

## **Wilderness Finally Protected: Regional Council approves protection plan**

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Regional council has officially approved a plan to protect the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness, located on the outskirts of Rockingham and Clayton Park. Effective immediately, the area will be declared a wilderness park and the public lands zoned accordingly.

“It has been four really long years in the making, but it is great that the area is finally protected”, said campaigner Chris Miller. “It is nice to see a grassroots campaign can influence policy like this.”

The Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness park was established in the policies of the HRM regional plan, which was approved by regional council last week.

The regional plan sets out a 25-year blueprint for development in HRM.

The regional plan has been in the works for almost five years and has undergone multiple rounds of public consultation.

Dusan Soudek of Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia has paddled the lakes of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness for years.

“It is a paradise for local outdoor enthusiasts of all stripes,” said Soudek. He welcomes the creation of the wilderness park and looks forward to the implementation of the plan.

Since much of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes is comprised of provincial Crown land, co-operation with the province will be necessary before the area can truly be protected. Miller is hopeful that the new provincial government will work with the municipality to protect the wilderness.

“Now it’s just a question of making sure the plan is implemented”, Miller said.