

HALIFAX

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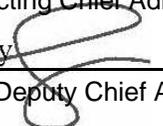
Item No. 14.1.8
Halifax Regional Council
August 2, 2016

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

SUBMITTED BY:

John Traves, Q.C. Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Jane Fraser, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 18, 2016

SUBJECT: Nova Scotia Nature Trust 100 Wild Islands

ORIGIN

April 26, 2016, Halifax Regional Council motion:

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Karsten,
That Halifax Regional Council request a staff report for the consideration of the Audit & Finance Standing Committee to identify potential sources of funding for a \$300,000 contribution over two years towards the NS Nature Trust 100 Wild Islands Legacy Campaign.

The following items were identified by members of Council to be addressed in the requested staff report:

- Whether or not the commitment for the funding or the actual funding for the campaign is required
- at the present time and the impact that the funding request will have on other budgetary items.
- Whether or not Councillor Discretionary Capital can be used to contribute to the funding.
- If consultation with the province can be held to improve the road system in the area.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Section 79, (1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for (av) a grant or contribution to (v) any charitable, nursing, medical, athletic, educational, environmental, cultural, community, fraternal, recreational, religious, sporting or social organization within the Province.

....Recommendation on Page 2

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to:

1. Include \$150,000 funding in each of the 2017/2018 and 2018/19 proposed operating budgets for a total grant of \$300,000 to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's 100 Wild Islands Campaign;
2. Execute a grant agreement on behalf of the Municipality with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, which in the opinion of the Acting Chief Administrative Officer or their delegate, achieves the outcomes of the Municipality identified in Table 1; and
3. Jointly promote and raise awareness of the 100 Wild Islands in partnership with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust when opportunities arise.

BACKGROUND

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust (NSNT) has requested a donation of \$300,000 from HRM towards its 100 Wild Islands Campaign, a project to create a coastal island wilderness area along the Eastern Shore (Map 1). Subsequent to a proposal from the NSNT (Attachment 1), Regional Council has requested a staff report to identify potential funding sources for this project.¹

100 Wild Islands Campaign Proposal

The NSNT is an incorporated charitable organization that was formed in 1994 with a mission, "to protect Nova Scotia's outstanding natural legacy through land conservation." This occurs with land acquisitions through purchases, donations, bequests and conservation agreements with landowners. Once lands are secured, the NSNT assumes a stewardship role in retaining their ecological values. While NSNT's primary intent is ecological protection, the preservation of lands also allows them to be accessed as open space for wilderness recreation and educational purposes.

The NSNT is completing a campaign for land acquisitions and conservation agreements for an area known as the 100 Wild Islands, located on the Eastern Shore. This is comprised of approximately 7,000 acres of near-shore islands between Clam Harbour Beach Provincial Park and Taylor Head Provincial Park that is described by the NSTN as, "one of the last remaining intact and ecologically rich island groups of its size in North America." The project will create a coastal island wilderness area that, in addition to preserving ecological features, will also create opportunities for recreation and ecotourism.

NSNT's goal is to raise \$7 million towards the protection of the 100 Wild Islands' lands. The project has a philanthropic sponsor who matches every dollar of funds that are raised through the campaign, bringing the total amount for the land acquisitions and conservation agreement to \$15 million. In their letter dated February 4, 2016, NSNT indicated that they were near the conclusion of their fundraising campaign, having raised \$6.3 million dollars. NSNT proposed that HRM provide \$300,000, and that Regional Council also challenge citizens to contribute the remaining \$50,000 which, with the matching donation, would result in the conclusion of the current fundraising campaign. NSNT has recently advised staff that the need to raise funds beyond HRM's contribution is no longer required; however, NSNT would appreciate HRM's in-kind support for joint promotion of the 100 Wild Islands in future.

¹ Regional Council's motion was to direct this matter to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee. However, as it is being recommended that funding be considered in the 2017/18 budget, in year, non-budgeted funding would not be required so this report has been submitted directly to Regional Council.

Past requests from NSNT

The NSNT has made similar previous requests to HRM's Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC) for HRM's participation in its fundraising campaign, specifically:

- A July 2014 request for \$500,000; and
- A March 2015 request for \$180,000 with a proposal that the municipality challenge citizens and businesses to contribute matching funds (for a total of \$360,000).

These requests were not recommended by HRM staff or the ESSC and were therefore not considered by Regional Council. The basis for that was partially that HRM did not have a budget allocation and therefore the funding would be at the detriment of other HRM priorities. It was also noted that there was no open space planning framework to assess the merit of the project, a matter which would be addressed through the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP).

DISCUSSION

During the request for the staff report, Council discussed rationale to support the NSNT proposal including the ecological, recreational, and ecotourism benefits, including the importance of water access within the subject area. While the HGNP is not yet completed, phase 1, which has been approved by Regional Council, outlined significant data assessment and spatial analysis in the *State of the Landscape Report*. From this and other research, the 100 Wild Islands can be considered within the context of HRM's regional open space network as follows:

Ecological and Cultural Conservation

The islands help shape a range of coastal ecosystems that in other areas of the municipality have been, or are being, altered by development. They contain significant wetland complexes, beach and dune systems, inlets and headlands that provide critical habitat of rare boreal forest and vascular plants. The islands and headlands comprise over 700 acres of diverse terrestrial and aquatic habitats that support a wide range of species, including breeding grounds for seabirds, song-birds and shorebirds. As a major coastal estuary, this open space system also supports habitat for fish, shell-fish and aquatic organisms. Culturally, there is a long history of hunting and fishing activities on and near the islands. An archeological study underway by 100 Wild Islands project is expected to identify sites of indigenous Mi'kmaq contact. The HGNP has also identified a large portion of the Eastern Shore as a cultural landscape for further research.

Outdoor Recreation & Education

The islands will provide a nationally important marine park system with recreation and education opportunities such as hiking, paddling, bird-watching, wilderness camping, and ecological and cultural interpretation. Traditional public access to the waters and the island beaches would be protected through the 100 Wild Islands conservation effort that would eliminate the threat of losing these natural areas over time.

Economic Development

The natural and scenic quality of the landscape provides both cultural and economic development opportunities which have been highlighted through HGNP's public consultation meetings. The protection of rural and coastal character is a key value for the Eastern Shore along with opportunities for ecotourism and sustainable rural economic development. Efforts of community organizations under the Strategic Tourism Expansion Program (STEP) view open space and economic development as mutually beneficial and are in the process of developing a destination-based tourism strategy which includes opportunities to explore and experience the unique natural assets along the Eastern Shore. The value of the area also rests in its proximity to the urban centre and its accessibility for day-use visitors.

Essential Landscape Patterns

The 100 Wild Islands can be characterized as a large, undisturbed coastal ecosystem and estuary forming part of a system of open space corridors between the islands and to the interior lands north of Highway #7. They form part of an east-west coastal corridor between the islands themselves and a north-south corridor linking coastal and terrestrial ecosystems within the Tangier Grand Lake Wilderness Area to the north interior. This system can be described as an important component of HRM's ecological pattern. An island archipelago of this size and ecological integrity within such proximity to urban settlement is rare and regionally significant to HRM's open space network.

Financial Support Assessment

A summary of HRM's authority, restrictions and options related to the requested funding support are outlined below.

Community Grants Program

Currently, HRM does not have a funding program which could accommodate the level and type of funding requested by NSNT. HRM's current Community Grants Program only provides for program grants in the amount of \$5,000 and capital grants up to a maximum of \$25,000. The NSNT request could be considered under the current guideline but would only provide minimal funds.

Regional Council has received requests for funding amounts that exceed or fall outside the current Community Grants and other program guidelines. As with those requests, Regional Council may provide funding it feels appropriate and supports a benefit to the municipality, provided it is permitted by the *HRM Charter*. As part of the work on the Auditor General's report on Grants and Donations, staff is reviewing the overall granting policy. Regional Council may consider requests on a case by case basis as the *HRM Charter* permits Regional Council to provide a grant or contribution to a variety of charitable organizations including community and recreational organizations. Therefore, Regional Council could consider provision of a separate grant to NSNT. The process for any grant should be the same as undertaken for other similar type of grant requests to ensure consistency.

District Capital Funds

As part of the request for a staff report, Regional Council also inquired as to whether district capital funds would be a possible funding source for provision of the requested grant. As part of the annual operating budget, funding is allocated for use by councillors for specific initiatives within their respective districts. While district capital funding could be considered for provision of a grant to a not-for-profit organization, the magnitude of the project is regional in scale, and staff recommends that the project should be funded from HRM's overall budget.

Grant Agreement

HRM provides grants through a variety of programs including Community Grants, Regional Special Events, Marketing Levy Special Events, among others. HRM enters into an agreement with event recipients to ensure that the funding is used for the purposes intended and that HRM receives any related benefits and appropriate recognition. In order to ensure a consistent approach with other grant programs, it is recommended that a grant agreement be executed between HRM and NSNT, subject to the key terms and conditions outlined in Table 1. That would enable the NSNT to have clear accountability for the use of the funds but would also enable HRM to ensure proper stewardship of tax dollars and receive public benefit and recognition.

Table 1: Proposed Grant Contract – Key Terms and Conditions

Nova Scotia Nature Trust shall use the grant provided by HRM solely for the 100 Wild Islands project.
Payment by HRM in the amount of \$300,000 shall represent the complete financial commitment from HRM. There shall be no supplemental or incremental funds available to Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The funds will be dispersed through a payment schedule whereby an initial payment of \$150,000 is made in 2017/18, with a subsequent payment of \$150,000 in 2018/19, with the grant payable in full prior to March 31, 2019.
HRM shall not be a guarantor of the 100 Wild Island project, nor shall there be any contingent or direct liability either implied or expressed.
In return for HRM's financial contribution, Nova Scotia Nature Trust shall provide recognition commensurate with the level of investment.

Road Improvements

Regional Council asked that this report address the possibility of consultations with the province to improve roads in the subject area. The roads in the area fall under provincial jurisdiction, so any improvements would need to be considered by the Province of Nova Scotia in future budgets. This is a matter that is outside the scope of this report, but will be raised by municipal staff in any future discussions with provincial staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Should Regional Council approve provision of the requested grant, funding in the amount of \$150,000 would be allocated in each of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Operating Budgets for Council's consideration.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report. The risks considered rate Low. To reach this conclusion, consideration was given to the financial risks. The allocation and use of funds for the project would be the subject of an agreement between NSNT and HRM which would mitigate the risks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community consultation in the preparation of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications beyond those identified elsewhere within this report.

ALTERNATIVES

- Alternative 1: Regional Council may choose to not approve a grant of \$300,000 to the NSNT's 100 Wild Islands Campaign.
- Alternative 2: Regional Council may choose to approve a grant in the amount of \$300,000 and direct that the full amount be included in either of the 2016/17 or 2017/18 operating budgets. However, a grant from the 2016/17 operating budget would require a subsequent report to Audit & Finance Standing Committee for approval of a funding source pursuant to the Committee's terms of reference since it would be an unbudgeted expense.

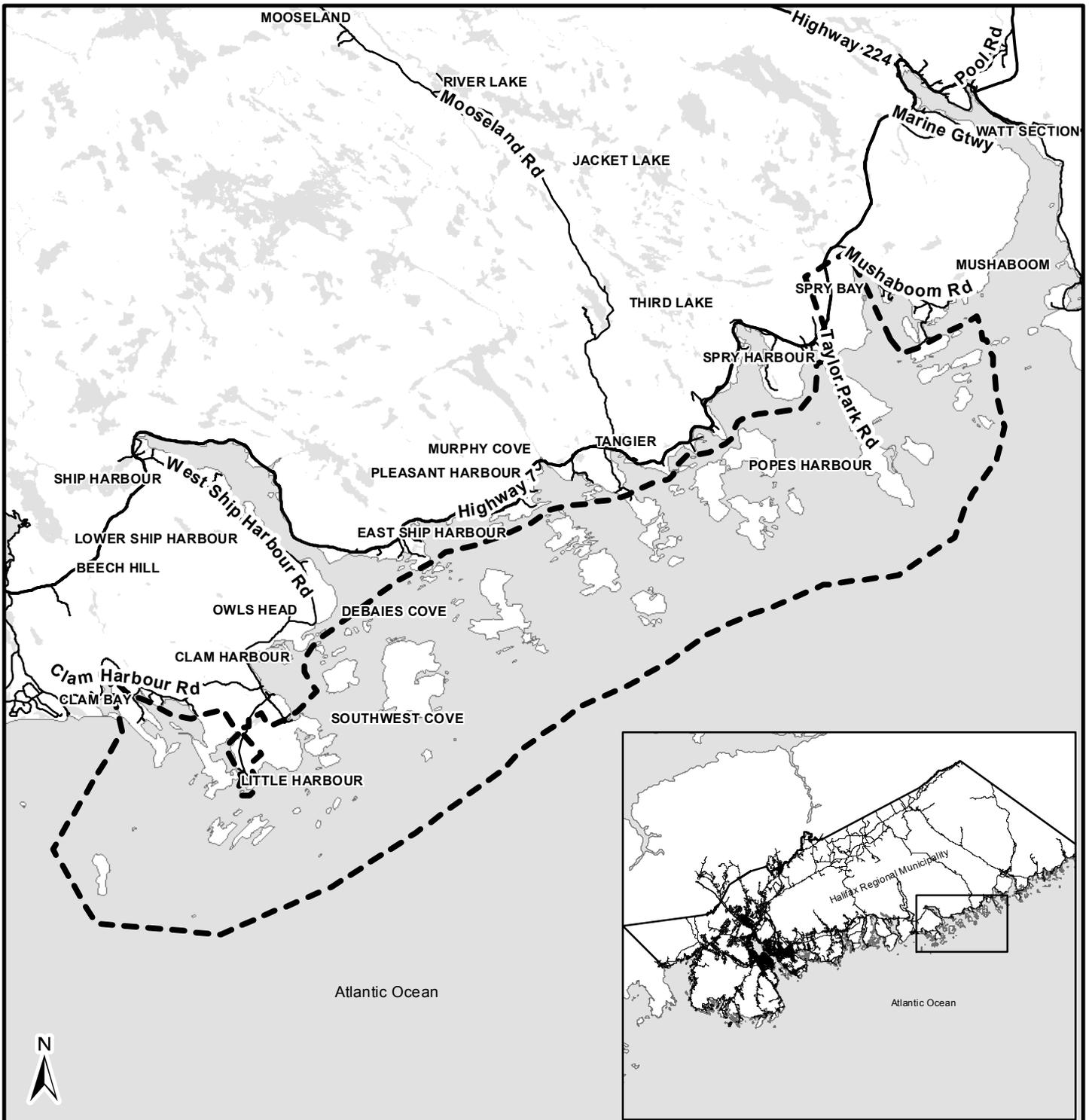
ATTACHMENTS

Map 1: 100 Wild Islands Campaign Area

Attachment A: Proposal from Nova Scotia Nature Trust

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Richard Harvey, Manager, Policy and Planning, Parks and Recreation, 902.476.5822



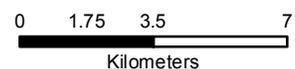
Map 1 - 100 Wild Islands Campaign Area

Council Report - NS Nature Trust 100 Islands

 100 Wild Islands Boundary (as identified by NSNT)

Produced by Parks and Recreation
Policy and Planning

HALIFAX



The accuracy of any representation on
this plan is not guaranteed.



Mr. Michael Savage
Mayor of Halifax
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

February 4, 2016

Dear Mayor Savage,

Thank you so much for your interest in the 100 Wild Islands campaign and for taking the time to meet with us to explore possibilities for the Municipality's engagement in our campaign. The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is delighted with the prospect of partnering to bring this landmark project, for Halifax, its citizens, and for the Province, to the finish line. As requested, I am writing to outline a specific proposal for partnership.

The 100 Wild Islands is a world-class coastal island wilderness, just an hour from downtown, and lying within the boundaries of Halifax. Over the last three years we have successfully fundraised \$6.3 million dollars towards the campaign goals of \$7 million, and protected over 70% of the 100 Wild Islands. We have attracted support from both the federal and provincial governments, the corporate sector locally and nationally, and a broad diversity of community support from across the country and around the globe, including from international environmental icon, Yvon Chouinard.

The campaign has also garnered significant public and media attention, from national news to Canadian Geographic, the Economist, the Wall Street Journal, and even a television episode (Love Nature/Smithsonian). This is a major good news story. A project of global conservation significance, a shining example of what the volunteers and community organizations can achieve, and an incredible profile-building, branding and marketing opportunity for Halifax and for the Eastern Shore.

We propose Halifax invests \$300,000 in the 100 Wild Islands campaign (payable over two years if required). In addition, we hope you will invite the citizens of Halifax to step up alongside Halifax, and be a part of protecting this most significant element of our city's natural legacy, by donating the remaining \$50,000. Halifax's contribution will be matched dollar for dollar by Halifax native and entrepreneur, Paul Gauthier, making the total cash impact of Halifax's investment \$600,000, bringing the campaign to completion, and ensuring the protection of the 100 Wild Islands for generations to come.

Attachment A – Proposal from Nova Scotia Nature Trust

The campaign offers tremendous opportunities for mutually beneficial profile-building, public relations and citizen outreach and engagement for Halifax, for the 100 Wild Islands, and for the Nature Trust. Working together we can maximize such mutually beneficial opportunities. We are delighted that you recognize and are supportive of such cooperation.

A \$300,000 investment by Halifax provides exceptional leveraging and return on investment:

- A \$600,000 impact with every dollar donated matched by Paul Gauthier
- Opportunity to bring this high profile, historic campaign to the finish line, and to be recognized for this leadership role
- Through donations of land, conservation easements, and success in securing wilderness area protection for all Crown islands in the archipelago, a leveraged value of well over \$15 million of coastal wilderness
- Over 7,000 acres of publicly-available open space (adding to the ongoing efforts in creating an open space and greenbelting plan for Halifax)
- New, unprecedented opportunities for ecotourism and rural economic development for the Eastern shore, building on the unique branding and draw of the 100 Wild Islands
- Environmental conservation benefits of national and global significance
- New recreation and active living benefits, with tremendous paddling, sailing, hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities on the city's doorstep
- The only capital city in Canada hosting a 45,000 acre 100 Wild Island coastal wilderness
- An excellent opportunity to showcase what makes Halifax and Nova Scotia unique, as a place to live, work, play and do business (and an excellent model of the OneNovaScotia vision)
- Opportunities for world-class scientific research and education in a city known as a world leader in ocean science and business
- Opportunity for a nationally important marine protected area and marine park system
- An excellent opportunity for Halifax to demonstrate that it values its rural areas and rural citizens
- A good news story for Halifax and for Halifax citizens, both urban and rural, and showcasing the strong urban presence yet rural vibrancy of Halifax.

We look forward to partnering to ensure that future generations of Nova Scotians and visitors alike can experience the magic of our unique coastal legacy at its finest, in the 100 Wild Islands of Halifax. Thank you again for your interest in engaging Halifax in this very exciting and historic initiative, and please let me know if there is anything else we can provide or do to assist in building a partnership with Halifax.

Sincerely



Original Signed

Bonnie Sutherland
Executive Director

c.c. David Hendsbee; Shaune MacKinlay