



WERAC  
Wilderness and Ecological  
Reserves Advisory Council

# Questions and Answers

Regarding A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan  
for the Island of Newfoundland

A public outreach project by the Wilderness and Ecological  
Reserves Advisory Council of Newfoundland and Labrador



Citation: Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council. Questions and Answers Regarding A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland. 2020.

Available in alternate format upon request.

The maps in this document are for illustrative purposes only.

Front Cover/Back Cover  
Cloud River Proposed Protected Area



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# Introduction

The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) is a council appointed by the Provincial Government to provide advice on the establishment and management of wilderness and ecological reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Council has up to 11 volunteer members who are citizens from a variety of backgrounds and from around the province.

WERAC's main role is to gather input from the public on whether a reserve should be established and how it should be managed. WERAC makes recommendations to government based on public feedback and conservation science. Government makes the final decision about a reserve.

WERAC is gathering public input on a Plan which outlines a number of proposed new wilderness and ecological reserves. The Plan is called **A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland** and is available on [www.engageNL.ca](http://www.engageNL.ca) under the WERAC consultation tab or by emailing the Council at [werac@gov.nl.ca](mailto:werac@gov.nl.ca).





This Questions and Answers document includes some of the more common questions that may be asked when considering the Plan. If there are additional questions not covered in this document, please contact WERAC directly by email at [werac@gov.nl.ca](mailto:werac@gov.nl.ca) or by phone at (709) 637-2081. A feedback form is also available on the [engageNL](http://engageNL.ca) website.



# WERAC

## ***What is WERAC's role in the public review of A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland?***

The Council engages the public and gathers public input on the creation and management of wilderness and ecological reserves. In the case of **A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland**, this means presenting this proposal to the public, receiving public input on the plan as a whole, and then making recommendations to government for implementation of the Plan.

WERAC's role is to make recommendations to government on wilderness or ecological reserve creation and management. As an independent council, they work to ensure that all interests are fairly heard and considered when reserves are being planned and established. Government will make the final decisions on how and when to move forward with the Plan. Once government directs the Council to move forward with establishing new reserves under the Plan, WERAC will begin the establishment process for each individual protected area. This formal establishment process includes public consultation for each site and is outlined on page 14 and in the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act.

# Protected Areas

## ***Why do we need protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador?***

Protected areas are one of the core ways to help us conserve nature – all our species and their habitats. As we develop much of the landscape in our province for resource-based industries, we also need to create areas where the focus is on nature conservation. Creating this balance is fundamental to sustainable living in our province, not only for nature, but for our own physical and mental health and well-being.

## ***Why do we need more protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador?***

In Canada, between 1970 and 2014, 50% of animal species have seen a significant decline (83%) in abundance<sup>1</sup>. A system or network of protected areas provides a kind of insurance policy for our species, habitats and natural landscapes. Protected areas not only safeguard biodiversity but also provide climate change resilience; carbon storage; maintain water quality, conserve natural resources, drive economic success, and curb the spread of diseases and pests.

Our protected area network should include examples of all the habitats and natural regions in the province as well as areas of particular importance for certain species, such as breeding bird colonies or rare plant sites. The parks and reserves that we do have do not protect the full range of diversity in the province. Some natural regions, habitat and special places for wildlife are left out.

Currently, only 6.7 per cent of the Island of Newfoundland is protected in a park, reserve or other conservation designation. Generally, with careful planning, as the amount of area protected goes up, so does the diversity of plants and animals and habitats that are included in the protected areas system. The international protected area target is 17 per cent, so Newfoundland and Labrador is working to close that gap.

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<sup>1</sup>World Wildlife Fund. Living Planet Report Canada: A National Look at Wildlife Loss. 2017.



***Aren't there other ways that government can prevent development in an area? Why would we need a wilderness or ecological reserve?***

Wilderness and ecological reserve establishment is the primary mechanism that is used by government (through the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources) to set aside lands for long term nature conservation. There are other planning processes, but their focus is not conservation. Provincial Forestry management's main focus is to provide fibre for commercial operations while the primary focus of Crown Lands management is on managing and allocating land for various developments. Neither has a dedicated mandate or process for long term protected area management.

When Newfoundlanders and Labradorians decide to protect an area as a reserve, usually it means that we want to restrict developments and instead be able to continue to experience the area as a relatively wild place. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act (or WER Act; the legislation that establishes wilderness and ecological reserves) provides for long-term protection and management that relies on public engagement. The WER Act provides government with a way to look at all the activities and impacts together and manage the area in a way that ensures that the area will remain a natural place for people to experience even if areas next to it have cabin developments or forestry or mining.

The WER Act is seen as one of the best pieces of protected area legislation in Canada because a reserve cannot be created, changed or terminated without public engagement. This means that a protected area will remain protected unless there is a public consultation process to discuss otherwise. It means that the area will be managed in a way that holds government accountable to the public. Protection as a reserve also means that a plan is in place to manage the site (to protect the area and to provide opportunities for education, research and tourism).





### ***What is the difference between a wilderness reserve and an ecological reserve?***

Wilderness and ecological reserves are both established under the WER Act but there is a slight difference in the intent for each type of area.

Wilderness reserves are large protected areas (generally greater than 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>) that are designed to protect relatively undisturbed landscapes. They provide wilderness areas for traditional outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, canoeing, and hiking, and for people to experience and appreciate a natural environment. Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve is an example of this type of protected area, and protects much of the range of the Middle Ridge caribou herd.

Ecological reserves are created to protect representative examples of ecosystems and to protect unique, rare, or endangered plants, animals, or other elements of our natural heritage. Special features in the province are protected, to date, in Seabird, Fossil or Botanical Ecological Reserves. Table Point Ecological Reserve is an example of this type of protected area. The reserve protects fossils that document changes to the continental shelf of an ancient ocean. Low-impact activities, such as hiking and educational tours, and scientific research are allowed in ecological reserves.

Both kinds of reserves provide standards against which the effects of development in other areas may be measured and provide opportunities for scientific research and education.

In the document **A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland**, all the proposed sites are described as ecological reserves. However, depending on public input during site consultations, the area could be established instead as a wilderness reserve if that designation more appropriately fits the boundary and management intent of the reserve.





# The Plan

## ***What is a Protected Areas Plan?***

A **Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland** outlines a collection of new proposed protected areas to increase representation of different natural regions (landscapes) within the protected area system on the Island of Newfoundland. Sites work together as a whole to protect natural values more effectively than individual areas could alone.

## ***How was the Plan developed?***

The Plan is based on over 25 years of ecosystem-based planning, reserve site selection and assessments, resource industry assessments, and consultations with scientists and government departments to find the most important areas for conservation while at the same time minimizing potential impacts to resource industries and other land use activities.

Over the years, staff worked to identify and assess areas for protection. Areas were prioritized that have low levels of development or a low 'human footprint'. The natural features of each proposed reserve were also assessed using digital mapping and site visits. Many committees were struck, with members mostly from within government departments, to consider a large number and variety of alternative sites that would reduce or eliminate conflicts with other potential land uses.



### ***What about a plan for Labrador?***

It has always been the intent to complete protected areas planning for the whole province. Early on in the process, a few preliminary sites were identified and considered in Labrador. However, the majority of the land base in Labrador was or is part of ongoing land claim discussions. It became clear that protected area planning in Labrador will be linked to resolution of land claims and will follow a process suitable and specific to the needs of the Labrador people, with input from all Labradorians.

To date, background data collection has been completed for Labrador in preparation for protected area and other land use planning. The Labrador Nature Atlas project was conducted by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with support from Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University, and members of a Labrador Core Team.







### ***Why are the areas outlined in A Home for Nature being proposed for protection?***

The areas proposed in the Plan will protect examples of some of the Island's natural regions that do not have any type of protection, or have only partial protection (i.e. some natural features are missing). There are also hotspots of biodiversity such as important breeding bird areas and rare plant sites that should receive protection.

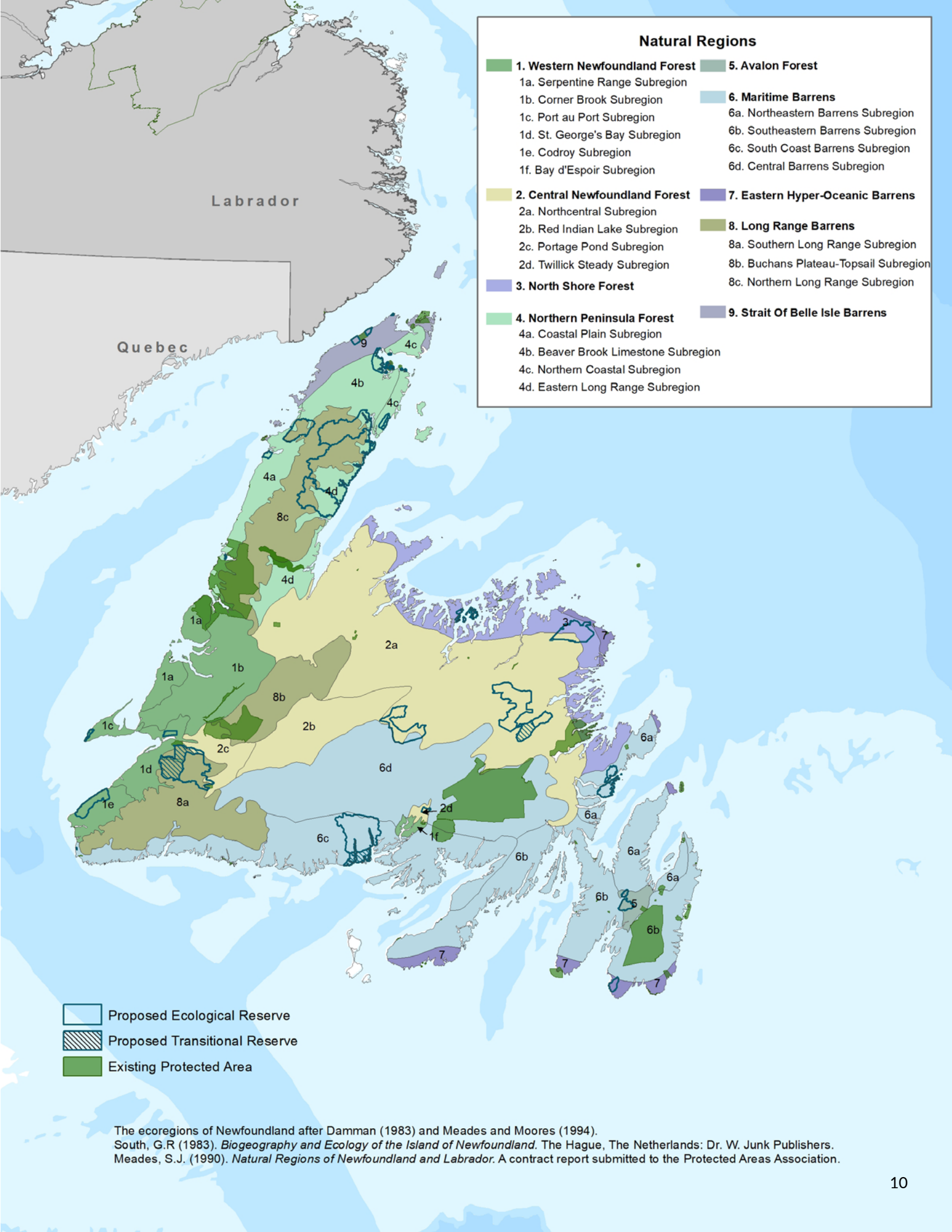
The proposed areas have a lower level of impact from human activities. In some natural regions, there simply aren't any areas without previous human disturbance (i.e. roads, trails, hydroelectric developments, and forestry or mining activities), so the areas selected have either grown back to some degree or are the most intact option remaining that still has representative characteristics. In some natural regions, more than one reserve is proposed so that all the typical features of a natural region are included in at least one of the reserves.

If there were several options for a proposed reserve, the sites that had the least impact on potential resource development were selected.

### ***What is meant by a 'natural region'?***

A natural region is a region that is distinguishable by its common natural features, like climate, geography, geology and typical species or forest types. There are nine ecoregions on the island of Newfoundland, which are further subdivided into 25 subregions.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Protected Areas Strategy outlines a framework for ensuring that natural values are protected throughout the province, which includes protecting landscapes that represent each of our natural regions. Sites outlined in this Plan represent some of the best remaining intact examples of natural regions. The map below shows the existing and proposed reserves overlapping the 25 natural regions on the Island.



### Natural Regions

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #4CAF50; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>1. Western Newfoundland Forest</b></li> <li>1a. Serpentine Range Subregion</li> <li>1b. Corner Brook Subregion</li> <li>1c. Port au Port Subregion</li> <li>1d. St. George's Bay Subregion</li> <li>1e. Codroy Subregion</li> <li>1f. Bay d'Espoir Subregion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #8BC34A; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>5. Avalon Forest</b></li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #BBDEFB; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>6. Maritime Barrens</b></li> <li>6a. Northeastern Barrens Subregion</li> <li>6b. Southeastern Barrens Subregion</li> <li>6c. South Coast Barrens Subregion</li> <li>6d. Central Barrens Subregion</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFF9C4; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>2. Central Newfoundland Forest</b></li> <li>2a. Northcentral Subregion</li> <li>2b. Red Indian Lake Subregion</li> <li>2c. Portage Pond Subregion</li> <li>2d. Twillick Steady Subregion</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #9575CD; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>7. Eastern Hyper-Oceanic Barrens</b></li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #8D6E63; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>8. Long Range Barrens</b></li> <li>8a. Southern Long Range Subregion</li> <li>8b. Buchans Plateau-Topsail Subregion</li> <li>8c. Northern Long Range Subregion</li> </ul>                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #9575CD; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>3. North Shore Forest</b></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #9575CD; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>9. Strait Of Belle Isle Barrens</b></li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #8BC34A; margin-right: 5px;"></span> <b>4. Northern Peninsula Forest</b></li> <li>4a. Coastal Plain Subregion</li> <li>4b. Beaver Brook Limestone Subregion</li> <li>4c. Northern Coastal Subregion</li> <li>4d. Eastern Long Range Subregion</li> </ul>  |   |

- Proposed Ecological Reserve
- Proposed Transitional Reserve
- Existing Protected Area

The ecoregions of Newfoundland after Damman (1983) and Meades and Moores (1994).  
 South, G.R. (1983). *Biogeography and Ecology of the Island of Newfoundland*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Dr. W. Junk Publishers.  
 Meades, S.J. (1990). *Natural Regions of Newfoundland and Labrador*. A contract report submitted to the Protected Areas Association.



***How have the proposed reserves remained undeveloped for over 25 years while the Plan was being developed?***

Sites have received a variety of informal protections including Cabinet directives limiting development, areas identified as mineral exempt lands, exclusion of proposed reserves from forest harvest plans and management of proposed reserves through the Crown lands application process. Not all of these informal protection measures have been applied to all proposed reserves.

***Some of the areas being proposed as wilderness or ecological reserves have a road or trail on it. Why don't you choose somewhere else without a road or trail?***

Most areas on the Island have been fragmented by roads or trails. Roads and trails contribute to the loss and fragmentation of forests. Efforts were made to choose areas that were the least impacted by roads and trails. Areas had to meet certain criteria for protection (i.e. they contained representative features and did not have significant natural resource conflict) and so in many cases, the areas being proposed are the only option for that natural region, even though the areas include road or trail developments.

***Was protected area connectivity considered in the plans development?***

The level of connectivity of a system of protected areas depends on how well individual protected areas relate to each other spatially and how well certain species can range from one protected area to another. Connectivity considerations were secondary, however, to choosing larger, more intact representative areas and avoiding land use conflicts. Maintaining connectivity between reserves will have to be a focus of ongoing protected area and landscape management efforts.



***What is the cost of establishing these areas or bringing the plan forward? What is the cost of not bringing the plan forward?***

Current plans are to proceed through public consultations for each site with the base funding, staff and expertise that are already in place in Land Management Division for managing our other protected areas.

The cost of not bringing forward the Protected Area Plan could be enormous. In order to have a sustainable economy and lifestyle, it is vital that we protect the nature that we all rely upon. Recent studies have shown that the annual economic value of a protected area network in terms of domestic tourism expenses was as large as the economic value of resources that could have been extracted from the same area of land in the protected area network<sup>2</sup>. This does not include the ecosystem services provided by protected areas, that is, services with economic value that natural habitats provide to people, for which we do not pay.

As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we must weigh the possible short-term economic value of leaving all areas open to development against the long-term economic benefits from a system of protected areas. The Protected Areas Plan will establish a network of protected areas that supports ecotourism, outfitters, hunting and fishing, and the mental health benefits of access to nature, in addition to ecosystem services like biodiversity conservation (genetic resources), fresh water supply, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Releasing the **Protected Areas Plan for the Island** and moving ahead with establishing a network of protected areas also directly benefits extractive industries such as forestry and mining by providing certainty in land use planning and clarity about the land available for development.

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<sup>2</sup> Heagney, et al., 2019. The economic value of tourism and recreation across a large protected area network. Land Use Policy 88: 104084.





### ***What about businesses opportunities in these areas?***

There are opportunities for nature-based businesses that are compatible with protected areas, such as outfitting and tourism. Establishing protected areas can increase business certainty for existing nature-based operations. For new businesses that want to utilize areas within a proposed reserve, the WER Act does not permit buildings, structures, roads and trails to be developed in a reserve. Private land is always excluded from a reserve, since the WER Act only applies to Crown lands.

Most of the proposed reserves lie in relatively remote areas and areas with little to no existing road access. The areas were selected partly because potential resource development (such as mining, or forestry) in these areas is generally low relative to other areas of the province, where exploration and development is more likely or proceeding.



# Implementing the Plan and Reserve Establishment

## ***What is the consultation and establishment process for the proposed reserves?***

Once WERAC receives direction from government to move forward with implementation of the reserves outlined in the Plan, WERAC will begin the legislated establishment and consultation process for the individual reserves. Public engagement and support is key to the establishment process. It is the recommendations of the public that will lead to the development of a final reserve boundary and a management plan that is tailored to each site. The typical reserve establishment process for a single reserve is outlined in the illustration below. Moving forward with a whole Protected Areas Plan has never been done before for the province; the public engagement process on the Plan as a whole will take the place of some of the initial steps in the WERAC consultation process.

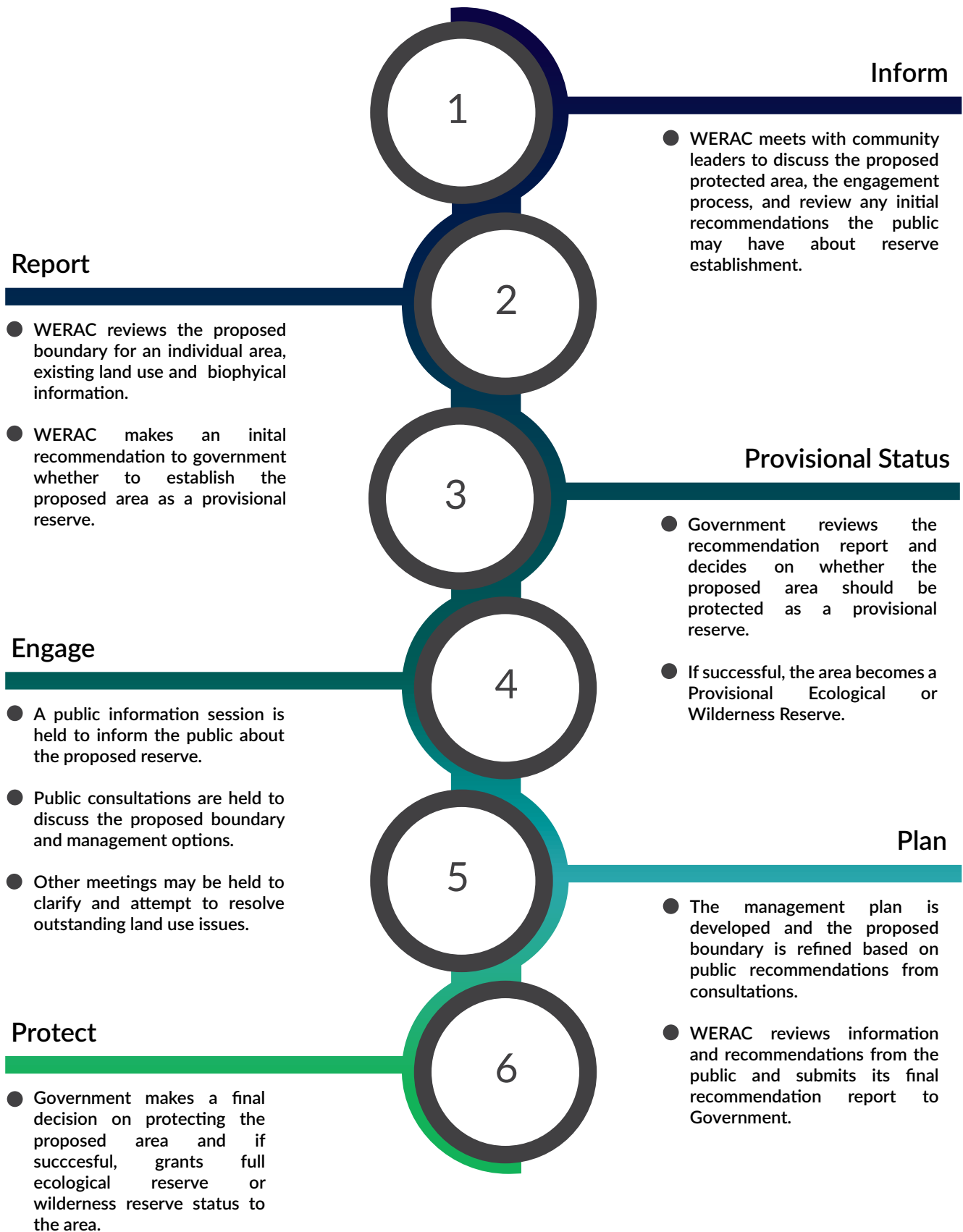
Usually, WERAC will review the biophysical and land use information for a proposed area and meet with the public in communities adjacent to the proposed reserve. Based on feedback from those community meetings, WERAC makes a recommendation to government as to whether the area should be protected as a provisional reserve. In the current process for the Protected Areas Plan, the feedback received from the public will bring the process to this point (Step 2).

Government makes a decision about protecting the area as a provisional reserve. If the area is protected as a provisional reserve, WERAC develops options for management, a proposed boundary and management plan, and conducts a public consultation. Public engagement typically includes community meetings in areas adjacent to the proposed reserve.

WERAC reviews the information from the consultation and makes recommendations regarding whether the reserve should be fully established and if so, what the boundary should be and how the reserve should be managed. Government makes a final decision on formal establishment as a reserve.



# Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland Implementation and Reserve Establishment



***There are 32 proposed reserves. How long will it take to move forward with the plan?***

It takes time to really engage with the public about existing activities, a final reserve boundary and an approach to managing the future reserve. Under the WER Act, the Council has 19 months from the time a provisional reserve is established through public consultations to submission of a recommendation report. During that time period, the reserve boundary and management plan have to be finalized. With so many areas, it won't be possible for WERAC to conduct consultations and complete recommendation reports on all the reserves at once. Where there are a number of proposed reserves in close proximity, it may be possible to combine the consultation processes and thus speed up the establishment process. It will take years for the site consultations, management plans and final establishments to be concluded for all 32 sites. As the areas are established, they will be managed in a landscape context to maintain connections with other protected areas and habitats outside of protected areas.

***How will the integrity of the proposed reserves be maintained while the WERAC establishment process is ongoing?***

Once public feedback is received on the Plan as a whole, government will make a decision about moving forward with the WERAC consultations. While the WERAC establishment process is ongoing, a variety of planning mechanisms will be in place to maintain the ecological integrity of each of the proposed reserves. It is anticipated that the proposed reserves will be temporarily placed under protection through the Lands Act. This will highlight the areas as sites where no Crown Lands applications will be accepted and will include a restriction on activities that will degrade the sites. These basic restrictions will be fine tuned through the establishment process. For more information on what activities are permitted while establishment processes are underway, please see the section Activities in Protected Areas.





### ***Why not just protect them under the Lands Act permanently?***

Newfoundland and Labrador is fortunate to have one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the country when it comes to protected area establishment. The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act (WER Act) lays out what can and can't be undertaken in reserves, outlines a formal consultation process for establishment and requires that a management plan be developed for the reserve. Unlike other legislation, no reserve can be changed, terminated or expanded without first bringing the proposal to the public for a consultation. While protection under the Lands Act can be achieved quickly, it does not have any of the mechanisms for protection and consultation that are available under the WER Act. The WER Act is a specific and effective legislative tool that is designed for protected area establishment and management, whereas the Lands Act is a general legislative tool that can be amended to the purpose of short-term protection while protected area establishment gets underway.

### ***How much engagement will the public actually have?***

The initial engagement with the public is to bring forward the plan to protect some of the best intact wilderness areas left on the Island. Once comments from the public on the Plan are received by WERAC, the Council will make its recommendations on implementing the Plan to government. Once directed by government to proceed with reserve establishment, WERAC will begin the process of establishing individual areas. The establishment process requires public consultations prior to establishment. In past establishment, public engagement has had a direct impact on protected area boundaries and on how various management issues are addressed in the management plan. WERAC will engage the public through an on-line process and, if possible, with in-person consultations. The objective is to develop reserve boundaries and a management plan that works for conservation and also recognizes existing activities.



***Will there ever be any additional protected areas proposed for the Island of Newfoundland?***

The **Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland** makes substantial progress towards targets for natural region representation for the Island. However, the plan is not perfect and, despite best efforts to date, some natural regions will remain underrepresented. Other areas may still be proposed for protection to WERAC. For example, the Council is currently considering a public proposal in the Lewisporte area (Indian Arm Brook) that would add needed representation of the Central Newfoundland Forest to the protected areas system.

Since provincial protected areas system planning began in the late 1990's, we have seen global protected area targets rise from 12 per cent, to 17 per cent, and, lately, to 25 or 30 per cent of the global land base. Conservation science has indicated the need for increased protected area requirements as the global biodiversity crisis worsens and climate change adds further possible impacts. However, it will take WERAC years to conduct consultations on the current suite of proposed new protected areas and, as such, no major additions to the planned areas are expected.

Conservation targets may be supported by managing our protected areas in a landscape context. The landscape between protected areas should allow movement of species between parks and reserves. If connecting lands are protected or conserved in a formal way, but not as a park or reserve, they may support conservation targets. Connectivity of protected areas and connected landscapes is an area currently under study nationally and internationally.

***Why aren't you protecting the transitional reserves right away as wilderness and ecological reserves?***

Transitional reserves are identified in areas with significant ecological values but where initial surveys indicate potential for discovery of mineral or petroleum resources. Given the potential economic value of the areas, they are proposed as transitional reserves which would allow staking of new mineral claims or issuance of new petroleum licences for 4 years from the time of establishment and a further 6 years allowed for further exploration. The land in transitional reserves remains in the Plan because these ecological features could not be identified for protection elsewhere. If, after 10 years, there are no significant mineral or petroleum finds or developments, WERAC will hold a public consultation to start the process to establish the sites as reserves under the WER Act. In a reserve, no mineral or petroleum development is permitted.



***What happens if they determine that the area in a transitional reserve is a viable mining or petroleum operation?***

Where there is a proven and significant mineral or petroleum resource discovered during the 10 year period, the future of the area will be determined on a case by case basis. The area could be retained as a reserve under the Lands Act (similar to Glover Island Public Reserve) while exploration continues. In that case, appropriate regulations would be put in place to minimize ecological impacts and maintain the value of the area for later protection as a reserve. Unless the area is transitioned to protection as a wilderness or ecological reserve, the area will not contribute to protected area totals.

***Why don't transitional reserves add to the percentages of area protected?***

A protected area is defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a 'clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.'

All criteria must be met for an area to be eligible for reporting as a protected area. In order for an area to qualify as being managed under 'effective means', activities that are incompatible with the conservation of biodiversity cannot occur and compatible activities must be effectively managed. Since transitional reserves will permit activities associated with mining and petroleum exploration, they do not fit the criteria for qualifying as protected areas and therefore are not included in protected area totals.

The total area being proposed as transitional reserves is 770 km<sup>2</sup> or 0.4 per cent of the province, and 10.5% of the total area being proposed in the Protected Areas Plan.







# Activities within Protected Areas

## ***What kind of restrictions will be in place for a proposed reserve while we wait for the establishment process to go forward?***

Regulations have been prepared under the Lands Act to temporarily protect proposed reserves until public consultations can be conducted by WERAC, and the establishment process can be completed under the WER Act. These would only come into effect once government makes a decision about moving forward with the Plan.

Under the temporary protection, existing activities will be permitted to continue so long as they are not damaging to the proposed reserve. All existing Crown Lands Licences (ie. Cabins and ATV trails) will be honoured. Private land will not be included in proposed protected areas. Generally, activities like boil-ups, mushroompicking or berrypicking, hunting, fishing, camping, and boating would be permitted to continue, except if the activities are incompatible with the reason for which the reserve was established. For example, having a boil-up (collecting wood and having a fire) would be restricted in a reserve designed to protect rare plants (such as Cape Norman or Watts Point Extension). All-terrain vehicle and snowmobile use would be permitted on licenced trails or if the use conforms to the Motorized Snow Vehicles and All-terrain Vehicles Regulations. Again, use of motorized vehicles would be restricted in areas where their use would be very damaging such as in proposed botanical reserves. Domestic timber harvest would be permitted where there are existing domestic cutting blocks; no new domestic harvest areas will be created.

Commercial activities such as forest harvesting and the staking of new mineral claims would not be permitted. However, activities could continue on existing mineral claims or petroleum licences staked prior to the release date of the Plan. New mineral claims or petroleum licences could be issued in transitional reserves.

To manage use, permits would be required for scientific research, educational activities or commercial uses (eg. commercial photography, eco-tourism, guiding).

Final management decisions around permitted activities will be decided based on public input during WERAC consultations for each site.

## General Access

### ***Will establishing wilderness and ecological reserves mean that I cannot go in these places?***

Not at all. Protection as a wilderness or ecological reserve means that people will be able to continue to enjoy the area for generations to come. The intention is not to restrict access, but to protect the landscapes and wildlife from development and damage. While some activities could be restricted in sensitive areas (for example, hunting in seabird breeding areas), protection as a reserve would mean that the area is kept intact for the use and enjoyment of people now and for the future.

The public is invited to make recommendations during reserve public consultations as to what limits should or should not be placed on access.





***Would I have to get a permit to go into a wilderness or ecological reserve?***

There is no permit required to enter an ecological reserve for general recreation. For scientific research, educational activities or commercial activities, a permit is required for both ecological and wilderness reserves. This permit is free and is a management tool to provide information to visitors and determine how a reserve is being used.

Under the WER Act and Wilderness Reserves Regulations, an entry permit is required for Wilderness Reserves. None of the proposed reserves are currently identified as a potential wilderness reserve, but that recommendation could come through public consultations for a site. Access permits for Wilderness Reserves are free and the application form is available online. Again, this is a management tool for providing information about the reserve to visitors.

The public can make comments and recommendations about permitting requirements during the public consultation for that reserve.



## Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

### ***Could I continue to hunt, fish, and trap? If so, are there any requirements or restrictions?***

Hunting, fishing and trapping can be permitted in a reserve, where it does not conflict with the purpose for which the reserve was established. For example, hunting birds in a seabird reserve would not be permitted. Hunting, fishing and trapping are permitted in wilderness reserves and in select ecological reserves (for example, hunting and fishing is permitted in Watts Point and West Brook Botanical Ecological Reserves) as long as they do not cause damage. There may be restrictions on accessing a reserve or part of a reserve by certain methods (see ATV, Boating and Snowmobiling sections below). There could also be restrictions on certain equipment, for example the types of snares or traps that can be used if protection of a certain species of wildlife is a key feature of the reserve (eg. Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve). Hunting, fishing and snaring are subject to the Wild Life Act.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations whether hunting, fishing and trapping should be permitted in a proposed reserve.

## Berrypicking and Mushroompicking

### ***Could I continue to pick berries or mushrooms? If so, are there limits on how many I can pick?***

Berry or mushroompicking is generally permitted in all reserves, except there could be restrictions where there are sensitive features like rare plants. To date, there have never been limits set on how many litres can be picked for personal use. Commercial berrypicking or mushroompicking would not be permitted unless it was identified as a pre-existing activity and determined to have no significant impact on reserve values.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about berrypicking or mushroompicking in a proposed reserve.



## Camping, Camp Fires and Boil-ups

### ***Could I continue to go camping? Are there any restrictions?***

Generally, camping is permitted in wilderness and ecological reserves, although some areas are simply too sensitive to withstand this degree of human activity. For example, camping is not permitted in Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve, which protects a species of plant found nowhere else in the world outside of a small stretch of the Northern Peninsula. Camping is permitted in the Avalon Wilderness Reserve and Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, however the period for a camp to be located at one site is limited to 10 days. Other than a restriction on building structures such as tent platforms and outhouses, there are no other general restrictions on camping.

The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations about whether there should be any restrictions associated with camping (e.g. only in certain zones).

### ***Could I have a boil-up in a reserve?***

In general, yes, the intent is that people will be able to have a boil-up, especially where there is no risk of damaging sensitive features in the reserve (for example, lighting a fire in a reserve designed to protect sensitive plants). Special feature sites protecting sensitive plants, unique forest features and lichen include Cape Norman, Watts Point Extension, Highlands of St. John, Spirit Cove, Cape St. George, Eastern Tolt and Hall's Gullies; boil-ups would be less appropriate in these reserves or in areas within a reserve with a high proportion of rare plants.

The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations about whether there should be any restrictions associated with boil-ups.

***Could I collect dead wood or cut down a tree to build a fire?***

Yes, the general intent is that people will be able to collect a small amount of wood for a boil-up or a campfire, and there is no plan to phase out that activity. The WER Act can allow for wood cutting depending on the purpose, amount and if the activity took place prior to the reserve being established. Cutting would need to not be in conflict with the purpose for which the reserve was being established, so for special feature sites protecting sensitive plants, forest features and lichen such as Cape Norman, Watts Point Extension, Highlands of St. John, Spirit Cove, Cape St. George, Eastern Tolt and Hall's Gullies, collecting wood for a fire would probably not be permitted.

The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations about how to manage a reserve to maintain and protect the forest, while supporting existing recreational activities such as campfires and boil-ups.







## Motorized Vehicles

### ***If there is a pre-existing road can I continue to use my vehicle on it?***

In most cases, motorized vehicles are not permitted in a reserve. Protected areas are most resilient when they are not fragmented by roads. However, if there is a pre-existing road in a proposed reserve, the legislation can allow for continuation of motorized vehicle access if it took place prior to the reserve being established. There are existing reserves where cars and trucks are permitted but not ATV's to reduce the risk of ATV's being used off-road and damaging vegetation in the reserve.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about inclusion of existing roads and motorized vehicle access in a proposed reserve.

### ***Can a road be maintained if it is in a reserve?***

Generally not. If a pre-existing road is included in the boundary for a reserve, the road would not be able to be maintained for general use. However, there are existing situations where a road may be maintained for commercial use to provide access to hydroelectric facilities or transmission line structures for maintenance. A road may also be excluded from the boundary of a reserve if there is a compelling rationale.

## Snowmobiling

### ***Can I still snowmobile in a wilderness or ecological reserve? If so, would I be restricted to certain trails?***

It depends on the reserve. The WER Act allows for the continuation of snowmobiling if it took place prior to a reserve being established. Snowmobiling is permitted in some reserves where it doesn't conflict with the purpose for which the reserve was established. For example, snowmobiling is permitted in Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, in areas outside of the winter range of the caribou herd. Snowmobiling is not permitted in Watts Point Ecological Reserve, which protects a variety of rare and endangered plants and snow cover along the coast may be insufficient to protect the plants from snowmobiling impacts.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about whether snowmobiling should continue in a reserve as well as any possible restrictions for sensitive areas, environmental impact or public enjoyment (for example only on existing recognized trails or excluding certain areas).





## ATV Use

### ***Can I ride my ATV in a wilderness or ecological reserve? If so, would I be restricted to ATV on certain trails?***

Typically ATV use is not permitted in wilderness or ecological reserves because of the damage these off-road vehicles cause to wetlands and ground vegetation. Protected areas are most resilient when they are not fragmented by roads and trails. However, an existing licenced trail could be excluded from a reserve to enable continued access. If an ATV trail were excluded from the boundary of a reserve, you would be able to continue to use the trail for ATV travel, but would not be able to drive off the trail into that reserve.

Recommendations regarding boundaries and trails to be excluded from the reserve can be made during public consultations.

### ***Could I use my ATV to get my moose?***

No. The WER Act prohibits the general use of an ATV within a wilderness or ecological reserve. While ATVing can be an excellent way to get outdoors, irresponsible use can damage sensitive wetland habitats, water supply sources and lead to siltation of fish spawning areas. If a trail is excluded from a reserve (see above), an ATV could be used on the trail to get close to the moose. Retrieval of the moose from the kill site to the approved trail would have to use other means (such as snowmobile, boat, or carried out on foot).

## Boating

### ***Would I still be able to go boating (motorized)?***

The WER Act can allow for the continuation of motorized boating if it took place prior to a reserve being established. Motorized boating may be managed to minimize disturbance to wildlife or other users, either by specifying locations for motor boating, or applying size or motor restrictions. For example, boating is permitted within the Avalon Wilderness Reserve, where outboard motors of up to 6 horsepower can be used on ponds that are accessible by road.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about whether boating should be permitted in a reserve as well as any possible restrictions in consideration of sensitive areas, possible environmental impacts or public enjoyment.

### ***Could I canoe or kayak?***

Yes, canoeing and kayaking could continue in a reserve. The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about whether there should be any restrictions associated with kayaking or canoeing (i.e. distance restriction from breeding seabird islands).





***Could I drive a jet ski or seadoo?***

No. Motorized personal watercraft such as jet ski's, seadoo's, wave-runners and similar craft are not permitted in a wilderness or ecological reserve. There are significant noise and disturbance impacts as well as environmental pollution associated with these types of crafts.

***Would there be any restrictions on boat size or horsepower of motor?***

Whether or not boating restrictions are put in place would depend on whether there are environmental considerations that would warrant special management, or whether any restrictions were recommended during public consultations. For example, high-powered motors can be noisy and act as an intrusion, both to people enjoying the area, and to nesting or brooding waterfowl. Limiting the horsepower, especially on smaller waterbodies can reduce the likelihood of environmental damage and also keep noise disturbance at lower levels.

The public is invited to make a recommendation during public consultations about whether boating should be permitted in a reserve as well as any possible restrictions in consideration of sensitive areas, possible environmental impacts or public enjoyment.

***Will some reserves have a marine component and if so, will that restrict boating access?***

Marine components are proposed for the Hare Bay Islands Ecological Reserve Extension and St. Paul's Islets Ecological Reserve only. It is anticipated that management of boating for Hare Bay Islands Ecological Reserve Extension would be consistent with management of the current ecological reserve. In Hare Bay Islands Ecological Reserve, motorized boats, kayaks and canoes are permitted but jet-skis, sea-doos, wave-runners and the like are restricted. Management of boating access for St. Paul's Islets Ecological Reserve would depend on existing uses, how much protection is required for the seabird breeding season, any guidance from the adjacent Gros Morne National Park Management Plan, and recommendations put forward by the public at consultations.

## Cabin Ownership and Access

### ***Would I be able to use and maintain my existing cabin?***

Yes. Cabin owners with legal title to buildings and land would still be able to use and maintain or improve their cabin without increasing the footprint of the present dwelling.

### ***Would my cabin be included in the reserve?***

A cabin on a private land grant would be excluded from a reserve. For cabin owners who own a cabin on Crown lands and who have a valid Licence to Occupy, the cabin would typically be retained within the reserve. If a cabin owner wished to exclude the Licence to Occupy area from the proposed reserve, they would need to indicate that to WERAC through the consultation process. If a Licence to Occupy were to be excluded from a reserve, the cabin owner could apply for a land grant following the established Crown lands process.

### ***I have a cabin but no title. Will I lose my cabin?***

If you have a non-licenced cabin on Crown lands, please get in touch to discuss your interests through the contact information on page 39.

### ***Could I expand the footprint of my cabin?***

No. The WER Act does not allow for increasing the overall footprint of a cabin within a reserve, for example, by clearing additional land, building additional buildings, or building on to an existing building within a reserve. Buildings being constructed or expanded at the time of establishment can be completed.





***Would I be able to build a new cabin in the reserve?***

No. While the WER Act allows for existing cabins within a reserve, new construction is not permitted.

***Could I sell my cabin?***

Yes, you would be able to sell your cabin as long as you are in possession of a valid title for the property.

***Would my property lose or gain value?***

The potential change in value of a property due to it being within a protected area is unknown. However, if established as a reserve, cabin owners would be assured that the forests surrounding their cabin would not be developed.

***Could I still access my cabin?***

Yes. If you have a valid Licence to Occupy, you would still be able to maintain access to your cabin if the surrounding area is protected as a reserve. However, your means of access could be affected by reserve establishment. An existing access route, especially if it is a licenced trail, could potentially also be excluded from a reserve or grandfathered in as an existing use.



### ***Could I use an ATV, snowmobile or motor boat to get to my cabin?***

ATV use is typically not permitted in wilderness or ecological reserves because of the damage it causes to wetlands and ground vegetation. If your cabin is only accessible by ATV, an access trail would need to be excluded from the reserve or grandfathered in as an existing use for the cabin owner. Recommendations regarding boundaries and trails to be excluded from a reserve can also be made during public consultations.

The WER Act can allow for the continuation of snowmobiling and motor boating if they took place prior to the reserve being established. Snowmobiling and motor boating are permitted in some reserves where it doesn't conflict with the purpose for which the reserve was established. For example, snowmobiling is permitted in Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, in areas outside of the winter range of the caribou herd.

The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations on individual reserves with respect to the continuation of snowmobiling and motor boating, as well as any associated restrictions (i.e. horse power, no-go zones).





## Outfitting

### ***Would outfitters be able to operate in a reserve?***

Yes. Outfitters currently operating within a reserve at the time of formal establishment would be able to continue to operate in that reserve. Typically, no new operators would be permitted to establish an operation requiring buildings and other permanent structures. The outfitter would need to apply for an annual commercial operator permit (at no cost) and there could be limitations on increasing the overall footprint of their buildings and operation. If an outfitter wished to have their building excluded from a proposed reserve, they would need to indicate that to WERAC through the consultation process. Being located in a protected area would mean that the outfitting grounds would be protected from development. If you have an outfitting cabin or operation within or partly within a proposed reserve, please get in touch to discuss your interests through the contact information on page 39.

### ***Are there outfitters in any other wilderness or ecological reserves?***

Yes, there are outfitting establishments operating in the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve and Little Grand Lake Provisional Ecological Reserve.

### ***As an outfitter, would I be able to build a new dock?***

The WER Act does not allow for new developments for outfitters. However, if there is an existing dock at the time of formal reserve establishment, that dock can be maintained. The overall footprint cannot be expanded. Where a floating dock expands out beyond the reserve boundary (i.e. into the ocean), there would not be any restrictions on maintaining the dock or expanding its footprint.



***Could I use an ATV, helicopter, snowmobile or motor boat in my outfitting operations?***

Typically ATV use is not permitted in wilderness or ecological reserves because of the damage it causes to wetlands and ground vegetation. If an outfitting operation within a proposed reserve is only accessible by ATV, an access trail would need to be excluded from that reserve or the activity would need to be grandfathered in as an existing use. Recommendations regarding boundaries and trails to be excluded from a reserve can also be made during public consultations or, if you are an existing operator, by contacting WERAC as per the contact information on page 39.

Access by helicopters or floatplanes can be permitted if this activity took place prior to the reserve being established. There may be altitude guidelines for flying in a reserve, and landing areas may be restricted. For example, within the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, landing is prohibited within any sensitive areas of the reserve as identified in the management plan, except at the times indicated in the management plan for the reserve.

The WER Act can allow for the continuation of snowmobiling and motor boating if they took place prior to the reserve being established. Snowmobiling and motor boating are permitted in some reserves where it doesn't conflict with the purpose for which the reserve was established. For example, snowmobiling is permitted in Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, in areas outside of the winter range of the caribou herd.

The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations on individual reserves with respect to the continuation of access by helicopter, floatplane, snowmobiling and motor boating, as well as any associated restrictions.





## Forestry and Domestic Timber Harvest

### ***Would commercial cutting and forestry access roads be able to be developed if an area is protected as a wilderness or ecological reserve?***

No. The WER Act prohibits commercial forestry and the construction of new roads in an effort to better protect our natural heritage. This reduces the level of fragmentation of forests in these areas. By maintaining larger areas intact, they can continue to provide all the benefits a protected area affords and contribute to national and international targets.

### ***Would domestic wood harvest be allowed in a reserve?***

Domestic cutting is generally not permitted within wilderness and ecological reserves. However, exceptions for removal of timber for domestic firewood may be made depending on whether this activity took place prior to reserve establishment. If domestic cutting were permitted, it would be available to existing users at existing levels with the likely intent that the activity be phased out over time. The public is invited to make recommendations during public consultations about cutting firewood and any associated restrictions.

## Mining

### ***Would prospecting and mining be able to go ahead in an area if it is protected as a wilderness or ecological reserve?***

New mineral claims would not be permitted. The WER Act prohibits mining, prospecting and claimstaking within a reserve. However, provisions can be made for exploration to occur on existing claims which were staked prior to the release date of the Plan.

### ***Why is there a time-limit on prospecting and development in transitional reserves?***

Transitional reserves will allow staking of new mineral claims or issuance of new petroleum licences for 4 years from the time of establishment and a further 6 years allowed for further exploration. This 10 year transitional period allows a period for exploration and development but ensures that, if there are no significant mineral or petroleum finds or developments, the process to establish the sites as reserves under the WER Act can get underway. The land in transitional reserves remains in the Plan because these ecological features could not be identified for protection elsewhere. This approach has been undertaken elsewhere in Canada to acknowledge the interests of mining exploration and development and the need to protect sensitive and representative areas.







# Contact Information

WERAC wants to hear from you! Visit [www.engageNL.ca](http://www.engageNL.ca) for more information on the Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland, to submit your comments and sign up to be notified when there are updates or consultations on a proposed protected area.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the information contained in this document or anything not covered in this document, please send in the feedback form or contact us at the information below.

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# Questions and Answers

Regarding A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan  
for the Island of Newfoundland

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