



WERAC

*Wilderness and Ecological
Reserves Advisory Council*

*Advising government on the creation and management
of wilderness and ecological reserves*

Activity Plan 2011 - 2014

Message from the Council

The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), a body that advises government through the Minister of Environment and Conservation on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province, is a Category 3 government entity as defined in the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. In keeping with the legislated requirements of the Act, the following activity plan, developed by WERAC, directs our activities for a period of three years. Through regular council meetings, drafting of correspondence, consultations with interested government departments, industry stakeholders and the general public, the Advisory Council is confident that objectives of this planning period are achievable. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council is accountable for the preparation of the plan and the achievement of its goal and objectives.

WERAC is committed to identifying and examining areas of the province for reserve designation and ensuring that all public and private interests are fairly heard and considered when reserves are being planned and established.



Bill Montevacchi, Council Member



Len Zedel, Council Member



Laura Jackson, Council Member




Bill Kelly, Council Member



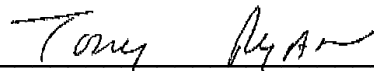
Bruce Porter, Council Member



Phyllis Baird, Council Member



Luise Hermanutz, Council Member



Tony Ryan, Council Member

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1. Overview

The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* (1980, *Section 7*) provides for an Advisory Council to advise government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. This Council consists of eleven (11) members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (LGC). A minimum of six (6) of these members must represent the public and all members serve for a period of three (3) years. Members are eligible for re-appointment.

Minimal qualifications for the appointment of individuals to WERAC include:

- significant training, experience or employment in the field of natural resources
- appreciation of the role of the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council and the reserve establishment process
- interest in and commitment to the protection of our natural heritage
- ability to work in a committee setting and time to commit to the working of the Council

Council members serve as volunteers; however, travel, accommodations and related costs are supported by the current budget of Natural Areas Program, Parks and Natural Areas Division (PNAD), Department of Environment and Conservation. The Division also provides WERAC Secretariat support to the Council through the Natural Areas Planner.

Typically, the council meets four times a year, for two days each time at various locations around the province. The WERAC Secretariat operates from the PNAD's headquarters in Deer Lake. Information for WERAC's review can be forwarded to the WERAC Secretariat by e-mail at werac@gov.nl.ca or by phone at 709-635-4520.

Together, WERAC and the Division work together to ensure that all public and private interests are fairly heard and considered when reserves are being planned, established and terminated. WERAC makes its recommendation on reserve creation/termination to Government, Government itself makes the final decisions.

2. Mandate

The *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*, 1980, under *Section 7*, provides for an Advisory Council to advise government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves within the province. The Council's duties include consultation proceedings with interested government departments, industry stakeholders, the general public, and other bodies on the establishment of a reserve, and preparation of a report to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the advisability of the establishment of a reserve. Please refer to Appendix B for fuller details of the legislated mandate of the WERAC.

3. Lines of Business

The WERAC provides the following line of business:

1. Advises government on the establishment, management and termination of wilderness and ecological reserves in the province:
 - Examines areas of the province in order to determine which areas are suitable for the establishment of a reserve (ie. three criteria guide reserve creation; large wilderness areas, ecosystem representation and rare natural phenomena)
 - Accepts recommendations from the public in relation to the establishment of or a change in a reserve (ie. through presentations, letters of nomination, etc.)
 - Holds consultations with stakeholders and public hearings to consider submissions, representations and objections respecting the establishment of a reserve
 - Within 120 days of the public hearings report to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, through the minister, on the advisability of the establishment of a reserve including a review of the benefits and disadvantages of the establishment, and with a review on public hearing proceedings, including its assessment of objections or reservations raised at the hearing

4. Values

WERAC will consider all public submissions on the identification, establishment, management and decommissioning of wilderness and ecological reserves. Using the best scientific information available and local ecological knowledge, the most comprehensive understanding of social and economic impacts on protected areas and through an open, transparent and consultative process, WERAC accepts the following values:

Values	Action Statements
Transparency	The Council will exercise due diligence when considering the opinions and points of view of different parties for the purpose of advising the minister on matters related to ecological and wilderness reserves
Accountability	The Council is dedicated to providing accurate and timely information to primary clients and to working within legislated timeframes
Responsibility	The Council will work to ensure that the interests and concerns of the public are considered and accurately represented when advising the minister on the establishment of reserves
Stewardship of Our Natural Heritage	The Council is dedicated to ensuring long term conservation and preservation of our natural heritage, using scientifically defensible information
Appreciation of Our Natural Heritage	The Council will work to ensure appreciation of protected areas through supporting, where appropriate, low impact recreation, nature-based tourism, educational and research activities in reserves.

5. Primary Clients

The WERAC's primary clients include the following:

- Lieutenant Governor in Council
- Minister of Environment and Conservation
- The Public (including private citizens, non-governmental organizations and industry representatives)
- Provincial and Federal Government departments and agencies
- Local Service Districts, town councils and local governments

6. Vision

The vision of the WERAC is the conservation and preservation of natural landscapes and seascapes in Newfoundland and Labrador for current and future generations through the timely establishment of a functional network of protected areas throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

7. Mission Statement

Creating and maintaining a network of properly designed and legally designated protected areas is one of the key ways WERAC intends to do its part to ensure the preservation of Newfoundland and Labrador's natural heritage. By 2017, WERAC will have advanced the establishment of a network of functionally connected protected areas throughout the province. WERAC will advance the establishment of this network by holding Council meetings at least twice annually, in various parts of the province, reviewing and identifying priority areas and evaluating public submissions and consulting various primary clients, as per the parameters of WERAC's role and mandate.

Mission: By 2017, WERAC will have advanced the establishment of a network of functionally connected protected areas throughout the province.

Measure: Advanced the establishment of a network of functionally connected protected areas throughout the province

Indicators:

- Public consultations are conducted for the establishment of reserves
- Points of view of the stakeholders are considered in the development of recommendations
- Recommendations are brought forward to the minister regarding reserve establishment
- Connections among protected areas are explored and prioritized
- WERAC continues to support community efforts to establish protected areas

8. Strategic Issues

In keeping with WERAC's mandate and mission statement, the following areas have been identified as the key priorities for WERAC over the next three years. WERAC will continue to evaluate candidate areas and make recommendations, review issues associated with the development of a network of connected protected areas, and actively promote the benefits of protected areas. WERAC will also inform Government on managing for healthy reserves in the Province, particularly with respect to improving connectivity among protected areas.

To facilitate these objectives, WERAC will consult with interested stakeholders, meet to review priority issues, respond to correspondence and meet with primary clients who may have an interest in the benefits of protected areas. The following issues identify the priorities of WERAC for the fiscal years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. The Objectives identified for Issues 1 and 2 reflect the results expected on a yearly basis throughout the planning time frame. The goal identified for Issue 3 includes three objectives, each objective reflecting the results expected in that year of the plan.

Issue 1: Establishment and Management

The mandate of WERAC is to provide advice to Government on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves. WERAC's role in protected area establishment is supported by numerous provincial and federal commitments, including the 2003 and 2007 Bluebook, and Canada's commitments under the UN Convention of Biodiversity. Establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves has a role to play in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable development, the Northern Strategic Plan, the Provincial Tourism Strategy, the Provincial Wellness Plan and the Recreation Strategy. WERAC will continue to implement this key part of the mandate throughout this 3-year planning period.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2014, WERAC will have completed assessments and made recommendations on candidate areas and reserves as required.

Measure: Complete assessments and make recommendations as required

Indicators:

- Reports provided to the responsible Minister of the results of the assessments and recommendations, as required
- Advice provided to Parks and Natural Areas Division on Reserve management, as requested

- Evaluated and responded to public submissions for protection
- Public consultations and feedback processes conducted
- Recommendations made for research monies for baseline research as appropriate

Issue 2: Promoting Protected Areas

Protected areas conserve natural and cultural capital. Benefits are ecological, economical, social and cultural, extending beyond provision of biological diversity and ecosystem services to providing opportunities for spiritual, economic, scientific, educational growth and community sustainability. The Council puts great effort into working with primary clients to provide informative and accurate information on protected areas, and to communicate the benefits and disadvantages associated with protection, and will continue to do so throughout this planning period.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2014, WERAC will have promoted the benefits of protected areas.

Measure: Promoted the benefits of protected areas

Indicators:

- The benefits of protected areas are communicated to regional groups and municipal governments during consultation processes
- Information regarding benefits of protected areas is provided through correspondence with primary clients

Issue 3: Managing for Healthy Reserves

Small and fragmented protected areas are more vulnerable to species losses and habitat degradation, and loss of ecosystem integrity and health. Connections between habitats are critical in order to allow for the movement of species and the recharging of depleted populations, particularly those which require large home ranges, such as caribou. Large ecosystem processes such as water flow, disturbances and the matrix of species interactions are needed for wildlife to be healthy. Maintenance of these ecosystem processes and connectivity are integral to planning a robust and resilient network of protected areas. During this 3-year planning session, WERAC will explore the importance of building connections between protected areas, and inform government on ways to ensure resilience of the Island's network of protected areas. The focus for this planning period is confined to the Island portion of the province, given that the network for this section of the province is substantially further ahead. The first

objective will be the focus for years 2011-12, the second for year 2012-2013 of the plan, with the third objective being the focus for year 2013-2014 of the planning period.

Goal 1: By March 31, 2014, WERAC will have informed government decision-making regarding connectivity in protected areas on the Island, to ensure that all reserves remain intact and functioning, and retain their full complement of native species.

Measure: Government is better informed of the relevance of protected area connectivity to ensuring reserve ecological integrity.

Indicator:

- Recommendations are made to the Minister on the importance of establishing connections between protected areas and maintaining connectivity on the Island portion of the Province.

Objective 1.1: By March 31, 2012, WERAC will have investigated the role of connectivity in managing for healthy reserves on the Island.

Measure: Investigations initiated

Indicators:

- A Connectivity Subcommittee is established
- WERAC has pursued opportunities for partnerships and funding sources to conduct a literature review of connectivity and protected area health
- Meetings are held with PNAD regarding opportunities for Government to move forward on improving functional connectivity.

Objective 1.2: By March 31, 2013, WERAC will have investigated approaches to achieving connectivity for healthy reserves on the Island.

Measure: Investigations conducted

Indicators:

- Meetings are held with PNAD regarding opportunities for Government to move forward on improving functional connectivity.
- Recommendations are made to PNAD regarding opportunities to move forward on improving functional connectivity.

Objective 1.3: By March 31, 2014, WERAC will have made recommendations to the Minister on the importance of establishing connections between protected areas and maintaining connectivity on the Island portion of the Province.

Measure: Recommendations made

Indicators:

- Recommendations are made to the Minister on the importance of connectivity and improving and maintaining connectivity between protected areas on the Island portion of the Province.

9. Appendix A: Strategic Directions

WERAC has considered the strategic directions of government and determined that they will not have a direct impact upon the mission and plan for the Council for this planning period. However, the Council notes that the work outcomes during this planning period do support the initiatives laid out in the strategic directions in the broader sense. The Council is invested in supporting the strategic directions related to climate change. Protected areas are an important component of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Establishment of new protected areas and effective management of current protected areas is a vital supportive mechanism in climate change adaptation. Increasing connectivity between protected areas also improves resilience of individual protected areas (and species) to climate change. The work of the Council also supports the directional focus on tourism development. Much of the Provincial focus in tourism relies directly upon protection and promotion of our natural heritage. The Council is committed to advancing protected area establishment in Labrador and on the Island, also supporting the strategic direction for Investing in Labrador. WERAC will continue advising Government on establishment of protected areas, communicating the benefits of protected areas and supporting low impact activities within protected areas.

10. Appendix B: Legislated Mandate

Mandate (Source: *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*)

Advisory council

6. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council is continued for the purpose of advising the Lieutenant-Governor in Council through the minister on matters in relation to the establishment, management and termination of reserves and for the better administration of this Act.

Powers of council

11. (1) The advisory council may examine an area of the province in order to determine which areas are suitable for the establishment of a reserve.

(2) The advisory council may accept recommendations from the public in relation to the establishment of or a change in a reserve.

Duties of council

12. (1) The advisory council shall give information on the areas determined as suitable for the establishment of a reserve under section 11 to interested departments of the governments of the province and Canada and to interested Councils, commissions or other bodies, whether incorporated or unincorporated, members of which or the members of the Council of management or Council of directors of which, are appointed by an Act or by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

(2) Where, in the opinion of the advisory council, the comments received under subsection (1) from the interested departments and bodies do not change the opinion as to the suitability of the area for the establishment of a provisional reserve, the advisory council shall give a report to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

Information on reserves

15. Within one year from the date of the establishment of a provisional reserve, the minister shall prepare and publish, in a newspaper in circulation in the area of the provisional reserve, a notice that contains

- (a) a boundary description of the area of the proposed reserve;
- (b) an outline of the management plan of the proposed reserve; and
- (c) a statement indicating that the minister requires written notice within the next 30 days where a member of the public intends to participate in a public hearing on the establishment of the reserve.

Public hearing

16. (1) The minister shall set a time and place for the holding of a public hearing by the advisory council to consider submissions, representations and objections respecting the establishment of a reserve including the boundary description and management plan of the proposed area.

(2) The time of the holding of a public hearing shall be within 90 days of the date of publication of the notice referred to in Section 15 but after 30 days notice has been given to the public of the time and place of the hearing.

Report to Lieutenant-Governor in Council

17. (1) The advisory council shall report in writing to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, through the minister, on the advisability of the establishment of a reserve including a review of the benefits and disadvantages of the establishment, and with a review on public hearing proceedings held under section 16, including its assessment of objections or reservations raised at the hearing.

(2) A report under subsection (1) shall be made within 120 days of the public hearing.

(3) Where the advisory council in its report made under subsection (1) recommends the establishment of a reserve, it shall include in that report

- (a) the boundary description, management plan and proposed regulations in relation to that proposed reserve as revised in consideration of the public hearing; and
- (b) comments on the rights and interests affected by the establishment of a reserve and an estimate of the compensation for those rights and interests.