

CONSERVATION COMPANY

www.williamslakecc.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 23, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

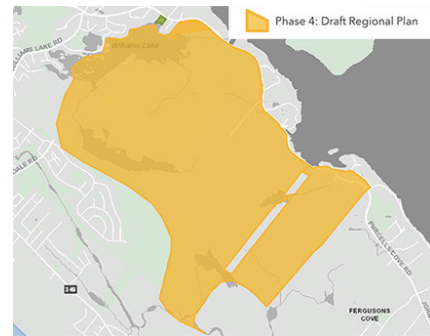
CAPTAIN WILLIAM SPRY CENTRE
16 SUSSEX STREET, HALIFAX B3R 1N9

EVERYONE WELCOME

The WLCC is a non-profit volunteer organization. We welcome everyone who shares the WLCC's mandate to preserve the health of Williams Lake to come to our AGM.

COME JOIN THE WLCC

The WLCC depends on its volunteers. If you have an interest in joining or helping out, please feel free to contact us through our website: www.williamslakecc.org. Come to the AGM to learn more about the WLCC and the Williams Lake watershed. We look forward to seeing you on May 23rd.



Area of the Williams Lake/Purcell Cove Backlands currently under review (see article below for more information).

REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

The Williams Lake Conservation Company (WLCC) is a founding member of the Backlands Coalition (BC). Both organizations have been participating in the Halifax Regional Municipality Plan Review. The Regional Plan is reviewed every five years. A very large part of the Backlands is currently zoned Urban Reserve (UR) (see map at left). This designation came into effect in 2006 when the Regional Plan was passed. The purpose of the zoning was to reserve the land for development once the water and sewer services were continued down the Purcells Cove Road. Many readers will remember that the public came out in force to object to any extension of the services. As a consequence, the UR zoning is no longer appropriate and will be changed sometime before the end of this year as part of the plan review. The hope is that a new zone will reflect the necessity of maintaining continuity of the land with the existence of the Shaw Wilderness Park and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust (NSNT) lands.

In addition to written submissions to the Regional plan review, two site visits with HRM planning staff took place in July and October, 2022. Local experts David Patriquin, retired Dalhousie University biologist, and Patricia Manuel, retired Dalhousie University planner, lent their time and skills to these site visits.

Also during the fall of 2022, a comprehensive document, titled The Backlands Coalition Wilderness Balance Sheet: A Report by the Backlands Coalition, was distributed to the planning staff and the WLCC Executive. The work on this project was led by WLCC Director, Martha Leary, and the BC public relations committee.

Another recent activity included a letter writing campaign to persuade Regional Council to fund a coordinator for the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP). The HGNP consists of 76 action items with the goal of increasing green spaces, connectivity between them and preserving wildlife corridors.

Although the HGNP was unanimously approved by Regional Council in 2018, the actual task of changing secondary plans and by-laws to ensure progress in support of the HGNP has been lagging behind.

As a result of the letter writing campaign Council voted to fund the hiring of a coordinator to work with different municipal departments and push the HGNP forward. Another fine example of how change can happen as a result of action taken by citizens.

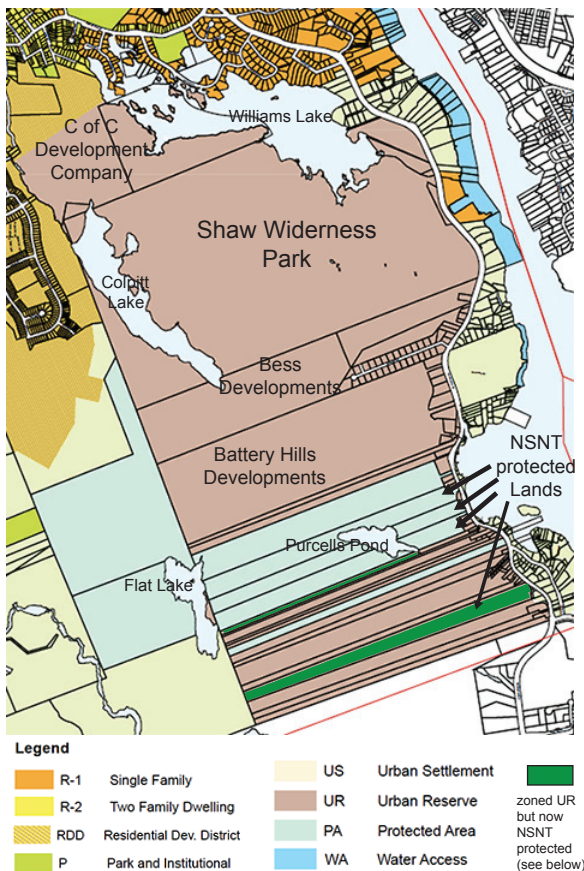
We encourage all to keep informed of the progress of the Regional Plan review as there will be an opportunity within the coming months for citizens to voice their wishes regarding the future of our community!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WLCC

On Facebook: [Williams-Lake-Conservation-Company](https://www.facebook.com/williams-lake-conservation-company)

On our Website: <https://www.williamslakecc.org/>

Among other items you will find links to colour versions of the newsletters and a printable membership form. 1



Zoning of properties in the Williams Lake/Purcell Cove Backlands

FAMILIES DONATE THEIR PROPERTY TO PROTECT THE BACKLANDS

In early March, a large jovial crowd of appreciative folks, conservation associations, citizen-action groups and local politicians gathered at the Purcell's Cove Social Club. They were there to celebrate the four families who had donated their lands in the Backlands to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust (NSNT). The Backlands Coalition (BC) together with the NSNT hosted the festive gathering to thank each family personally for the generous gift of their land allowing everyone to have 'forever-protected' access to nature.

The Longard, Napier, Field and Duggan families gifted their lands, over the past several years, to add to NSNT properties in the Backlands (see above). The families want to protect the unique ecosystems, important wildlife corridors, distinctive land formations and the globally-rare Jack Pine-Broom Crowberry communities. They feel it is important to provide permanent public access to these stunningly beautiful properties. "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

- Coretta Scott King.

To learn more, check out: <https://tinyurl.com/4ax8etj8>, <http://backlandscoalition.ca/>, <https://chebuctonews.ca>

THE DAM



Location of the Williams Lake dam. Shaw Wilderness park outlined in white.



Read the Rocks.
Dark line on rocks (seen here in summer 2022) shows how high water level was in spring
Photo courtesy of Cathy Vaughan



Fluctuating water levels compromise nesting of Williams Lake loons.
Photo courtesy of Melanie Dobson

WLCC DAM COMMITTEE REPORT

By WLCC Dam Committee Chair Cathy Vaughan, WLCC President Murray Coolican, and Williams Lake Dam Association (WLDA) Representative Margo Kerr.

Commitment to Fix the Williams Lake Dam

The Minister of Public Works, Kim Masland has committed to fixing the Williams Lake dam. Last year and again this year in the Legislative Assembly, she has promised our MLA Brendan Maguire that she was committed to fixing the dam and that she has the funding to do it.

“We know it is in poor condition and the ownership has not been determined. But what I do want the Member to know is that I understand the concerns of his community. I don’t take those lightly. We have secured funding and are working collaboratively with HRM to make sure that dam is fixed,” stated Minister Masland, Public Works, March 2023.

WLDA leader Margo Kerr posts regularly on the WLDA Facebook page, covering issues concerning the lake levels, updates on discussions with government as well as the many recreational activities on Williams Lake. Check out the video posted there which follows a young couple as they brave pounding snow to get into the freezing lake from the Community Access area off Wyndrock Drive this past winter. *Crazy how much folks love this lake!*

Aerial Videos – Drone Team

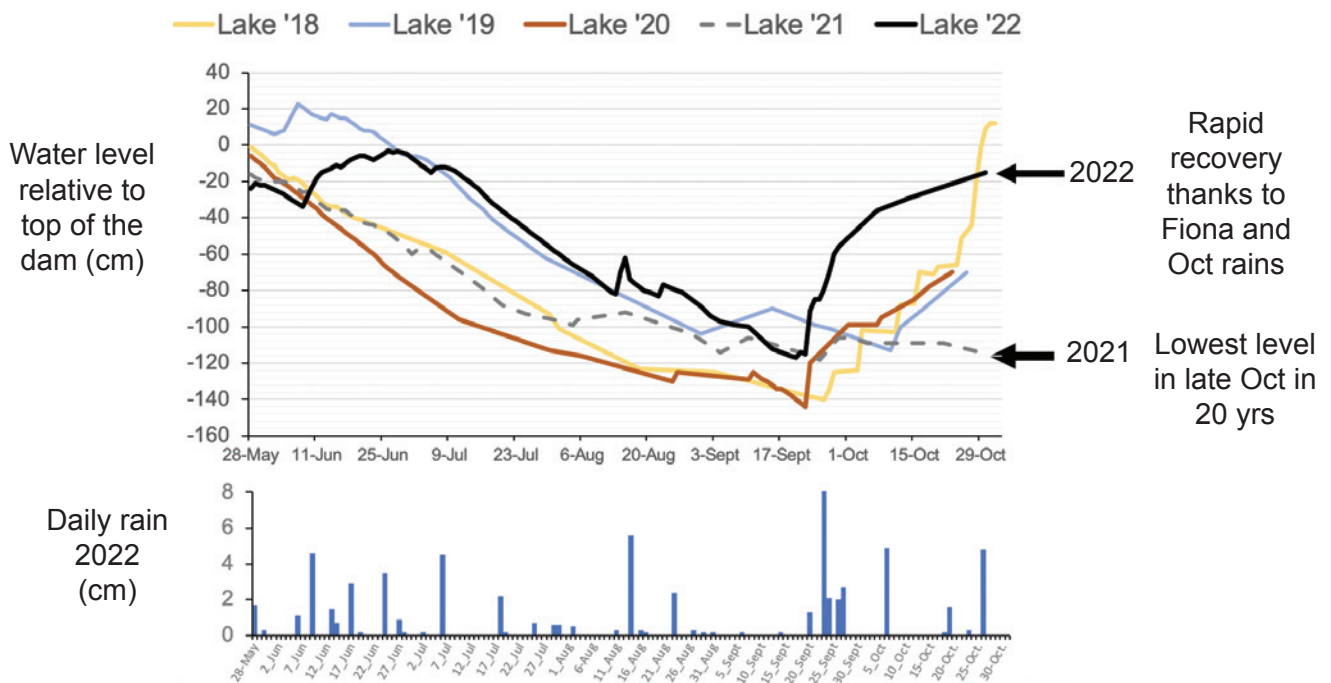
We have produced two spectacular aerial videos of Williams Lake and the stunning Backlands for promotional purposes. Five new members of our committee made the ‘Save Williams Lake’ video which was sent to the NS Department of Lands and Forest, and the ‘Protect the Backlands’ video which was part of WLCC’s submissions to HRM Planners. Both videos are available on Youtube and our social media.

News Articles

Chebucto News, our local newspaper continues to publish our articles on issues that impact the Williams Lake watershed. With a distribution area from the Armdale Roundabout, Harrietsfield Loop to Sambro and a circulation of 12,500 papers monthly, as well as an online version, we are keeping this on the public radar.

What’s Next

We are appreciative of the efforts of our local representatives, Concillors Shawn Cleary, and Patty Cuttell, and MLA Brendan Maguire. We are grateful for the support of the thousands of citizens who have signed our petition to save Williams Lake. We continue to encourage HRM and the Province to reach an agreement and move on saving Williams Lake.



Level of Williams Lake rebounds in the fall but is taking longer after recent hot dry summers (unless there is a hurricane). Repair of the dam would reduce the rate at which water is lost from the lake each day during summer.

MONITORING LAKE WATER QUALITY

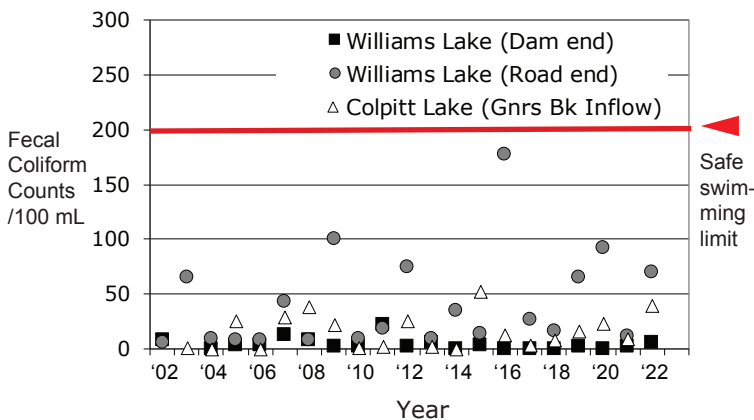


Your WLCC membership dues go towards the cost of testing Williams and Colpitt Lake water quality. We test for fecal coliform and chemical levels at three sites every summer (starred sites 1-3 at left).

Because of the long history of water testing by the WLCC, we were able to spot worrying increases in alkalinity, pH and iron levels in samples taken in 2015, the summer after HRM resumed salting on the streets near Williams Lake in winter. Levels for these rose even higher in 2017. At the request of the WLCC, HRM went back to gritting those streets in 2017. Iron levels did drop by the summer of 2021 but are still high, especially at the end near Williams Lake Road which is still salted.

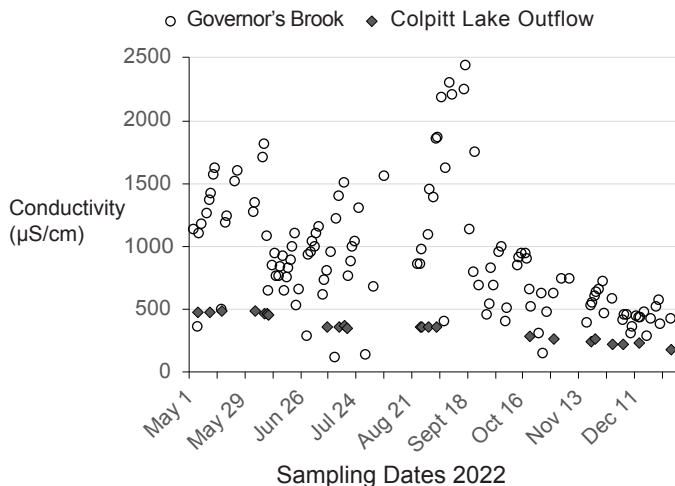
Iron and chloride levels also remained above historical levels for Colpitt Lake water sampled at the Governor's Brook inflow last summer. This could reflect altered quality of the water entering the lake from Governor's Brook and merits ongoing surveillance.

WLCC Water Testing 2002-2022



Samples for microbiological testing are taken in last week of July or first week of August each year. Samples are also taken for chemical analysis at the same time (See our website for complete results).

MONITORING WATER CONDUCTIVITY



This past year saw a new initiative undertaken by WLCC member Charles Bull in collaboration with WLCC Honorary Director David Patriquin. Charles has been routinely monitoring conductivity of water at three sites, one in Governor's Brook, a main supply of water to Colpitt Lake (starred site 4 on map above), and two sites in Colpitt Lake, one (starred 3) where the WLCC has sampled water quality for many years at the outflow of Governor's Brook into Colpitt Lake, and the other (starred 5), at the outflow to Williams lake.

Conductivity gives a measure of the salt content of the sampled water. Significant increases could indicate some source of pollution entering the watercourse (such as road run-off) or could reflect environmental factors (such as increased evaporation or reduced flow).

Charles's data (see graph above) shows the salt level in Governor's Brook fluctuates dramatically and is frequently higher than that of water flowing out of Colpitt Lake towards Williams Lake. Come to the AGM to hear more about this initiative from Charles Bull. See full results on the Backlands Coalition website: http://backlandscoalition.ca/?page_id=4538

DESPITE EFFORTS, 48-50 OLD SAMBRO ROAD REZONING WAS APPROVED

In our June 2021 Newsletter we reported on the application by a local developer (John Tawil) to HRM to rezone the lots at 48 – 50 Old Sambro Road (black square on map above at left) to enable the development of a 13-unit dwelling and underground parking. These lots are located in the Williams Lake watershed, and as such WLCC opposed the application. Our concern was the potential disruption to Catamaran Pond and its associated wetlands that feed into Governors Brook.

The application was considered at Halifax and West Community Council (Case 22890) on November 16, 2021 where it was denied by Council, in spite of HRM planning staff recommending approval. In denying the application Council expressed concerns related to the accuracy of watercourse setback requirements as well as environmental implications regarding health of the watershed. The WLCC was delighted with this decision, but the delight was short-lived as the developer appealed. A (virtual) hearing was scheduled before the Nova Scotia Utilities and Review Board (UARB) on March 30–31, 2022.

WLCC applied for – and was granted – intervenor status at the UARB, and hired environmental lawyer, Jamie Simpson, to represent us. Several members of the executive assisted counsel through research and case preparation, and three members acted as witnesses at the hearing. Long-time Spryfield resident and friend to the WLCC, Dr. Martin Williston, appeared as an expert witness. In addition to our concern regarding impact of the development on the watershed as noted above, WLCC argued that the developer's plan for the property would not be compatible with the existing neighbourhood, and would create traffic concerns on Old Sambro Road.

The UARB decision was released on June 13, 2022. Unfortunately, it was made in favour of the developer. The adjudicator did not find Community Council's decision to be reasonably grounded in policy and allowed the appeal, ordering Council to approve the rezoning application. The full case can be read on the UARB website at nsuarb.novascotia.ca, search M10373.

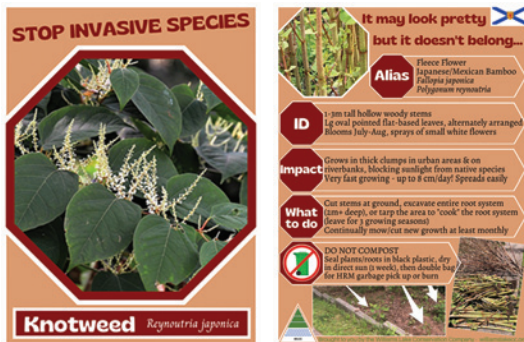
As of mid-April (2023), a fence surrounds most of the property, an earth mover is parked on the site, and earth has been distributed to expose many huge boulders. Time will tell how the project evolves.

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

The woods and lakeside in the spring offer an array of sensory delights. Our senses come alive with bursts of green, the sound of bird song and the scent of the earth. This awakening is so welcome.

Not so welcome, however, is the new growth of some invasive plant species, sprouting from the soil and crowding out native plants. This year, WLCC is sharing information to assist residents in identifying and constraining the spread of some species that are of concern. These species spread rapidly, choking out and replacing native vegetation that our wildlife and pollinators rely on for food. This invasive vegetation can block hard-working waterways, wetlands and ponds that clean stormwater flowing into Williams Lake, reducing water quality and quantity.

Over the past year WLCC members Leslie Randall and Cathy Vaughan have been gathering information on invasive species found in the Williams Lake watershed. This is being assembled into 'card-sized' guides for each with design features from Ilona Inman of the Backlands Coalition (sample below). The guides will be available for download from the WLCC website for easy reference by work crews or for use in backyard gardening to aid in identification and removal. We will continue to add information on these and other invasive species over the next year. Check the WLCC website for this information at <https://williamslakeecc.org/maps-and-guides/>.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2022

Paul Cashman	Kathleen Hall	Craig Smith
Murray Coolican	Martha Leary	Sanja Trussell
Melanie Dobson	Leslie Randall	Cathy Vaughan
Deborah Hall	Nick Ross	

Philip Howard • Webmaster
David Patriquin • Honorary Director
Anne von Maltzhan • Honorary Director

WLCC MEMBERSHIP - JOIN US OR RENEW!!

WLCC membership is \$20 per household and runs from July 1 – June 30. To become a member or to renew your membership go to <https://williamslakeecc.org/membership/> and follow the cues, or complete and return the form below. **Please consider a donation to keep our work going.**

MEMBERSHIP FORM (\$20 PER HOUSEHOLD)

To: WILLIAMS LAKE CONSERVATION COMPANY,
% 9 Hall's Road, Halifax, NS B3P 1P4

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

MEMBERSHIP : \$ _____ Optional DONATION: \$ _____

Williams Lake Conservation Company (<https://williamslakeecc.org/membership/>)
A registered non-profit community organization founded 1968

BLUE-GREEN ALGAE CONCERNS



Last summer blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) blooms were seen in Cunard Pond (see photo above taken on Oct 25, 2022) and also in August in Williams Lake near storm drains that release road and garden run-off into the main lake. Blooms are promoted by shallow, warm, slow-moving water, high in nutrients. Watershed residents can help by limiting use of lawn fertilizer. Sadly, we will need to be on the alert for future blooms, especially if the trend of hot dry summers continues.

TRIBUTE TO BURKHARD PLACHE

This past year marked the passing of a great friend of Williams Lake and the Backlands – Burkhard Plache. Burkhard loved nature and devoted much of his free time to exploring the outdoors, protecting it and educating others about it. He was president of the Halifax Field Naturalists and led hiking and paddling adventures. He was an active volunteer with the NS Nature Trust, acting as guardian of a land tract with rare plant species, and was a contributor to the eNaturalist website. The WLCC is grateful for Burkhard's mapping of the Shaw Wilderness Park trails, and for his yearly water quality and depth measurements, which contributed to the historic data enabling the WLCC to track changes to Williams Lake caused by development and road salt. He will be sadly missed.



Burkhard Plache (at left) guiding a hike in the Williams Lake Backlands in 2012
Photo courtesy of Joyce Chew

DID YOU KNOW?

That now you can give a one-year gift membership in the WLCC?

Go to <https://williamslakeecc.org/membership/>

