

## **Owls Head Provincial Park: Timeline In Brief**

*Note: The original Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources has been renamed to the Department of Lands & Forestry.*

### **February 1975**

The Eastern Shore Seaside Park System Citizen's Representative Committee is formed, following the Nova Scotia government's announcement of plans to develop the Eastern Shore Seaside Park System.

### **May 1, 1975**

Local community representatives unanimously approve the concept of an Eastern Shore Seaside Park System. The concept is the product of co-operative efforts by the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests, the provincial government, public participation advisors, and elected citizen representatives.

The Minister of Lands and Forests declares that his department wants to actively encourage public participation in the planning of the proposed provincial park system. The Committee is comprised of 21 locally elected members representing 17 communities from Musquodoboit Harbour to Sheet Harbour. Soon after its formation, the Committee decides on its own objectives.

### **1977**

The Eastern Shore Seaside Park System Brochure is launched by the Parks and Recreation Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests, in cooperation with the Citizens Representatives Committee for the Eastern Shore Seaside Park System.

### **June 1980**

The Master Plan - Eastern Shore Seaside Park System Concept - is [released](#) in a quarterly publication of the NS Department of Land and Forests.

The map identifies *Owls Head* parklands as a "unique coastal landscape" in the "Islands and Headlands" area of the proposed Natural Environment Park.

### **November 2009**

The [Colin Stewart Forest Forum Final Report](#) is released by the Nova Scotia Environment and the Department of Natural Resources. It is based on nearly 5 years of scientific analysis and cooperative planning by members of the Forum. Owls Head Provincial Park is identified as Tier 1 (top-priority) conservation land.

*“Tier 1 areas are those of highest priority and conservation value [...] Most Tier 1 areas are truly irreplaceable, meaning that they represent the last opportunities to fill particularly critical gaps in the protected areas network, or to capture highly significant ecological features.”*

### **July 2011**

“Owls Head” is featured on map 15 of the 12 Percent Lands for Review series produced by the Protected Area Branch of Nova Scotia Environment. It is a key part of area 304: “Owls Head and Islands, 24 sites 276 hectares.”

The 12% review initiative is in response to the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (2007), which set a target to protect 12% of the land in Nova Scotia by 2015.

### **2012**

Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve is identified in the “Provincial Parks and Park Reserves” map series, issued by the NS Department of Natural Resources.

### **2013**

After years of consultations, [Our Parks and Protected Areas: A Plan for Nova Scotia](#) is published. Owls Head Provincial Park is site #694. The Plan “represents what are considered to be the best lands for protection.”

### **September 23, 2016**

Application to purchase Owls Head Crown lands from the Department of Natural Resources is formally initiated by Sean Glover (Cox & Palmer) on behalf of his client, Beckwith Gilbert / Lighthouse Links Development Co., by way of correspondence to DNR staff and an attached [“Application for the Use of Crown Land.”](#)

### **2017**

The Hon. Margaret Miller (then Minister of Natural Resources) writes to Mr. Beckwith Gilbert:

*“The first step that must be taken before the transaction can proceed is DNR obtaining authorization from Cabinet to remove the Crown lands from the Parks and Protected Areas Plan (PAPA).”*

### **July 22, 2018**

[Lighthouse Links Proposal](#): Proposal for Exchange or Purchase of Lands in Little Harbour, HRM, Nova Scotia.

### **August 14, 2018**

Halifax Regional Council approves the [Halifax Green Network Plan](#), which “defines an interconnected open space system for the municipality, highlights ecosystem functions and benefits, and outlines strategies to manage open space.”

Owls Head Provincial Park falls under Area of Consideration 8 (100 Wild Islands). The

Plan indicates an “essential corridor” between Tangier Grand Lake Wilderness Area and Owls Head Provincial Park.

**December 5, 2018**

At a meeting requested by [lobbyist] Michel Samson, attendees determine there will be “No Public Consultation until after decision re PAPA,” (Parks and Protected Areas Plan) and that “Aboriginal Consultation,” likewise, would not be initiated until “after the withdrawal from PAPA.”

**February 26, 2019**

[Memorandum to Executive Council](#): “Decision on whether to withdraw Crown lands at Owls Head identified for protection in the Parks and Protected Areas Plan.” Submitted by the Honourable Iain Rankin (Minister of Lands and Forestry) & the Honourable Margaret Miller (Minister of Environment).

**March 13, 2019**

The government of Nova Scotia secretly delists Owls Head Provincial Park (removes it from Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan) without public notice, consultation, or scientific assessment.

**August 26, 2019**

[Updated Valuation Report](#): The valuation by Turner, Drake, & Partners states that the “highest and best use” of Owls Head Provincial Park is for **recreation or conservation**.

As a result of the primary zoning (regional park zone), the property is assessed at a mere \$306/acre, based on the land being undevelopable. That amounts to \$216,000 for over 700 acres and five miles of coastline.

**October 29, 2019**

Lighthouse Links submits an [updated proposal](#).

**December 16, 2019**

[Letter of Offer](#) from then-Minister Lands & Forestry Iain Rankin to Lighthouse Links Development Co. sets out the terms between the two parties. The Letter of Offer contains no expiry date.

**December 18, 2019**

Investigative journalist Michael Gorman of the CBC [beaks the story](#), thanks to a whistle-blower and freedom of information request.

**December 19, 2019**

Sydnee Lynn McKay launches the group [Save Owls Head Provincial Park/Little Harbour From Becoming Golf Courses](#).

### **January 13, 2020**

The Nova Scotia government sanitizes its websites of references to Owls Head Provincial Park. The government surreptitiously removes the Owls Head Provincial Park [Protection Values Sheet](#) and erases Owls Head Provincial Park from the online Parks and Protected Areas map.

### **February 2020**

Stefan Sinclair-Fortin of The Signal reports, “Minister of Lands and Forestry Iain Rankin said he is aware of the public’s interest, but has no plans to protect the area.”

### **March 23, 2020**

Biologists Caitlin Porter and Dr. Jeremy Lundholm submit the [Report on the Ecological Importance of Owls Head Crown land](#) to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court.

### **June 2020**

The Chronicle Herald reports, “Of 206 provincial parks in Nova Scotia, 102 are awaiting official designation.” In many cases, citizens have no idea that these “provincial parks” aren’t formally protected.

### **August 5, 2020**

Justice Coady grants the applicants’ request for a time extension. He agrees that even though the deadline to file a judicial review had passed, “the secrecy of the decision precluded any member of the public from legally responding within the six-month window.” He also emphasizes, “The public had every reason to assume Owls Head was a provincial park.”

### **April 1, 2021**

Judicial review hearing: Applicants Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association and former DNR biologist Bob Bancroft (represented by lawyer Jamie Simpson) go to court on behalf of concerned Nova Scotians. It is uncertain when the Court will issue its decision.

### **May 8, 2021**

Facebook Group Save Owls Head Provincial Park/Little Harbour From Becoming Golf Courses exceeds 6,000 members!