



for a living planet®

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January 24, 2020 (VIA EMAIL)

RE: Delisting of Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve

Dear Premier Stephen McNeil,

WWF-Canada is concerned with the delisting of Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve and calls on the provincial government to stop the sale of public lands at Owls Head and to honour the commitment to Nova Scotians to legally protect this ecologically significant wilderness area.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is one of the largest conservation organizations in the world, with projects in more than 100 countries. For half a century, WWF-Canada has worked to protect nature in Canada, creating solutions to the environmental challenges that matter most for Canadians. We work in places that are unique and ecologically important, so that wildlife, nature and people thrive.

WWF-Canada believes in the protection of important ecological areas to help protect species, habitats and ecosystems. We are working across Canada in partnership with communities, indigenous peoples and other groups to advocate for the protection and sustainable management of our environment to ensure we have places set aside where nature can flourish.

WWF-Canada is troubled to learn about the delisting of Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve, especially given its status as a globally rare ecosystem. This ecologically important coastal wetland habitat is also home to several endangered species, including the piping plover, with eelgrass beds surrounding the headlands of the park providing vital coastal habitat. With so little of Nova Scotia's coastline publicly owned and protected, it is concerning that this site would be sold to developers to be converted into multiple golf courses.

As you know, we are facing a climate crisis. Nature based climate solutions can help contribute to climate change mitigation, including ensuring that the carbon sequestered in wetlands and coastal seagrass beds stays locked in the ground. The loss of these ecosystems would not only

reduce carbon sequestration but would also result in the release of stored carbon into the atmosphere, ultimately accelerating climate change while reducing habitat availability.

It is also concerning that the delisting of Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve, and the planned sell-off of public lands occurred without any public consultation, and that this was only brought to light as the result of a Freedom of Information request.

Canada has committed to protecting 25 per cent of its land and oceans by 2025, with an eye towards 30 per cent protection by 2030. Nova Scotia still has a long way to go to meet that lofty, but necessary, goal. We respectfully request that the Nova Scotia government fully implement the Nova Scotia Parks and Protected Areas Plan, so that all of the promised sites receive legal protection. Every piece of protected land in the province is important to help reverse the decline of wildlife.

WWF-Canada thanks you for the opportunity to provide comments. We look forward to receiving your written reply to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Sarah Saunders
Specialist, Marine Protection and Renewables
WWF-Canada

CC:
Honourable Gordon Wilson, Minister of Environment
Honourable Iain Rankin, Minister of Lands and Forestry
Gary Burrill, Member of Legislative Assembly
Tim Houston, Member of Legislative Assembly