

Transcript - Proposed Sandy Point Wilderness Area - Council Meeting July 22, 2026

Speaker Summary

Craig Smith		00:29:18 (74.8%)
Sherry Thorburn Irvine		00:03:49 (9.8%)
Penny Smith		00:01:59 (5.1%)
Dale Richardson		00:01:22 (3.5%)
Angie Shand		00:01:13 (3.1%)
Paula Sutherland		00:00:36 (1.6%)
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Heidi Wagner		00:00:15 (0.7%)
Speaker E		00:00:04 (0.2%)

[00:00:00] Craig Smith

Thank you very much, Penny. I'm a pleasure to meet all of you virtually. I appreciate the offer to join you this evening. And I hope you're all doing well and staying dry. You met this mini monsoon that has enveloped the province.

[00:00:16] Penny Smith

We're very thankful for that.

[00:00:18] Craig Smith

Yes. I think many of us are. Most of us, all of us actually. Yes. So I don't intend to take too much of your time with this presentation, but I will deliver some slides that will help contextualize some of our work and answer some of the questions that I think you may have. And then hopefully we do have a little bit of time for personal open discussion and dialogue. Again, Craig Smith, I'm the director of the protected areas and ecosystems program within Nova Scotia environment and climate change. Can I just get a confirmation that you can see my presentation or it?

[00:00:54] Penny Smith

We can.

[00:00:55] Craig Smith

Perfect. And I advance it now. Okay, so I suspect this is somebody pretty basic content for all of you, but why, you know, why is the province of Nova Scotia interested in advancing land protection through this tool called protected areas? Well, there is. A very traditional kind of rooting of this concept in efforts to conserve nature. Currently, we talk about that in terms of biodiversity. And that includes concepts like representative ecosystems and their distribution across the province, but also concepts like rich and rare ecosystems. There are some places that are just particularly special from an ecological point of view habitat for threatened or endangered species. Those are some of the more traditional ecological rationales for pursuing a protected areas approach. More recently, linkages have been made to important governmental responses to climate the climate crisis on both the mitigation side and the adaptation side. So mitigation. in the form of peat lands and forests in protected areas absorbing carbon and helping keep that carbon in the ground out of the atmosphere, which helps with the current climate crisis that we are facing. And on the adaptation side through the provision of ecological services, for example, intact natural ecosystems, including, for example, riparian wetlands, may absorb the impacts of flooding and help mitigate the impacts that might occur if intact natural ecosystems weren't along the river. In the coastal context, it is natural ecosystems like salt marshes or even intact coastal forests can help buffer the impacts of increasing storm frequency and intensity and some of the storm surges associated with that. And then perhaps most close to my heart is that protectors support a wide range of different outdoor activities, including traditional backcountry activities like hunting and angling and even trapping, as well as more kind of self-propelled wilderness recreation activities like hiking, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing, canoeing, kayaking, these types of things. And I have a bit of an outdoor benton. So that's how I came to this work was through the entry point of outdoor recreation and activity. So this is kind of a high level view of why Nova Scotia pursues protected areas. There are, we'll talk a little bit about the system in Nova Scotia's context. But for Nova Scotia environment and climate change, we have two types of protected areas. They're both designations under provincial statute Nature reserves, which you have many of in the county of Shelburne and in your municipality are generally smaller sites on the order of tens of hectares to hundreds of hectares. They're intended to protect like really discrete outstanding natural features or biodiversity elements. And they are designated under a piece of legislation called the Special Places Protection Act, which dates to like the 70s. So it's a little bit dated. But these are areas that have pretty strict land use controls on them. They're really only available for science, research, education, and light low impact recreation activities. The larger, much more significant complement of protected areas in Nova Scotia environment, designates and manages our wilderness areas. They are usually on the medium to large scale, so hundreds to thousands to tens of, well, thousands to many thousands of hectares in size. Obviously, you have the Tobatis wilderness area, a portion of it in your in your municipality. That is the largest protected area in the Maritime. In fact, but wilderness areas are a more modern interpretation of how to do land conservation. The act was passed in 1998. And again, it allows for a wide variety of different backcountry and traditional recreation styles. There are provisions for allowing OHV access under some certain conditions. And these are areas that occupy a huge portion of the province, nearly 10% of the province and our program is in charge in fact of managing those with support from the Department of Natural Resources and community organizations throughout the province. Where we stand right now currently 14.5%, sorry, 5.6% of Nova Scotia is protected. And that 14.56 number encompasses the provincial protected areas. I just talked about, or sorry, ECC protected areas, but also some DNR lands that are protected as well as the federally protected lands, most notably, Kedra McEudrick National Park and Cape Breton Highlands. As well as privately protected lands, those lands protected by land trusts, such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Nova Scotia Nature Trust, who I know are active in your municipality. Sorry, I haven't been advancing my slides. That's an oversight, my apologies. So just stop here quickly. So this graph depicts the kind of large proportional contribution of wilderness areas to the overall 14.5% of Nova Scotia protected. Some of the other categories I mentioned are provincial parks are at about 3.5%. Those are Department of Natural Resources. And then the land trust protected lands are 3.08% of that 14%. Here's just a rough look at the distribution of those sites across the province. Yeah, so a little bit of drilling down into your neck of the woods, so to speak, and what a beautiful neck of the woods it is. I've had the privilege to work in Shelburne County a few times over the course of my career. This is a map of the county. I know I'm talking to the municipality, but I'm going to kind of move back and forth between some distinctions. So the map is of the county, and obviously you've got quite a bit. I understand of protected land. The vast majority of that is composed of three wilderness areas, the Tobiatic area up here in the north, as I'm sure you're all familiar with Tidney River here on the eastern boundary of your municipality, and then the Bowers Meadows wilderness area further south. By our numbers, there's about 22.4% of Shelburne County under protection. And about 29% of the

municipality, I know Warren that does differ a little bit from the numbers you provided. Maybe we can get to the bottom of that in the future. But it is somewhere around the 30% mark, regardless. These sites, those three big sites I mentioned, were all established at the time that the Wilderness Area Protection Act was brought into being. That was in 1998, they're part of the original 31 Wilderness areas as we refer to them. So, I know one of the questions is, why does Shelburne County have such a large proportion of protected lands as compared to some other municipalities? And it's true that there's a bit of an outsized amount of land protected in Shelburne County and in your municipality. And I think a big part of that has to do with the abundance of ground land that's your municipality is fortunate enough to enjoy. By our calculations, there's about 94,000 hectares of of undesignated Crown Land remaining in Shelburne County in about 70,000 in your municipality. Again, these are rough numbers. And that places you like somewhere in the fourth or so position in terms of abundance of Crown Land in your neck of the woods, so to speak. And by my count, there's 12 counties that have less Crown Land. So I think that's a big part of the explanation. And your, in my view, fortunate enough to enjoy the presence of the largest protected area in the Maritimes, that is, that is the Tobiatric. So, but we do recognize that and we recognize that it's an area of, of interest for, for some counselors. You know, it's, it's really interesting like the abundance of crown land ranges from as high as 185,000 hectares remaining in in guys, bro, down to as low as 20,000 hectares in in an ignaish. So there's a real difference in the distribution as I'm sure you're aware of crown land throughout municipal units in the province. I want to do address a question. So There are no other other than the Sandy Point wilderness area, which we're here to talk about a little bit tonight. There are no other proposed protected areas in your municipality with the tiny exception of a little piece of land that doesn't even appear on this map. But it's right here at the head of Port Le Bear. There's a provincial park and there's a small proposed addition to it, like on the order of 80 or 100 hectares or so. that is in the parks and protected areas plan. That's a DNR site. I'm not aware of any work to advance that designation at this point in time. And it is, again, the only other location that has been identified for protection by the province. So. So. So an idea of how we approach site selection. In 2023, the province released the collaborative protected areas strategy, which is, you know, in provincial terms of, you know, a high level kind of guidance document that is intended to lay out a pathway for pursuing the 15% and 20% land and water conservation objectives. Those criteria are just briefly outlined here, but we look for intact areas that are generally free of major anthropogenic disturbance, although in some cases we will seek restoration areas that are located in a part of the province that we have very little representation in and may protect some outstanding natural value. They're in a poor state now, but they may recover over time. This concept of representation, I've used that word already a few times, so what it means is that there is a diversity of ecological conditions and habitats across Nova Scotia, and we're trying to protect some of each of them. is the simplest way to think about it. If we only protected hemlock for us, for example, and not any other ecosystem, we wouldn't be achieving our objectives of protecting biodiversity. So representative examples of the diverse, full diversity of ecosystems across the province is kind of a foundational element of protected areas planning in our program here. Again, rich and rare sites. So there are cave ecosystems or salt marshes. It sites of ecosystems that are of particular richness and certainly are blessed with a lot of those in southwestern Nova Scotia. Ecological connectivity refers to the concept of how species and ecosystem processes move in between the land like on the landscape and we You know, a design principle is that protectors shouldn't just be islands of biodiversity that they should be able to facilitate movement between them. That's a complicated concept and it doesn't always have to be protected land in between. But we do think about that and incorporate that science into our planning. Watershed and water protection was a distinctive selection criteria that was incorporated into the collaborative protected areas strategy. both in recognition of their importance to wildlife and the natural world and also to humans in our world. And then we look at additional practical factors, including like improving boundaries or expanding existing sites and incorporating consideration of impacts to rural resource industries, including clean energy development. So there is a pragmatic layer of course, to government decision making as well. That's only intended to give you like a high level perspective on how site selection is approached. So the proposed site in your municipality, Sandy Point, Wilderness Area is that large 800 and 880 or so hectare block of intact habitat in the middle of Sandy Point peninsula. It is ecologically diverse, composed largely of like coastal influenced mixed wood forest, as well as, as I'm sure you're aware, a high abundance of Pete land and wetland ecosystem. We don't have good evidence of it, but we think there's like quite a diverse bird fauna because of the amount of habitat diversity that is found within a relatively short period or a small area, including forests and wetlands and coastal wetlands and the open ocean as well. For us, it straddles two natural landscapes, and so it actually is an interesting eco-tone. We would call it, there's kind of an ecological divide in the, during features, the geology, the topography. Located in that area our surveys have led to identification of the all of side of fly catcher

which is a federally and provincially threatened species white rim shingle liken which is provincially threatened a bit more of a difficult to find species and a plant called Pine Bear and Golden Heather. which is just provincially rare. It's not listed under any provincial or federal species at risk statute, but it is recognized as a rare species. The site overlaps with the routing like watershed is you're all aware our numbers have that at roughly a quarter of the watershed. And as far as where there is no history of commercial forestry or no overlapping mineral rights. So our conservation planning process did identify this as a potential area of interest. We also received some public correspondence and recommendations to consider this area which does factor into government decision making. This is currently a proposed protected area as I think you're all well aware for which we are gathering perspectives and feedback through public consultation. I know you've all seen the link to that. That public consultation is slated to close on July 28th next week. So as we look at it in a little bit more detail, we are in like the console, the purpose of our public consultation is to harvest information from stakeholders in the public and the community that should be considered in our planning work. So we will when the consultation closes be summarizing the results. We will be taking the more significant considerations to the minister and other more just technical considerations our staff team will be incorporating into planning efforts. So the proposed boundary at the moment is based on the current crown land boundary. It's a bit strange, but this is not uncommon. Land boundaries in much of Nova Scotia have strange configurations as a result of parcelization over time. The link road which bisects the area is not intended to be part of the designation that's a public road and and the boundary of the proposed wilderness area if designated would run down either side excluding the road and leaving it unimpacted. The area does not as far as we can tell based on our mapping and we have good mapping of Nova Scotia Power infrastructure does not interact in any way shape or form with current infrastructure. And our analysis suggests that it's hard to believe that or hard to think of a scenario where Nova Scotia Power would need to run infrastructure through the middle of this peninsula or interact with this land base in any significant way, given the existing infrastructure that follows the Sandy Point Road all the way. around the peninsula, I know Warren had raised a question around that, so I wanted to address that. Important to understand, if that was of interest, construction of a new power line in the future would not be a possibility under the wilderness areas protection act. If that's something that is of interest, then it could be addressed through the planning now. And on ATVs and OHVs, our fieldwork And desktop analysis has not let us to identify any areas of like obvious high use. But I, I'm aware that there are some interests relevant to OHVs and I suspect, I expect some questions on it. So, but we haven't identified any like heavily used trails at this point in time. So we can, we can talk about that a bit more and we are, we, you know, we certainly would encourage. users to submit that feedback through the ongoing public consultation. So with that, I think that's kind of the content I wanted to deliver. Hopefully we do have a few minutes here for questions and discussion. Thanks, Ben.

[00:19:08] Penny Smith

Okay, that's great. Thank you so much. And thank you. We really appreciate you agreeing to present to us this evening. Lots of great information for both counselors and for our residents. So Thank you. I'm going to see. We'll start. We'll open with some questions and comments and I'm going to go to my far left again. Councillor Richardson.

[00:19:34] Dale Richardson

One question comes to mind. In the numbers you quoted is our watershed protective areas counted within that number?

[00:19:45] Craig Smith

No, they're not. So we're just counting that number is just reflecting like kind of traditional protected areas, not a protected water area which is established under regulation. But that is, so there is a difference there, not included.

[00:20:03] Dale Richardson

But they are legislated, they are protected. And I guess the reason I asked that is, I look at the numbers you quoted and we're coming in relatively 29% And I'm thinking we're way above the average. And, you know, I really have reservations about seeing more land put aside just for those reasons or it limits any use. And to my way of thinking anything above 20% or 25% becomes nothing but a park more or less, so we're only using the fringes. We have large sections within the municipality that are protected. Marshland, woodland, the Tobiasi, you've listed them. So that's just my opinion. Thank you.

[00:21:05] Penny Smith

Okay, thank you for that. Before I go to Councilor Thorbener, I should note that I did forward an email today from one of our residents. who was supporting the protected land designation. So everyone should have received that. Councilor Thorbener.

[00:21:23] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

Thank you. The first question that I'd like to ask is about ATVUs. And in speaking with yourself, or it may have been Neil, it is clear, as you've said, that residents can hunt trap or fish with a license. And in terms of ATVUs, If the province works well with organizations, so they will not work one-on-one with people. And so I would just like to also speak to those people who are not joiners. They may not belong to an association, but they do appreciate getting out into the outdoors. Some of them are older people. It is about convening in nature. And so how would the province suggest people who they're not joiners these people are fishermen their hunters their independence and not all of them belong to an association. So how would the province suggest that they loosely affiliate in order that they can be worked with and. And I do believe it was Neil that had said, many people are interested in a through fare versus a point eight, a point B designation. So just generally questions on that. And I have a few other questions if I could just perhaps rattle them off and you could speak to them. I mean, I'm certainly willing to, I've advanced them already, but I could advance them to you after this session.

[00:22:53] Speaker E

Yes, go ahead.

[00:22:55] Penny Smith

Thank you. Go ahead and answer. Thank you.

[00:23:00] Craig Smith

Oh, well, I mean, it so the joiners thing I prefer that's I assume that's referring to like advance and the the ATV Association of Nova Scotia and the licensing requirement that they have.

[00:23:17] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

No, I'm just talking about people who are independent. They don't belong to any organization. And we know that the province doesn't want to work one-on-one with residents. I suppose it's a matter of practicality, and you work well with A2B associations. So what would people that don't normally belong to an organization, but yet would like to continue to perhaps recreate in a way that's acceptable to the province with the wilderness status? How would you suggest That occur.

[00:23:49] Craig Smith

Yeah, so we have, I mean, I think that the key for us is to understand this issue and in more detail than perhaps we do at this point in time. We haven't identified any existing like significant trail use. Now, I'm not suggesting it's not occurring, but we need to understand where that is and How significant it is and where, where people are going. We can't, you know, to manage a trail, you know, you need to be working with an organization that has some capacity to conduct management. And so that's why the program structure that we have was adopted is because it's just a born out of necessity. But we have other planning tools to address like recreational uses such as OHV use. But it's hard to talk about them in any sort of detail without understanding the use and the patterns of use. So I think what we're looking for at this point in time is information and data to use in our planning process. The legislation, the governing legislation, does put bounds on how the minister can approach certain issues, including motorized use broadly, which OHV or altering vehicle use falls So I think the key is, though, as a first step to understand that usage and to hear from those citizens. And so I guess my ask of you is, and I'm sure you're doing this already, to encourage them to submit their feedback via the open consultation, or if need be directly to the department. Right. We'll do.

[00:25:39] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

Okay, so you've already mentioned protected species. So I'm going to move on from that question. How, how, how have such areas been utilized in the past to bolster? Okay, so this is a question that I have. In terms of this protected area, could we jump into several different things that could potentially increase economic opportunities for us here in terms of equal tourism? Are there trails? I know in Ottawa, there's a bog walkway. Obviously, through KEDGE, there's a walkway that's a low-foot print and allows people into the interior. Could you see doing that on this crown-line portion? Or in the perimeter, would there be money that the province would be willing to invest that could increase visitor ship, whether that be residents or visiting tourists? Is that a potential in the future for something like this?

[00:26:37] Craig Smith

Well, I think it could be. Yeah, I mean, wilderness areas offer a lot of benefits when they are open and accessible and available to two citizens. We see, you know, the role that places like edge mcgugic play and in Nova Scotian society and, you know, in our system, there are emerging examples of that. The Wentworth Valley wilderness area is supporting trail races and a wide variety of activities that contribute to an emerging kind of outdoor culture and economy, even in that part of the province. So I think there is some potential. I think it's not the type of thing that we're particularly well provisioned to undertake ourselves. We are often in a position to listen to communities, including municipalities, and then try and work out a potential path forward. We don't have funding programs, but there are funding programs available to support those types of initiatives what I guess one of the things we can offer is that Nova Scotia environment we have what's called a funding navigator position and that that person can help partners and collaborators understand the funding landscape. And that was put into place partially because ECC is not a funding organization where, you know, the core of the organization is an environmental regulator. We don't have access to funding programs. There are other provincial departments and possibly federal programs that may be able to contribute to something like that. So I think the The messages possibly I think we you know it were the site to proceed to be designated that we would have an open ear and be willing to listen to provincial or municipal interest in that regard and you know see where we what we might be able to to to plan.

[00:28:26] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

Sure. So to that end, the other thing, you mentioned the different assets. So it is a special area. It also serves as a natural filtration system. And there's a predominant interest and concern of the water supply within the wetlands for our neighboring municipal unit as well, the town. And so is there any Is there anything you can speak to right now because I know there's a number of people that are interested. How do those wetlands actually help us along the ledge of Sandy point. I think I might know, but it certainly would be interested. I'm interested to hear from an expert such as yourself.

[00:29:08] Craig Smith

Well, I don't know if I'm an expert, but I mean, in general terms, like bogs and fens, which are another closely related type of peat land, which are wetland generally dominated by Spagnum Moss. They are ecosystems that develop over thousands of years, and they have very complex subsurface root structures and vegetative structures and water moves through them but very, very slowly. And in that process of water moving or filtering through these wetlands sediment is retained in the wetland and clear water has pushed out the departure points for the wetland. And so in that way they can be thought of as a natural filtration system for water. Now it's not always intuitive when you Alright, a bog and you look at the water it looks rusty colored and it's filled and southwestern Nova Scotia we have high Abundance of a chemical compound called tannins in the water and it gives it that brown rusty hue, but the water is generally of quite high quality. And so I think there is quite a high degree of alignment between the idea of ecosystem protection and water supply for the town of Amherst. And in fact, as you know, we've received a letter of support for the initiative.

[00:30:28] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

You mean the town is so awkward, but I don't know.

[00:30:30] Craig Smith

Sorry, this is the second time I've done that today. Sorry, the town of Amherst on the mind. My apologies, town of Shelburne. Yes. So I think like there's like quite a high degree of alignment between the idea of land conservation and provision of clean drinking water to municipal residents. And we see that elsewhere. Other municipalities including the town of Amherst and the town of Anganish supported the development or so the establishment of protected areas on not just Crown lands, but municipal lands as well in recognition of that important ecological service as we sometimes call it.

[00:31:07] Sherry Thorburn Irvine

I only have one more question because I don't want to take all the time. Yes, thank you very much. I think it's as counselors in. planners, I suppose, as we direct, we always want to understand best use of land. Would you say that this would be the best use of our wetlands is preserving it for the people along the ledge, the town of Shelburne, and the carbon and climate adaptation education that can be born out of this? I mean, I know you're in the Ministry of the Environment. Maybe it's a loaded question, but in your opinion, best use. He was, he was, he was your best friend.

[00:31:50] Craig Smith

Well, that, that concept is, is challenging. I mean, I think it depends on the, on the societal values, right? That, that governments of all levels are, are trying to address what, and that's, that's always a tricky concept. What I can say is that, you know, we're all concerned, we're all grateful for the rain. Why are we grateful for the rain while we're concerned about forest fire risk? And, and part of the reason we're concerned about forest fire risk is a change in climate. So we know as a society, at all scales, we need to absorb more carbon to try and address this serious threat that the world is going through. Peat lands absorbed more carbon per square meter than just about any other or any other ecosystem in the world. And this site has an abundance of Peat lands and southwestern Nova Scotia has an abundance of Peat lands. So is it the highest in best use? I don't know. Is it a good use of this land base? I think I feel comfortable saying that, yes. Thank you very much.

[00:32:51] Penny Smith

And just before we go to Councillor Shan, I just wanted to pick up on something that you would said, go to encouraging residents to submit feedback. So my question is, what is the process that you've gone through for a public engagement with these types of designation? How are you reaching residents?

[00:33:12] Craig Smith

It's largely through the online portal. So the launch was May 27th. There was a press release, some social media to pick that up. And we asked that partners and stakeholders engaged in the conservation community echo that and share it quite broadly. So that's the main thrust. We're not in a position to be doing a whole lot of local community outreach at this point in time. We are quite a small program. So it is really that consultation portal that is live currently. I know Warren has the link. I can drop it in the chat here as I leave the meeting and that's the primary opportunity for people to review information on what is being proposed and submit their their feedback on the idea.

[00:34:12] Penny Smith

Okay. Thank you for that. Councillor Schand.

[00:34:16] Angie Shand

Would you be able to bring your little map up again for us to see for a second? My question is a little bit about the lands surrounding it. So this land that we're looking to preserve is a really weird shape. So the land that's around it that is The other designated land. Is that land that it can be owned like it just residents may own it or like anybody at random owns a property that's around this.

[00:34:42] Speaker E

Yeah, just bear with me a second, I get the map. Wait.

[00:34:52] CAO MacLeod

I can probably answer that, Angie, it's all private landowner all around.

[00:34:55] Angie Shand

So that could be owned by a resident or just it's all resident. So yeah, so building can occur all around this piece like all around, just looking at this shape of it. It's a really weird jagged piece that like so a building could be in like, you know, in a little piece of it and around that goal structure would be preserved land as well.

[00:35:17] Craig Smith

That is correct. Yeah. Thanks. Thanks, Warren. It's struggling to get the slideshow back up here.

[00:35:22] Angie Shand

But it is, it is all private little kind of nooks in the property. So like when you look, there's a really, you know, like the skinny piece so we could a structure could be built in that whole area and then around that is preserved land that you can't do anything on other. If you were something who wanted to hunt and fish, you could do that on it.

[00:35:44] Craig Smith

Yeah. That's, that's correct. We, we, uh, this, this common common issue.

[00:35:49] Angie Shand

Yeah. So power lines are anything for these properties could have to go a little around about ways to fit around these little regions of preserved property.

[00:36:01] Craig Smith

Yep. That would be fair. Now, I think, you know, we don't have the individual parcels mapped here. It is quite a, um, like dense private property division, particularly on the western side coming into Mangum Lake. As far as the core, I mean, there's very few locations that I think would be like, truly, like heavily impacted by those types of restrictions. in relation to power in particular, but yes, that is something that I've noted as well. It's a strange configuration, which isn't always the best starting point, but it's also not uncommon in Nova Scotia, again, where the crown land base and lands that are private have been granted and some divide at many times, and we have different configurations across the province, but they often are complex and very irregular.

[00:37:03] Penny Smith

Any other questions council? Thank you for that. I think it was Deputy Warden next and then councilor Sablewood.

[00:37:10] Heidi Wagner

I just have a quick question you had said about that the 28th is the deadline for feedback from residents. So what the UN indicated a thing goes to the minister. What is your proposed timeline that this is going to be done basically?

[00:37:28] Craig Smith

Well, we will be looking to advance the information to support a ministerial decision within a month or so, you know, brought by the first of September. And then, you know, depending on the outcome of that, if there's a direction to continue, then a cabinet decision is required to designate a wilderness area. And so we would then need another period of time, probably six or eight weeks to prepare the necessary documentation for a cabinet decision. So, you know, the intention is that these land designations, the 13 that are currently out for public consultation support government's efforts to achieve its 15% land and water protection a milestone target by the end of calendar year 2026. So that's gives you an idea of the rough timeline. We, if given direction to proceed, we would hope it would be prior to the end of December 2026.

[00:38:34] Penny Smith

Okay, thank you, Councillor Sutherland.

[00:38:40] Paula Sutherland

I guess that's kind of near and dear to my heart. In 2004 by Bowers Meadow, Lillard and Stereo was encrypted or made. Um, the public was quite a controversy at the time because the public was not made aware of all the ins and outs of it. In 2025, you expanded it in other 48 hectares with nobody's knowledge. In 2024, the Queen's Methods Nature Reserve was conducted. And that's at 151 hectares. And now the last unleash was Roseway River Wilderness Area at 150 hectares. Charlton County has given a lot of land to this. And I believe you mean I'm all for conservation, but it's just my two cents worth. I think we've given enough already.

[00:39:26] Penny Smith

Thank you.

[00:39:28] CAO MacLeod

Thank you very much. Thanks for the presentation, Craig. Just a quick question. Going forward in the future, the area north of the 103 highway, say probably 80 or 90% of that is Crown Land has your department engaged with discussions with other departments like DNR and them in terms of identifying how much of that crown land is potentially eligible for renewable energy in the future.

[00:40:01] Craig Smith

We so. We do work with DNR on resource industry related matters. Obviously, that's their jurisdiction and their purview. As regulator, Nova Scotia environment tends to stay in that box. Again, we're a bit of a different case as a program within Nova Scotia environment. I can say that we're engaged on specific renewable energy development files, but not on the planning at large. So I'm aware of the chain of your land use by law and the kind of push pushing so to speak of renewable energy developments, particularly when North of the 103, but we haven't had any direct dialogue with the NR on that to date. There is no, like there are no proposed protected areas and I can tell you that we aren't. You know, there's no circles around sites in Shelburne County at this point in time. The largest source of proposed protectors or potential future protectors is something called the Parks and Protectors Plan. It's public information and there are no other undesignated sites in your municipality at this time. All right, thank you very much, Craig.

[00:41:20] Penny Smith

Thank you. Councillor Richardson.

[00:41:23] Dale Richardson

And just another short question. That piece or that area that you propose intersects the Lake Road. And that would mean that that would have no development in those designated areas whatsoever. And I ran that and also what about power lines across there because it's an established road that has been there for my time and beyond, I guess.

[00:41:54] Craig Smith

No, it's a well established road and your your understanding is correct. The road itself is excluded and importantly, we always back the protected area boundary off of the road and in some cases even off of the 60 meter, sorry, 60 foot 20 meter. right of way parcel, which is standard. And that is to accommodate future expansion needs. So that's a planning consideration. The road would be excluded, the infrastructure associated with the road is all excluded. And that usually the standard road right away typically provides more than enough space for future power line installation and development. But so I don't think it would be an issue, but your understanding is correct. The proposal is that the boundary run alongside the Lake Road and within the boundary of the protected area, no potential, no future infrastructure development would be permitted.

[00:42:59] Speaker E

Thank you.

[00:43:01] Penny Smith

Hey, thank you for that. Any other questions or comments? So, um, so I'm wondering if there's any expectation from the municipality at this point, um, Mr Smith with regard to this designation and you'd mention that the date I think was July 28th for deadline for, um, any feedback.

[00:43:27] Craig Smith

Yeah, I mean, it's, I mean, certainly like if the municipality chose to send a letter and we received it on the 29th of the 30th, it's, it's going to be on the record that this, we just have to have a date where we close the consultation and start harvesting the information. I don't have an expectation, but I do want to thank you for the opportunity. I think this has been good dialogue and discourse, very appropriate, highly pertinent. And if there are viewpoints and perspectives of the municipality that need to be taken in or should be taken into account during this next stage of planning that we're about to conduct, we want to know those. And so I would encourage you to to provide them in some shape or form at your earliest convenience.

[00:44:11] Penny Smith

Okay. Great. Really appreciate a game. You agreeing to present. I hope that I know council has found it very helpful and insightful and I hope that the residents who are listening or who will listen in the future will feel the same way. So thank you again and enjoy the rest of your evening.

[00:44:29] Craig Smith

Thank you all very much.

[00:44:30] Penny Smith

Okay, bye. Okay, anything further at this point that we want to do on this matter.