

Meeting 9:30, May 14<sup>th</sup> , Terminal Road, Halifax

**In Attendance:**

N.S.E.	John C Glynn-Morris (Planner)
	Oliver Maass (Protected Area Coordinator – Central Region)
B.I.A.N.S	Phil Nelson
B.A.N.S.	John Webber

N.S.E. started the meeting by telling us that there was no formal plans yet for the proposed wilderness area boundaries and that they were getting information from residents of the area, current users, other interest groups and stakeholders, government departments, NS Mi'Kmaq, etc. Working with D.N.R., the next step will be to develop a boundary proposal which will then be released for extensive consultation with the public, user groups, stakeholders, etc. Final government decisions on boundaries and related matters will be made after that consultation. A map, the same one in the current newsletter regarding Chignecto, was presented. It showed existing sanctuary and the crown lands surrounding it, as well as roads. Some of these will be excluded from a wilderness area; others may be kept inside a boundary but permit continued vehicle use through trail agreements; and other routes will be closed to vehicle / ATV/ snowmobile use altogether.

NSE also maintained that for lands within the current Chignecto game sanctuary that are encompassed by the new Wilderness Protected area, the current bow hunting only regulations will apply, but for Crown lands outside the current sanctuary, all legal “traditional” means of hunting and crossbows will be allowed.

Phil showed on the map where the majority of current bow hunters camped (Wilson’s pit) and how the bow hunters had a good reputation for leaving the pit clean and used an example of the bow hunters being told a mess had been left in the pit, so they went up and cleaned it up. It was explained that the majority of the bow hunters use the roads to get to the pockets of deer in the sanctuary and that the deer are not evenly dispersed over the entire sanctuary. He also explained how in the bow hunter’s course, sanctuary rules are taught as some rules are different than outside the sanctuary, i.e. – hunting bears starts on the first day of the early bow season for deer. It was also said that the majority of bow hunters leave their ATV’s or vehicles on the road and if successful, drag their game back to the vehicle. It was stated that about 2 % of the bow hunters are successful.

John Webber explained B.A.N.S support of the 2008Cumberland Wilderness proposal and what led up to withdrawing that support – the loss of access by regular passenger vehicles. What BANS hears most is that vehicle access should remain as it is now, even if what little maintenance being done to the roads stops. Eventually the roads would grow in and be more in line with what is perceived as a wilderness area. It was also stated that a lot of elderly people take their grandkids into the sanctuary, berry picking, swimming, angling and for that reason, any roads currently accessible by a family vehicle (mini-van, sedan, etc) should remain open until they are no longer passable if indeed D.N.R. cannot be convinced to retain control of the current roadways. It was also stated by BANS that some cutting would be a good thing in the sanctuary as the moose need the fresh browse and currently there are more moose in the areas being cut outside the sanctuary than in the sanctuary. Another point made by BANS. was like the River Watch program, the more people there were using the sanctuary the harder it would be for the area’s moose poachers to poach moose.

N.S.E. stated at this point that there is a wood shortage in central Nova Scotia, including on Crown lands. The province has legal wood supply commitments from Crown lands to Northern Pulp and others, which will be difficult to meet. Because of this, forests on Crown land outside boundaries of a future wilderness area in the Chignecto Sanctuary area will need to be considered for harvest to satisfy existing legal commitments.

B.A.N.S. also said that the current mineral exploration in the sanctuary was not aimed at “strip mining”, as has been stated by groups in the past, but seismic wok trying to determine if the oil and gas deposit in the

Peticodiac area extends under the sanctuary. We asked if it was possible that the concerns in the Colin Stewart Forestry report regarding the more sensitive areas requiring protection for either landforms, or flora and fauna be the first priority and for no more of the sanctuary than necessary be “protected” if vehicle access was to be lost. We asked that access as it is now be maintained to, at a minimum, the current hunting areas and to plan any places of the sanctuary to be “protected” around the roads and that the Roads remain in D.N.R.’s control.

N.S.E. is working with D.N.R. to develop a boundary proposal that meets protection goals while trying to accommodate a wide a range of other interests, as possible. We were told that not all Crown lands in the area will be protected, and some vehicle use, as can be legally permitted under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act, will be accommodated within the boundaries of a new wilderness area.