was received, and provided a formal response.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted public consultations and feedback processes as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WERAC assessed questions and feedback from the Indian Arm Brook public information session (conducted June 2016) in order to develop a draft Question and Answer document. The document is currently in the final stages of approval and will be posted to the public in 2018. No public consultations were conducted during the reporting period.

2. Education and Awareness of Protected Areas

During the 2017-18 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, 2018, 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_nI 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. WERAC met with representatives from the Department of Natural Resources to discuss mining interests in the proposed Indian Arm Brook protected area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted outreach activities in communities interested in proposed and established protected areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Question and Answer document has been prepared for outreach regarding Indian Arm Brook proposed protected area. Once the draft Question and Answer document is finalized, it will be distributed to the public. In November 2017, WERAC members Bill Montevecchi and Graham Wood were invited to appear as specialists on VOXM radio to discuss ecosystem protection, and communicated the role of WERAC to the public. WERAC will continue to plan more outreach activities as time permits.

Opportunities and Challenges

During the 2017-18 fiscal year, WERAC advised government on management of existing protected areas and continued to monitor and assess developments adjacent to Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve. There is an opportunity for WERAC to continue to be engaged in the development and implementation of the Natural Areas System Plan. This fiscal, WERAC made recommendations to the Minister regarding protection of the Central Newfoundland Forest Ecoregion, and advised on individual proposed sites and the development of the Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland.

There is also a great opportunity to continue to advance the locally driven proposal to protect the Indian Arm Brook proposed protected area. During the reporting period WERAC took actions to advance establishment of Indian Arm Brook proposed protected area and to evaluate and respond to public submissions for protection. WERAC continued to increase public awareness through public outreach and communications, and to encourage public interaction with WERAC through education on the role of WERAC and the public in reserve establishment.

Some planned outreach activities have not been completed during this fiscal due to development of the Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland. 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 Statement

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. The approximate expenses for the 2017-18 fiscal year were \$8,276, this amount represents a decline from the previous year (\$13,158.16). This decline was due to the focus of WERAC and the Land Management Division on the development of Natural Areas System Plan for the Island of Newfoundland. The workload associated with this file significantly decreased the ability of the Division and WERAC to organize and conduct regular in-person WERAC meetings.

Statement of Expenditures 2017-18	
Expenditures for Council members (travel, accommodations, per diems)	7,922.13
Meeting Expenses	353.87
Total	8,276