

Pockwock Watershed Management Committee

Approved Meeting Minutes



Pockwock Watershed Management Committee			
Date: October 6, 2022 (Meeting originally Scheduled September 22 postponed due to post-tropical storm Fiona). Location: Virtually via Microsoft Teams and in-person @2 Park Ave. Minutes recorded via Teams.		Meeting Time: 10:00 a.m.	Adjourned: 11:50 pm
Member name and position:		Agency/Representation:	
Attendees:	Michael Allen (MA), Watershed Planner	Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change (NSECC)	
	Jillanna Brown (JiB), P. Eng., Reg. Eng.,	NSECC	
	Barry Geddes (BG), (<i>Vice Chair</i>) Watershed Manager,	Halifax Water	
	Anna McCarron (AM), (<i>Secretary</i>) Source Water Planner,	Halifax Water	
	Tim O'Brien (TO), (<i>Chair</i>) Regional Forester,	Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (DNRR)	
	Michael Perry (MP), Community Representative,	Mount Uniacke	
	Sanjeev Tagra (ST), Manager of Water Supply Plants	Halifax Water	
	Debbie Uloth (DU), Planner (for Rachel Gilbert)	Municipality of East Hants (MEH)	
Regrets:	Jeff Brown (JeB), Forestry Technician	DNRR	
	Rachel Gilbert (RG), Manager of Planning Services,	Municipality of East Hants (MEH)	
	Neil Morehouse (NM), (for Dawn MacNeill) Manager Protected Areas & Ecosystems,	NSECC	
	Sally Steele (SS), Protected Areas Coordinator, Western Region	NSECC	
	Colin Waddell (CoW), Senior Manager, Water Services,	Halifax Water	
Guests:	Tricia Isnor (TI), Environmental Engineers, Regulatory Services,	Halifax Water	
	Curtis Wiley (CuW)	Upper Hammonds Plains Community Advocate	
	Gina Jones Wilson (GJW)	Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association and Melvin Tract Lands Society	

1. Attendance / Introductions

Meeting called to order by Chair, TO.

Discussion:	<p>Attendance: Six (6) virtually (JB, TO, MP, ST, CW, and GJW); and four (4) in-person (BG, TI, AM and DU).</p> <p>Debbie Uloth (DU) in place for Rachel Gilbert, representing MEH. Guests acknowledged. Regrets conveyed (see above). Quorum noted.</p> <p>Members of the Upper Hammonds Plains Community requested a meeting with Halifax Water in July 2022, for members of the community to discuss communication improvements and to gain a better understanding of the Pockwock watershed area. Subsequently, community members Gina Jones Wilson, Curtiss Wiley, Tesha Gray, Renée Kuehnle and Thomas McGuire were invited to attend the fall meeting of the Pockwock Watershed Management Committee.</p> <p>The Upper Hammonds Plains Community owns two large land tracts colloquially known as “Small Melvin” and “Big Melvin” that are managed by the Melvin Land Tract Society (MLT) and lie partially within the Pockwock watershed area.</p> <p>CuW introduced himself as a 6th generation descendant of the original settlers to the Upper Hammonds Plains Community, and professionally as the Manager of the Provincial Land Titles Initiative, supporting African NS’ land use claims and occupation under the Land Titles Clarification Act, as well as a community advocate who founded a land trust in Upper Hammonds Plains. He is working to mobilize the community to repair and build partnerships to chart a more collaborative path forward.</p> <p>CuW added that the Melvin Land Tracts (MLT) Society is working to galvanize and refresh interest in these lands through community planning involving various organizations who have an interest in the MLT, including the parcels described above. This group wants to better understand the operations of the watershed in the community.</p> <p>GJW introduced herself as the President of the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association and a working member of the MLT Society.</p> <p>Via Viewpoint.ca, BG displayed where the Melvin Land Tracts are in relation to the Pockwock watershed.</p>
Decision:	Information Only

2. Review and Approval

a. October 6, 2022, Meeting Agenda

Discussion:	BG added post-tropical storm Fiona under New Business.
Decision:	Agenda proceeded with additions.

b. March 3, 2022 DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Discussion:	Review of Draft Minutes: Minutes were reviewed and approved with minor edits to section 5.c.i. a.
Decision:	Minutes reviewed.

3. Old Business

a. Water Storage and Withdrawal Permit Application (TI Presentation)

Discussion:	TI advised the Committee that Halifax Water has submitted the Water Storage and Withdrawal Permit Application to Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change (NSECC). They responded a couple of weeks ago seeking clarification on a couple of items. Halifax Water has responded. NSECC is reviewing the information and informed Halifax Water that they can continue to operate under the existing permit, which has expired.
Decision:	Ongoing

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Keep on agenda.	AM/BG	Ongoing

b. Pockwock Wilderness Area

Discussion:	NM and SS were not available for discussion. BG suggested moving this item to the landowner section as a standing item, to which the Committee agreed.
Decision:	Move to standing agenda item under landowner Q&A.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Keep on agenda as a standing item.	AM/BG	Ongoing

c. Sackville River Protected Wilderness Area

i. License Agreement Status

Discussion:	NM and SS not available for discussion. BG provided background on the status of the proposed Sackville River Protected Wilderness Area (SRPWA) with respect to the Pockwock Protected Water Area (PWA). Halifax Water does not require a License to Operate in the Sackville River Wilderness Area (SRWA) right now because its status as a Wilderness Area has not been approved yet. TO noted that Halifax Water's License to Operate in a Wilderness Area is not the norm across the province. Managing for drinking water quality is considered a special circumstance for the purpose of protecting the drinking water supply. BG requested removing this item from the agenda until the SRWA has been approved – date unknown. The Committee concurred.
Decision:	Remove from agenda

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Follow up after the Wilderness Area designation is in place to make sure the license agreement is in place	BG/NM	Pending
Remove from agenda	AM/BG	Next Meeting

d. Mount Uniacke Signage		
i. Bell Park Interpretive Signs		
Discussion:	MP spoke with Jim Foster regarding his thoughts on erecting interpretive signage in Bell Park. Jim Foster's focus right now is on cleaning up Bell Park from post-tropical storm Fiona damage. MP committed to provide an update at the spring 2023 meeting.	
Decision:	Keep on agenda.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Contact Mr. Foster to discuss an interpretive signage proposal for Halifax Water to consider funding.		MP/AM
		Deadline
		Next meeting
e. Resource Management Updates		
i. Forestry		
Discussion:	JeB not available to update the Committee. BG updated the Committee in JeB's place, as follows: All bridges along the main Pockwock ring road have been replaced. There are a couple of bridges along the secondary roads that will need to be replaced, in time. There are no other forestry activities to report on for 2022 inside the Pockwock watershed. Approximately 15 ha of the 85-ha commercial thin area remains on the back west side of Pockwock. Westfor indicated that it plans to complete the commercial thin area in 2023.	
Decision:	Standing agenda item.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Information item.		BG/JeB/TO
		Deadline
		Ongoing
ii. Water Quality		
a) Geosmin update:		
Discussion:	Nothing to report.	
Decision:	Standing agenda item.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Information Item.		BG/ST/CoW
		Deadline
		Ongoing
b) Lake Recovery Research:		
Discussion:	Research is ongoing. There is nothing new to report since the March 2022 meeting. The Committee discussed water quality in relation to water quality levels for 2022 as follows: MP asked what the water quality and the aquatic growth was like this year considering the lack of rain and drop in water levels? Was it abnormal compared to other years? BG replied that he was not aware of anything unusual in the Pockwock reservoir and added that he couldn't speak to the non-drinking water supplies, BG added that Halifax Water's reservoirs are dammed so they don't go as low as lakes that aren't dammed.	

	<p>MP has observed that the lakes in the Mount Uniacke area exposed to recreational activities had more growth this year than in previous years.</p> <p>BG and AM replied that this is likely a direct result of human activity through both recreation and development. This has been an ongoing issue in other parts of HRM. More people on the lake leads to more reporting of these incidents as well.</p> <p>ST reported that there is nothing out of the ordinary and that post-tropical storm Fiona topped up water levels.</p>		
Decision:	Standing agenda item.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Information only.		BG/ST/CoW	Ongoing
f. <i>forWater</i> Research Network			
Discussion:	<p>BG provided the following update:</p> <p>This is the last year for the <i>forWater</i> project (year 5 of 5). David Foster (Dalhousie University's research student) is compiling data and creating the final report, which will be circulated to the Committee once completed.</p> <p>Waterloo University (the <i>forWater</i> lead institute) is poised to extend the research. Halifax Water indicated its support for the extension. Approval of the extension is pending.</p>		
Decision:	Ongoing agenda item		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Keep on the agenda.		AM	Standing item
g. Tours of the Watershed Area			
<i>i. Helicopter</i>			
Discussion:	Priority for 2023.		
Decision:	TO to investigate a helicopter flight for the spring of 2023.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Book helicopter for aerial tour of watershed for Committee		TO	Spring 2023
<i>ii. Educational Ground Tour of Watershed Area Research</i>			
Discussion:	Continue to pursue this.		
Decision:	Plan a tour for the watershed area, targeted at a small group consisting of councillors, community leaders, first responders, East Hants Directors and PWM Committee members, for the summer of 2023.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Conduct watershed tour for a targeted audience consisting of councillors, community leaders, first responders, East Hants Directors and PWM Committee members.		BG/MP/RG/AM	Summer 2023

4. New Business

a. Fire in Pockwock Watershed

Discussion:	<p>BG advised the Committee of a fire reported on Saturday September 18, 2022 by DNRR to Halifax Water, which was in the Wilderness Area of the Pockwock PWA, located on a northern peninsula of Island Lake. [BG displayed a Google earth image of the fire's location].</p> <p>DNRR determined that the source of the fire was a campfire left smoldering, which was also during a province-wide fire ban. There were no witnesses to the fire.</p> <p>DNRR followed provincial protocol for fighting wildfires within a watershed. The fire was quickly extinguished by a 3-person DNRR fire crew, supported by a helicopter using a water bucket. Only water was used to fight the fire, and the helicopter bucketed water from Granite Lake just north and outside of the watershed area. The total area burned was about 1 acre. DNRR determined there was no risk to the water supply due to the small size, location, and swift containment.</p> <p>It was believed the area was accessed using the northern gate off Hwy 101 because the camera at that location was temporarily down. All other cameras were working with no recorded activity for a couple days leading up to the fire. The camera has since been updated and working.</p>
Decision:	Information only. Remove from next agenda.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Remove from Agenda	AM/BG	Next meeting

b. Lake Trout Study

Discussion:	<p>BG advised the Committee that a graduate student from Acadia University, Matt Warner, contacted Halifax Water seeking to expand a province wide Lake Trout Study to include Pockwock Lake. The scope of the project is to live-catch, tag and release Lake Trout across the province to gain a better understanding of them and their habitat. It is a difficult fish to study, and until very recently, very little is known about them in Nova Scotia. From the research data collected to date, a list of other potential Lake Trout-carrying lakes was identified, using characteristics from known Lake Trout Nova Scotia Lakes, which includes Pockwock Lake. Halifax Water agreed to the study as it could help to answer some of the questions related to the Pockwock Water Withdrawal Permit.</p> <p>Acadia obtained the research permit required to carry out the activities on Pockwock Lake. Three trips were completed; no Lake Trout has been caught to date. Research will continue into December 2022, after which it will be decided whether the research should continue.</p> <p>Halifax Water boat cleaning protocol was followed while working on and around Pockwock. Halifax Water staff assisted in the research trips.</p> <p>A researcher noted during a trip that no invasive species were caught, which could not be said for the other lakes being studied that carry Lake Trout. They believe the Pockwock watershed is one of the last remaining watersheds in the immediate proximity of HRM that is free of invasive species. They attribute this to the fishing prohibition and the dam at the outlet to Pockwock Lake, which acts as a physical barrier to keep invasive species from migrating upstream. The researchers indicated that without these prohibitions and barriers keeping the</p>
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	lake free from invasive species, the watershed would be biologically transformed, which would negatively impact the existing ecosystem. Therefore, the researchers recommend that the existing dam remain to protect the integrity of the Pockwock ecosystem. Halifax Water will continue to report any findings of the Lake Trout studies to the Committee. BG will provide contact info of the researchers to TI for them to discuss information related to the Pockwock Water Withdrawal Permit.		
Decision:	Information item. Leave on Agenda.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Send research contact info to TI		BG	Immediately
c. Post-tropical storm Fiona			
Discussion	<p>BG reported to the Committee the impacts of post-tropical storm Fiona using Google earth and pictures to demonstrate the extent of the storm's damage in the Pockwock watershed.</p> <p>BG asked TO if the area would be cleaned up to reduce the impact to the water supply and the Pockwock Water Supply Plant.</p> <p>TO indicated there is a process; TO will arrange for a helicopter flight to assess the damage. BG and AM were invited to take part.</p> <p>The helicopter assessment will provide Halifax Water and DNRR with a better understanding of the extent of the damage, to help guide any cleanup, if required.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the pre-harvest assessment and public consultation process. TO advised that while the process may not be perfect, it is meant to be open and transparent, and considers the best available information.</p> <p>AM asked whether shallow soil is taken into consideration; how do you cut on shallow soil?</p> <p>TO replied that thinning is not the best treatment in a shallow soil; soil structure is not there to support it. Moving forward, we must look at our thinning regimes differently and maybe just do small openings. This way, we will get diverse-sized openings, which will allow light in to promote regeneration while meeting different objectives.</p> <p>MP asked if an inspection of the Pockwock lands north of Hwy 101 could be inspected and assessed for fire hazards.</p> <p>TO replied that he would.</p>		
Decision	Arrange a helicopter flight to assess post-tropical storm Fiona damage.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Arrange a helicopter flight to assess Hurricane Fiona Damage.		TO	immediately
5. Landowner Q & A			
a. Mount Uniacke Community			
i. Uniacke Trails Association (Trail Development)			
Discussion:	<p>BG provided the background, which may be accessed in previous Minutes.</p> <p>MP heard nothing official from the MLA's regarding the future of the rail line.</p>		

	<p>MP believes that the Committee is a stakeholder in the plan to repurpose the rail to a trail because the trail would direct recreational traffic away from the watershed, which would reduce recreational pressure and overall risk to the watershed area.</p> <p>MP recommended sending correspondence to all 3 MLA offices on the Committee’s position. The 3 MLA names and respective ridings are; Melissa Sheehy-Richard for Hants West, Brad Johns for Sackville-Uniacke, and John A MacDonald for Hants East.</p> <p>BG indicated that the rail (trail) is outside of the watershed; however, the Committee sees the merit in repurposing the rail as a sanctioned trail that may divert traffic away from the watershed and therefore reduce risks associated with recreational vehicles accessing the watershed area the way they do now.</p> <p>BG asked MP what the intent of the trail is? MP replied that the trail is intended to be used as multi-use trail.</p> <p>BG asked who the contact for the Uniacke Trails Association is. MP replied that the current President relocating, so he is not sure who the new one is but will find out.</p> <p>BG to contact the Association to discuss the Pockwock Watershed Management Committee’s support.</p>	
Decision:	<p>MP to send new Uniacke Trails Association President name to BG.</p> <p>BG to contact the Association as per action item below.</p>	
Action Items		
	Person Responsible	Deadline
Ask the Uniacke Trails Association (UTA) whether it wants to ask the PWMC for a letter of support in their effort to lobby the Department of PW to continue the push to have the Windsor Junction – Windsor railway converted to a trail.	MP/BG	Pending review by the province
b. Crown		
Discussion:	TO felt this was covered in other sections of the agenda	
c. Municipality of East Hants		
i. Planning and Development within Pockwock’s natural watershed boundary:		
a. Business Park Expansion:		
Discussion:	<p>BG updated the Committee as follows:</p> <p>Prior to the spring 2022 start-up, BG met Derrick Normanton, MEH Project Manager at the Business Park expansion site to review the sediment and erosion control plan and address any other concerns. Most of the control measures that were in place needed maintenance.</p> <p>Runoff from rainfall is a concern for Halifax Water. Halifax Water asked MEH if they would consider asking the contractor to avoid working during 20 mm or over rain events to reduce sediment runoff. This is a Best Management Practice Halifax Water follows within its watershed areas.</p> <p>MEH spoke with the contractor; the sediment and erosions measure were corrected, and the contractor agree to avoid working in 20 mm or over rain events. Follow-up site visits were completed, during operations, whereby all control measures were performing as designed.</p>	

	<p>Samples were collected as per Halifax Water’s monthly baseline sampling program. Results show that all short-term concerns have been addressed. Sampling will continue at these locations to monitor for potential long-term effects of the activities related to the Uniacke Business Park expansion.</p> <p>BG noted that water levels for the summer of 2022 were lower than normal due to lower rain fall averages, which may account for the improved water quality sample results.</p> <p>Halifax Water understands that all construction activities relating to the Business Park are complete; therefore, this item can be removed from the agenda. Halifax Water will continue to monitor the area and report any concerns to the appropriate agency(ies).</p>		
Decision	Remove from agenda.		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline	
Remove from Agenda	AM/BG	Next meeting	
b. Planning Regulations and Update of Activities:			
Discussion:	<p><u>MEH Planning Regulations:</u></p> <p>BG provided background information on the Business Park expansion planning regulations and update of activities, which may be reviewed in previous minutes.</p> <p>Halifax Water sent a letter to MEH with recommendations to further protect the Pockwock Watershed during and after the Uniacke Business Park Expansion. In addition to recommending regulations, it was recommended that a stormwater management system capable of containing all the business park expansion runoff into an area that could easily be treated in the event of an emergency be established.</p> <p>Halifax Water received a letter dated October 4, 2022, from MEH confirming that a stormwater management system would not be required because the existing municipal Pockwock Watershed regulations are not changing and are strong enough to protect the watershed. Once the lots were sold than the new landowner would be liable.</p> <p>BG indicated that he met with MA, NSECC’s Watershed Planner, to gain a better understanding of who is responsible for enforcement of the area north of Hwy 101, which is outside of the Pockwock Lake Watershed Protected Water Area Designation and Regulations. The following is what transpired at that meeting.</p> <p>MEH has satisfied the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water under the Municipal Government Act (MGA) when it created the municipal Watershed Protection Overlay Zone Bylaw for Pockwock; therefore, MEH is responsible for enforcing those. NSECC is responsible for enforcing the Environment Act Regulations. In this case, no PWA regulations would apply because the origin would be from outside the PWA.</p> <p>BG asked DU if MEH would be open to sharing any development application for the Uniacke Area with the Pockwock Advisory Board for its review and comment?</p> <p>DU replied that if an application came into MEH that needed Council approval, then MEH would go through consultation agencies for comment, which would include Halifax Water. For as-of-right development there is no requirement for any review if the lot is developed as per the land use bylaw. Also, under as-of-right developments, MEH does not require individual lot grading plans. However, MEH does require subdivision stormwater management plans.</p>		

	<p>BG asked what measures are in place to inform the proponent about mitigating any impacts to the water supply that would alleviate any concerns Halifax Water may have; are the developers made aware of the potential impacts that should be mitigated when they come into the Business Park to develop?</p> <p>DU replied that the development permit asks what zones they are in. So, if they are in the Pockwock development zone then it will need to be indicated on the application. Also, the MEH development officer goes through each application to make sure the developer understands their obligations.</p> <p>AM asked, is there room for the application to come to the Committee for review?</p> <p>DU replied that if it is a development application then yes, but if it's an as-of-right, then they are not required. DU recommends a further conversation with RG.</p> <p>BG asked whether we could share educational info with developers, such as our brochure?</p> <p>DU replied that generally, yes, but to discuss with RG on how it should be delivered.</p> <p>MP expressed that generally, developers want to do right thing. Sharing as much information as possible would be good; he supports contacting RG to discuss delivery options.</p> <p>BG asked JiB, how an issue within the Business Park (outside the PWA) would involve NSECC.</p> <p>JiB replied that once the lot is sold by MEH, and if the activity on the land is listed as a designated activity in the Act, then that would trigger an approval; otherwise, if it comes to NSECC as a complaint, such as a sediment release or hydrocarbon spill, that would be reported.</p> <p>BG displayed Google earth to review the expansion activities that lead to a discussion about wetlands within the impacted area.</p> <p>JiB indicated that if the wetlands were maintained and a buffer was maintained around them then a wetland alteration permit would not be required. If the wetland was planned to be altered and/or planned to change +/-10% of the water entering those wetlands, then a permit would have to be issued by NSECC. This would require submitting an alteration permit to the department. It is the inspectors who take care of that. JiB indicated she does not recall seeing anything come across her desk for this area, so she is not aware of them.</p> <p>BG thanked Committee members for providing clarity about where responsibility lies regarding the Business Park. Halifax Water will continue to collect water samples and work with MEH and NSECC. If anything concerning is observed, the appropriate organization will be contacted.</p>	
Decision:	Discuss options with RG about Halifax Water's ability to comment on MEH development applications and providing developers with educational materials.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Discuss options with RG about Halifax Water's ability to comment on MEH development applications and providing education pieces to developers.	BG	Next meeting
Share and seek advice from Halifax Water regarding the proposed changes to the regulations for the business park.	BG/RG/AM	Remove from Agenda

c. Regulations regarding pyritic slate and salt impacts in the watershed		
Discussion	Sulphide concerns were addressed through geotechnical sampling which confirmed all tests sampled were within acceptable range. No discussion on salting. RG not available	
Decision:	Salting to be discussed further with MEH	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Address the concerns about chloride impacts when meeting with the project manager for the business park development. Moved to discussion with RG	BG/Halifax Water	Next meeting
6. Education / Awareness Update		
a. Newsletter/ Presentation – Education Awareness Opportunities		
Discussion:	AM advised that this is pending further development of a broader source water protection education program that is targeted in 2023.	
Decision:	Ongoing	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Pursue a newsletter after we have the key personnel tour and have a better idea what people are interested in learning more about regarding the watershed.	MP/AM	Pending
a. Municipal-wide PSA		
Discussion	BG to see what the status of the PSA is. A broader PSA was released in 2021. The Committee felt that a PSA should be targeted for the areas surrounding the Pockwock watershed.	
Decision	BG to reach out to Halifax Water Communications group to discuss if this was delivered.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Discuss the status of a PSA with Halifax Water Communications	BG	Next meeting
7. Election of Officers – Fall 2022		
Decision:	TO advised the Committee of his retirement next year. MP accepted AM's nomination for the Chair position for the next 2-year term which was unanimously accepted. AM accepted the position of Vice-Chair for the next 2-year term. BG accepted the position of Secretary for the next 2-year term.	
8. Next Meeting – Thursday March 09, 2023 @ 10am, Virtually via Microsoft Teams/ In-person at 2 Park Avenue		

Respectfully submitted by BG/AM