

## CONSERVATION COMPANY

[www.williamslakecc.org](http://www.williamslakecc.org)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

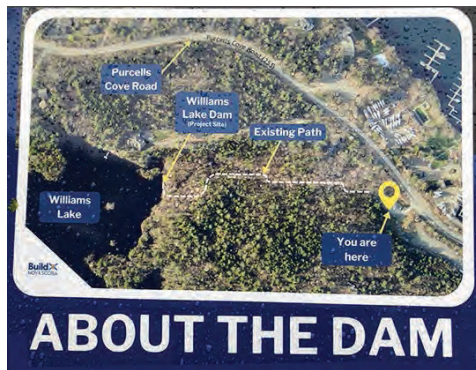
CAPTAIN WILLIAM SPRY COMMUNITY CENTRE  
MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM  
16 SUSSEX STREET, HALIFAX B3R 1N9

### EVERYONE WELCOME

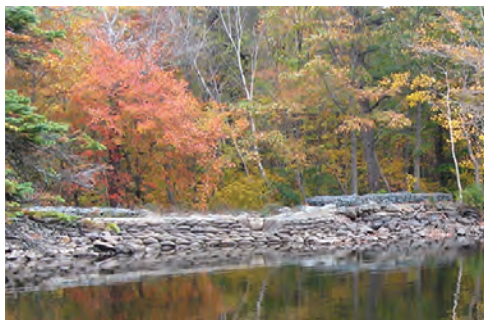
The WLCC is a non-profit volunteer organization. We welcome everyone who shares the WLCC's mandate to preserve the health of Williams Lake to come to our AGM.

### COME JOIN THE WLCC

The WLCC depends on its volunteers. If you are interested in joining or helping out, please feel free to contact us through our website: [www.williamslakecc.org](http://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 June 17th.



A dam was first built at the east end of Williams Lake in the 1700s for logging purposes, and rebuilt in the 1800s to power a sugar cane mill on the Northwest Arm. By the mid-1950s the dam was failing. In 1968, 1977 and again in 1984, the community funded repairs of the dam, adding bagged cement, cement topping and the stone Gabion baskets that make up the current visible structure (see photo below). Despite this, by 1993, water was seeping through under the structure. Now, water flows freely underneath, leading to lower lake levels, especially in dry summers (see Page 3).



### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WLCC

Check us out on Bluesky, Facebook, Instagram, X and Youtube or on our website where among other things, you will find links to colour versions of this and previous newsletters and a printable membership form.



Sign by the path leading to the dam in the Shaw Wilderness Park carpark on the Purcell's Cove Road.

## BUILD NOVA SCOTIA TAKES LEAD IN REPLACING THE WILLIAMS LAKE DAM

In the fall of 2024, the Minister of Public Works Kim Masland announced that Build Nova Scotia (BuildNS) would replace the 200-year-old leaky Williams Lake dam. In consultation with WLCC's Bird Team the clearing of brush and trees was scheduled for March this spring to avoid disrupting the nesting season of the local and migratory birds. In April, the tender for the replacement of the dam went public and companies were required to submit proposals by mid-May to BuildNS. Proposals are currently being reviewed. We expect an announcement soon regarding the next step of this important project which, as the Minister said, "is an investment in the safety of the community and the health of the environment that will be a benefit now and for generations to come."

BuildNS will present information on the status of the dam replacement at the WLCC AGM on June 17th, at the Captain Spry Community library. This is a chance for you to come and hear what is planned and to ask questions.



Local resident Margaret Spore checking out the current state of the Williams Lake dam on May 9, 2025



Bird walk, Backlands, Spryfield. 2025  
(Photo: Cathy Vaughan)

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### OUR BIRD FRIENDLY WATERSHED

BY MARTHA R LEARY AND KATIE STUDHOLME

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In response to the shocking declines in the bird population in Canada, our city has worked toward becoming "Bird Friendly Halifax" by promoting practices that save birds' lives and protect and restore healthy bird habitat. Each year, one of the Bird Walks celebrating Bird Friendly Halifax takes place in Spryfield – this year at the Spryfield Urban Farm with our WLCC - Backlands Bird Team members. This is just one of many walks where our Bird Team leads the way. WLCC Member, Cathy Vaughan, partnered with the Halifax Public Library for a fourth year to arrange four Bird Walks in the Halifax Backlands, attended by up to 60 Halifax residents. Our WLCC Birders, including Fulton Lavender, Katie Studholme, Catherine Slone and Joshua Barss Donham, provided identification of the birds and natural history facts. Sightings from these walks are included in a database of current and historical Backlands bird observations, recently established by Katie Studholme. This database includes community science data, primarily collected using eBird and iNaturalist, as well as our WLCC Bird Survey data, and will help provide us with a longitudinal view of our local bird population.

For a third year, the WLCC renewed our commitment to understanding the provincially threatened Common Nighthawk and its local habitat. This coming summer, we are once again partnering with Dalhousie University and working with three of their students, two to study the Common Nighthawk and the third to study amphibians in the Halifax Backlands. Dr. David Patriquin, WLCC Lifetime Member, is providing support for the amphibian study.

The WLCC-Backlands Bird Team has a focus this year on the flora, fauna, and hydrology of HRM's newly acquired lands, formerly known as the Church of Christ Lands, now the "Shaw Wilderness Park Extension". These lands provide very important ecological services for the Williams Lake Watershed, slowing the flow and filtering the stormwater that enters Colpitt and Williams Lakes from our increasingly urbanized watershed. The vernal pools and small wetlands of this area also provide important habitat for amphibians and invertebrates, including insects that feed the Common Nighthawk, Little Brown Bat, and dragonflies. While most of this land will remain in its natural state, HRM has noted that some areas may be used for other purposes. We hope that our efforts to identify ecologically sensitive areas will provide support for maximizing protection and be used to guide site selection if any development does occur.

Our Bird Team has fun and provides important and consistent data on the birds in the Halifax Backlands, including species at risk in Nova Scotia. If you are interested in being a part of this work, please contact the Bird Team through the WLCC website.



American Bittern in SWP Extension, Autumn 2024  
(Photo: Joshua Barss Donham)

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### THE SPOTLIGHT ON SPRYFIELD SPEAKERS & EVENTS SERIES

BY CATHY VAUGHAN

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Spryfield is uniquely situated among several amazingly beautiful parks and distinctive wildness areas. These spaces are stewarded by many dedicated volunteer environmental organizations who work together with neighbours, government departments, local councillors and the surrounding community to protect and conserve these green spaces for everyone in HRM to enjoy.

The Williams Lake Conservation Company partnered with the Captain William Spry Public Library to host a series of speakers and events by local experts on the unique natural environment in Spryfield. Hiking, bird watching, fishing, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation and identifying wild edible plants are some of the fascinating topics covered by well-known experts. The speakers and events were popular and well attended.

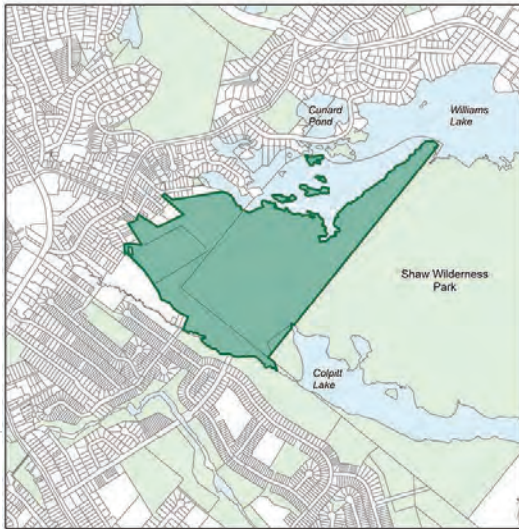
The WLCC and the Captain William Spry Public Library partnership has many benefits. The library supported and promoted our four Bird Walks. They managed the registration for the walks as well as provided library staff to attend and assist with the walks. As a result of this partnership, a greater diversity of people from all parts of HRM attended and learned about WLCC, the Williams Lake Watershed and experienced the Halifax Backlands.



Karen McKendry of the Ecology Action Centre presents at Spotlight on Spryfield series in March.  
(Photo: Cathy Vaughan)



## FORMER CHURCH OF CHRIST LANDS NEXT TO SHAW WILDERNESS PARK - WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



HRM land next to the Shaw Wilderness Park (SWP)

In May of 2024 the Halifax Regional Municipality announced it had purchased four parcels of land totaling 46 hectares (~113 acres) located to the west of Shaw Wilderness Park. HRM stated its intent was to add 36 hectares of this land to the existing park and develop the remaining land which is close to existing streets and utilities. The land was owned by the Church of Christ Development Corp but with the change in ownership it is now being referred to as the Shaw Wilderness Park extension.

Over the past year representatives of the Backlands Coalition, which includes the WLCC, have met with HRM staff and to date there are no fixed plans for development. However, in anticipation of plans for any development it was decided by the WLCC Board of Directors that a sub-committee should be struck to collect together all existing studies and data and focus on what other information should be obtained pertaining to the land. The focus encompasses hydrology, grade/geology, wetlands and forest classification as well as species sightings. The intention is to demonstrate to HRM the ecological value of this land.

Significant work has already been taking place as noted in the article on Page 2 titled 'Our Bird Friendly Watershed'. Once the accumulated data has been reviewed by the sub-committee, HRM staff will be apprised and provided with the information. Our initial assessment of the information is that the entire 46 hectares should be protected.

Members of the WLCC Board of Directors have also met with staff of the Nature Conservancy of Canada to discuss the extension of the NCC/Shaw Wilderness Park conservation easement over the newly acquired lands. There is certainly support for this goal from all parties which includes HRM, but continued work is critical. Essentially, parkland owned by HRM can be designated for another use which does happen from time to time. The existence of a conservation easement would protect the land in perpetuity.

If you are interested in this subject and would like to help with the work, please reach out to the WLCC through its website.

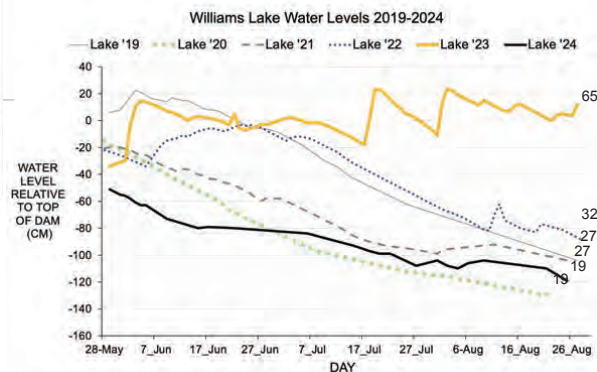
## REGIONAL MUNICIPAL PLAN UPDATE

Phase 4 of the Regional Plan, which may impact the future of the undeveloped lands in our watershed and the Backlands, has been released! A special meeting of the Halifax Regional Council is set for June 3, 2025 at 10 am. The agenda sets out that Council will give First Reading to consider repeal of the existing 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and approval of the proposed 2025 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy. The entire plan can be found at:

<https://pub-halifax.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=1982>

The public hearing is anticipated to be on Thursday, June 19 at 6 pm, Council Chambers, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Directors of the WLCC are very concerned about any development in the Backlands especially any planned close to Williams Lake. Details of changes to the current Urban Reserve Zone can be found in Attachment A-4: Table 2 of the report. If you are interested in getting involved contact the WLCC through our website.

## MONITORING LAKE LEVEL

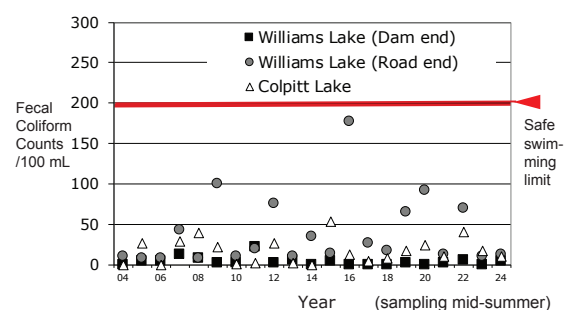


Williams Lake fell to low levels in 5 of the last 6 summers, remaining high only in 2023 when rainfall was more than twice that of the other summers (total rain summer June-Aug is shown at right in cm).

## LAKE WATER QUALITY

Unfortunately, blue-green algae was again detected in Cunard Pond last summer which meant the Cunard Beach had to be closed for the season. This cyanobacterium flourishes in slow-moving, warm, nutrient-rich water and can produce a toxin which can make animals and people quite ill if ingested. Fortunately, no blue-green algae blooms were spotted in the main body of Williams Lake last summer. WLCC testing also showed negligible fecal coliform counts in Williams Lake and Colpitt Lake (see graph below). Why is Cunard Pond most affected? Although the Pond is part of Williams Lake, if the main lake level drops, as it has done in recent hot summers, the flow of water that comes to the Pond from under the Wyndrock Drive causeway is cut off. Hopefully, replacement of the dam will help keep the water level higher and Cunard Pond refreshed and cooler in future.

WLCC membership dues support our continued microbiological and chemical monitoring of Williams Lake and Colpitt Lake. In addition, WLCC members Katie Studholme and Stephen Glazier have now begun accumulating data on Williams Lake as part of the HRM LakeWatchers Program. They have been conducting more comprehensive sampling at different depths which will allow us to detect changes in the health of our lake and see how it compares to other lakes in HRM.



## INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

On August 1, 2025, WLCC members and other volunteers helped clear three invasive plant species (Berberis, Japanese knotweed, Multiflora rose) from the banks of Lawson's Brook, the outlet stream for Williams Lake in the Shaw Wilderness Park. The event was organized by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Thanks go to Mackenzie Foster of NCC for coordinating the effort.



(Photo: Cathy Vaughan)



Williams Lake loon  
(Photo: Robin Whyte)

## CUNARD CONSERVATION CREW



Some of the members of the Cunard Conservation Crew with teacher Emma Rose at left, and principal Jillian Sabadash, third from right at back.

Cunard Junior High School students have recently formed the Cunard Conservation Crew. Members of the Crew have volunteered to help protect Williams Lake by picking up litter in the area around the school. The WLCC thanks principal Jillian Sabadash for spearheading this effort, the parents of the Crew members for allowing them to take part, and especially the students for their efforts and enthusiasm. On May 22, Crew members attended a talk on turtles and other wildlife that live in and around Williams Lake given by WLCC member Melanie Dobson.

## WLCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

Murray Coolican	Kathleen Hall	Katharine Studholme
Melanie Dobson	Martha Leary	Sanja Trussell
Stephen Glazier	Leslie Randall	Cathy Vaughan
Deborah Hall		

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

## WLCC MEMBERSHIP - JOIN US OR RENEW!!

WLCC membership is \$40 per household, \$25 per individual, or pay what you can, and runs from July 1 – June 30. To become a member or to renew your membership go to <https://williamslakecc.org/membership/> and follow the cues, or complete and return the form below.

You can give a one-year gift membership to the WLCC

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

**Bluesky:** <https://bsky.app/profile/williamslakecc.org>

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/WLCCHalifaxNS](https://facebook.com/WLCCHalifaxNS)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/williamslakecc](https://twitter.com/williamslakecc)

**Instagram:** [instagram.com/williamslakecc/](https://instagram.com/williamslakecc/)

**YouTube:** [youtube.com/@WilliamsLakeCC](https://youtube.com/@WilliamsLakeCC)

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY ☐ \$40 per household ☐ \$25 per individual

To: WILLIAMS LAKE CONSERVATION COMPANY  
c/o 9 Halls Road, Halifax, NS B3P 1P4

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ # of household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional emails of other household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

