



Ecology Action Centre's response to Nova Scotia's "Summer 2026 Protected Areas Consultation"

Oct. 19, 2026

About us:

The Ecology Action Centre is Nova Scotia's oldest and largest environmental advocacy organization. For decades, the Ecology Action Centre has advocated for more parks and protected areas, including through the Colin Stewart Forest Forum, the Parks and Protected Areas Plan and the Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy.

Candidate sites:

The Ecology Action Centre welcomes this opportunity to support the designation of the 11 candidate protected areas:

- Canso Coastal Barrens Wilderness Area, Guysborough County (addition, 529 hectares)
- Chimney Corner Nature Reserve, Inverness County (addition, 107 hectares)
- Guysborough Headlands Wilderness Area, Guysborough County (addition, 69 hectares)
- Herring Cove Backlands Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality (new, 2,910 hectares)
- Masons Mountain Wilderness Area, Inverness County (new, 154 hectares)
- Medway Lakes Wilderness Area, Annapolis County (addition, 61 hectares)
- Musquodoboit Harbour Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality (new, 308 hectares)
- Ogden Round Lake Wilderness Area, Guysborough County (addition, 34 hectares)
- Polletts Cove-Aspy Fault Wilderness Area, Victoria County (addition, 23 hectares)
- Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area, Halifax Regional Municipality (addition, 475 hectares)
- Tobeatic Wilderness Area, Yarmouth, Shelburne, Digby and Queens counties (addition, 498 hectares)

The province's legislated commitment to protect at least 20 per cent of Nova Scotia's lands and waters by 2030 is both essential and achievable. Legally protecting 5,100 hectares (51 square km) of forests, lakes and barrens across these candidate Wilderness Areas and Nature Reserves is a small but welcome step toward meeting that important commitment.

But to reach Nova Scotia's 20 per cent legislated commitment, the province now needs to protect an average of over 5,000 hectares **every single month**.

The bigger picture:

The Ecology Action Centre remains very concerned that the pace at which this government has been designating land is inconsistent with the amount of work required to meet its land protection commitment under the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*.

[Nova Scotians are very supportive of protecting more wilderness](#) and accelerating efforts to protect at least 20 per cent of the province by 2030, even when weighed against industrial use. But at the current rate, it would take the provincial government until 2041 to legally protect 20 per cent of the province — 11 years after the government's own legislated deadline.

Nova Scotia must do better, and we have the opportunities to do just that.

Missing pieces:

Important community-proposed protected areas like the proposed Chain Lakes Wilderness Area, the proposed Goldsmith Lake Wilderness Area, the proposed Ingram River Wilderness Area, the proposed Minamkeak Lake/Petite Rivière Wilderness Area and many more are noticeably absent from this slate of candidate protected areas.

The provincial government appears to be studiously avoiding these community-proposed protected areas, despite the ecological imperative, legal commitment and public will to protect more nature in Nova Scotia.

Designating all of the community-proposed protected areas on our [online map](#) would protect 127,887 hectares of Nova Scotia's natural heritage, approximately **2.3 per cent** of the province.

In contrast, the government [press release](#) stated that if designated, the 11 candidate sites will protect 5,100 hectares, or an additional **0.09 per cent** of the province.

So, while designating these 11 candidate sites is welcome, they make up *less than one-tenth of a single percent*.

Nova Scotia still has to protect 5.44 per cent of the province by 2030.

Site-specific feedback:

To make the most of this opportunity, we urge the Province to expand the boundaries of three candidate sites: Guysborough Headlands Wilderness Area addition, Medway Lakes Wilderness Area addition and Tobeatic Wilderness Area addition.

Site-specific feedback (continued):

Our proposed boundaries can be found on the online map of community-proposed protected areas. They are informed by local knowledge, citizen science, gap analysis and which lands are under public ownership.

Guysborough Headlands Wilderness Area addition:

→ Instead of the suggested 69 hectares, we urge the Province to expand the site to 194 hectares.

Medway Lakes Wilderness Area addition:

→ Instead of the suggested 61 hectares, we urge the Province to expand the site to 2,081 hectares.

Tobeatic Wilderness Area addition:

→ Instead of the suggested 498 hectares, we urge the Province to expand the site to 12,532 hectares.

Important next steps:

In addition to designating the 11 candidate sites, the Ecology Action Centre urges this government to protect:

- all the remaining sites from the 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan
- all the community-proposed protected areas that meet the national and international standards
- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)
- all the remaining sites purchased through the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement funding