



# TOBEATIC WILDERNESS AREA MANAGEMENT PLANNING EXERCISE

## SUMMARY REPORT ON PUBLIC COMMENTS

### Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the protection and management of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. We are presently working with a community of partners to develop a long-term strategy for this outstanding natural area. Please take an opportunity to read this report, and then participate in the next steps of our public management planning exercise.



Autumn canoeing on the Shelburne Heritage River, above Irving Lake, Tobeatic Wilderness Area (photo credit: O. Maass).

### Tobeatic Management Planning Exercise

The Protected Areas Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour (DEL) is pleased to be developing a management plan for the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. As the first comprehensive management planning exercise for one of Nova Scotia's 31 designated Wilderness Areas, this exercise is an important step forward in implementing the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. We are currently engaged with the Tobeatic Advisory Group, a 26 member citizen body that provides advice on the management plan. We will continue to work closely with all of our partners to advance this project.

### Introduction

This is the second publication in the management planning project for the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. The first outreach was a newsletter entitled "*Focus on the Tobeatic*". The newsletter introduced the management planning process, and presented information about the Tobeatic's natural, cultural and recreational values. A worksheet invited written comment on values and issues that people felt were important to consider in developing the draft management plan. We thank all those who provided initial comments. A full set of the submissions received is available for public reference at the DEL offices in Bridgewater (60 Logan Road) and Halifax (5151 Terminal Road).

This report summarizes the many ideas and opinions expressed during the public comment period. It does not reflect the work of the Tobeatic Advisory Group, currently engaged in a consensus-based project to define strategies and priorities for action. Public comments will help DEL consider a wide variety of viewpoints as we develop the draft management plan. The range of public comment is summarized in this report, organized in the following categories:

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Throughout the Tobeatic planning project, DEL is using consensus principles in our work with the Tobeatic Advisory Group. To be consistent with our consensus approach, this summary report captures the general spirit of public thought, rather than providing a verbatim record.



View of Moosehead Island from the shore of Silvery Lake just after ice-out.

## Newsletter Distribution & Response

*“Focus on the Tobeatic”* was released October 25<sup>th</sup> 2002, launching a four week consultation period. In total more than 3500 copies of the newsletter were distributed through direct mail, pick-up at regional offices, our website, and by Advisory Group members. DEL staff reviewed 175 individual written responses. This input identified more than 700 different ideas and opinions.

## Next Steps

The next major step in the planning project is for DEL to develop a draft management plan for the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. This discussion draft will be based on the consensus-based advice of the Tobeatic Advisory Group, and fair consideration of all public comment, scientific information, “best practices”, management guidelines, and legislation.

Upon completion the draft management plan will be reviewed by the Advisory Group. Next, DEL will host a series of public workshops in Annapolis, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne and Queens counties, as well as metro Halifax. These workshops are planned for autumn 2003, and will provide the public with an opportunity to review the draft management plan, ask questions, and provide comments.

Incorporating all public comment, and the advice of the Tobeatic Advisory Group, DEL staff will write the comprehensive management plan.

- Step 1. Launch Tobeatic Management Planning Exercise including establishment of the Tobeatic Advisory Group
- Step 2. Identify Themes, Issues & Objectives
- Step 3. Invite Public Input with “Focus on the Tobeatic”
- Step 4. Circulate “Summary Report on Public Comments”**
- Step 5. Identify Strategies & Priorities for action
- Step 6. Develop “Draft Management Plan” for review
- Step 7. Host Public Workshops on “Draft Management Plan”
- Step 8. Complete “Comprehensive Management Plan” and conclude Tobeatic Management Planning Exercise

## Information Sharing

We welcome your ideas and suggestions on any aspect of the Protected Areas Program, and would be pleased to add you to the project mailing list.

DEL will consider participant identity to be personal information, in keeping with the provisions of the *Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act*. The privacy of a participant’s identity will be upheld by the Department, unless the participant consents to the release, or if the submission has been made public by the participant. Any person or group may give prior consent, in writing, to the release of their submission.

Please contact Mr. Leif Helmer, at 902-543-4685 (t), 902-527-5480 (f), or by email: [helmerpl@gov.ns.ca](mailto:helmerpl@gov.ns.ca) Additional information about the Tobeatic Management Planning Exercise is on our website [www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas/)

## Summary of Public Comment Themes & Management Priorities

*“Focus on the Tobeatic”* highlighted eight major themes. Goal statements and background information (included below) were provided for each theme to encourage thoughtful consideration. The worksheet also posed specific questions seeking: suggestions for new themes and goals; top-ranked issues to be addressed; and approaches to address these issues.

### Ecosystem Protection & Management

*To implement a high level of ecosystem protection and management.*

Protection and management of the ecosystems and habitats of the Tobeatic is a primary objective. Special protection measures are necessary to ensure the long-term preservation of wilderness and biodiversity values for this generation, and those that follow. While some of the features of the Tobeatic, like old growth forests and geological features are enduring, others such as moose, rare plants and recreation resources may require special management if they are to be maintained or restored. Management of natural disturbances such as wildfires and insect infestations, must also be considered.

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Participants expressed appreciation and support for ecosystem protection within the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. Many stated that biodiversity and wilderness values should be the highest priority for management, and suggested a precautionary approach that is consistent with principles of conservation biology.

Wildlife habitat, particularly for interior species such as moose and American marten, received considerable attention. Priority was given to diminishing species, as well as those that are rare and endangered. Several suggestions involved active management such as restoration of acidic lakes, removal of abandoned dam structures, and control of exotic plants. Respondents highlighted wildfire, insects and predation as natural processes that require special management.

Lastly, a large number of responses addressed enforcement of the special protection measures in the Tobeatic. These included creating a higher profile for the area so that users could learn the guidelines for safe use and enjoyment, an increased enforcement presence, and use of a range of tools for compliance.



Solar-powered “Hydolab” water monitoring station on the Shelburne River.

### Scientific Understanding

*To develop, share, and promote scientific understanding.*

Scientific research and monitoring are important tools to better understand our natural environment. These tools can be used to establish “benchmark” ecological conditions, detect change and determine trends. Local, regional and global issues of concern may be studied such as endangered species, acid rain, mercury deposition, and climate change. Strategies and actions to improve scientific understanding will be identified in the Plan.

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Generally, people who commented on this theme supported scientific research and monitoring activities in the Wilderness Area. Some cautioned that only beneficial research be carried out, while others stressed that only non-intrusive research methods be approved. Respondents identified research needs to establish a baseline for wildlife populations, ecological conditions, long-range stressors, and site-specific human impacts. It was suggested that some baseline information may be available from partners that are active within the region. Others raised the unique opportunity that the Tobeatic Wilderness Area presents for long-term monitoring of acid rain, mercury, and climate change effects.

A need was identified to improve scientific capacity, develop a role for users in reporting, and create partnerships with existing research networks. The research program at Kejimikujik National Park was identified as a model to emulate.



Spring water run-off past a frost split rock on North Bald Mountain Brook in the upper Jordan River watershed (photo credit: A. Smith).

## Cultural & Social Values

*To protect, share, and promote cultural and social values.*

The significant cultural and social values of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area are important to consider when planning its management and use. The human heritage of the region includes First Nations, historic land use, and traditions of recreational use such as guiding and wilderness travel. These important heritage features can be integrated into recreation, interpretation, and protection activities reflected in the Management Plan.

Throughout the range of input received on cultural and social values, there was general agreement that heritage values are important. For example, many suggested that First Nations values need to be respectfully addressed in the management plan. Others noted the unique European heritage of the region, such as local use by the British military, Acadian families, sporting guides, and early tourists. Some respondents highlighted traditional use and indicated that local users have cared for and enjoyed the region for fishing, hunting, and recreation for many generations. Some suggested that all means of travel should be considered as traditional use, while others cautioned that only traditional uses that are compatible with the new protected status of the Wilderness Area should be supported.

In this section, many people expressed their personal connection to the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. Many described it as a sacred or spiritual place. Respondents expressed the sense of escape that the area's remoteness provides, the sense of personal challenge and accomplishment involved in wilderness travel, and the humility and renewal inspired by its enduring features. Users noted solitude as an important

wilderness value, and one that is hard to find in the province. Others described the Tobeatic as an important natural classroom for learning about nature.

## Recreation & Use

*To support safe and responsible recreation and use.*

The Tobeatic is an important region for outdoor enthusiasts. It supports a range of wilderness recreation pursuits such as camping, hiking, canoeing and nature viewing, as well as sport fishing, and traditional patterns of hunting and trapping. Appropriate planning and management can ensure safe and responsible stewardship by users. The challenge here is to establish a balance for the future between present recreational use, wilderness values, and conservation. The Management Plan is a tool to help set this balance, and develop reasonable solutions that are consistent with the protection-oriented goals of the Wilderness Area. Several issues require thoughtful, balanced solutions. These include access for wilderness recreation, camping site and trail development, vehicle use, the use of ranger camps, and special zoning within the Wilderness Area.

A wide range of response was received on the recreation and use theme. Many comments were made on issues related to motorized vehicle use. While the most frequent comment was a suggestion to expressly ban, or otherwise limit motor vehicle use in the Wilderness Area, some respondents supported vehicle use on old roads, and others made a case for the use of old roads and off-road trails. Others supported vehicle accessible staging areas at Upset Falls, Silvery Lake and Crain Lake as adequate to access the Roseway and Jordan rivers.

When considering recreation many put a priority on maintaining high quality wilderness recreation experiences. Many felt that only limited facilities are required to achieve this, and that too many facilities may even ruin the wilderness aspect of the region. Tools such as a visitor reservation system, zones to focus use in non-sensitive locations, and use limits based on carrying capacity were noted.

Many users supported low-impact recreation in the Wilderness Area, to reduce stress on important natural features. Many noted the "Keep It Wild" campaign as useful outreach to achieve this end.

Generally, users agreed that existing major access points were sufficient with no new points required. Users stated that existing tenting sites and carries along major travel routes are sufficient, with only a few new sites required for high use or sensitive sites.



Late snowfall greets wilderness travelers at the head of Stoney Brook (photo credit: A. Smith).

Several ideas for potential recreation facilities were highlighted. Some users suggested developing a series of access points around the boundary of the Wilderness Area, to provide opportunities for wilderness recreation. Others supported limited facility development at select interior sites such as Upset Falls, Silvery Lake or Crain Lake for tenting, angling or hunting. Others encouraged DEL to work with partners to identify access points and facilities, and designated routes for vehicle use on other public or private lands adjacent the Wilderness Area.

Maintaining the existing river travel routes was highlighted as important to ensure high quality experiences. Leaving most of these routes in a rugged state appeared to be the preferred approach of users. Several responses encouraged DEL to consider new hiking trails to improve and diversify the experiences available for users. The Billy's Hill route in Yarmouth county, and the Rocky Daniels country in southern Digby county were noted. Others suggested linking appropriate travel routes (both canoeing and hiking) to the backcountry network at Kejimikujik National Park.

Some people felt that a staffed or self-serve interpretation centre (or kiosk) would be useful at key entry points such as Indian Fields. Others suggested using existing local Visitor Information Centres to help users access information. A registration system was suggested by many respondents as a tool to help get information to users, and to survey trends. Ideas for a registration system ranged from a system for all users to systems targeting groups, commercial users, or non-residents.

Some users strongly opposed hunting and trapping in the Wilderness Area, while others clearly supported the continuation of these activities. Some felt that hunting and trapping (particularly baiting) pose a threat to other recreational users, and are not ecologically supportable in a Wilderness Area since they affect wildlife behaviour. Others stressed that these activities are part of the heritage of human use of this region.

## Communication & Education

*To ensure understanding and appreciation through communication and education.*

Communication and education are key tools for developing appreciation and shared stewardship for the Tobeatic. Interpretation and education can deepen one's appreciation of the natural world, build support for conservation, or inspire a new wilderness ethic. The Management Plan will address outreach goals, including interpretive themes and literature (e.g. brochures, signage). Education and research opportunities will also be addressed.

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Outreach was highlighted as serving an important role for public understanding of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. Comments largely supported increased communication to local users and across the region. Some noted a desire for regular local update meetings, or regional workshops. A common suggestion was for DEL to partner with other agencies or community groups for outreach. Many highlighted the benefit of using schools, museums, community halls and Visitor Information Centres as places to make material available. Users stressed the need for increased and improved signage to identify the Wilderness Area boundary and special protection measures of the area.

Several noted that plain language should be used in all outreach. Others suggested that interpretation kiosks be developed at main access points to ensure users have the necessary information.

Many people noted the outdoor and environmental education opportunities offered in the Tobeatic Wilderness Area, and called for these values to be considered in area management. Several respondents felt that the protected area was the best outdoor classroom in the province for personal development, leadership, and earth education.

A recurring idea was the development of theme-based materials to make information interesting and accessible. Several respondents encouraged the development of education materials (such as video, brochures, a booklet series, and posters) to promote the tangible benefits of wilderness protection. Topics for education materials included First Nations heritage, sporting and guiding heritage, and specific plant or animal guidebooks.



Summer sunset from the shore of Irving Lake (photo credit: Heartwood Institute).

Many creative linkages for outreach were raised, such as working with Nova Scotia Museum initiatives, direct mailing to local residents and notices in weekly papers, and developing interpretation resources for local outfitters, guides and inns to use in package tours for local and visiting users to enjoy.

### Partnership

*To encourage and secure long-term strategic partnership.*

Implementation of Wilderness Area objectives is more efficient when done in partnership with neighbours, users and other agencies. Partnership opportunities might include a "Wilderness Watch" program where users are engaged in stewardship, coordinated management with other landowners, and collaborative research with the scientific community.

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The DEL approach to working with neighbours was widely supported. Many respondents supported linkages between DEL and its many partners, including universities, non-government networks, municipalities, community groups and businesses. Partnerships with provincial departments such as Natural Resources, Fisheries and Agriculture, Tourism and Culture were suggested. Additionally,

the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Parks Canada Agency were raised as promising partnership opportunities.

Local citizen involvement was roundly supported as essential for the success of the planning project, and for long-term stewardship. The Department was encouraged to engage local communities such as East Kemptville and Upper Ohio along route 203, New Tusket and others along route 340, and the village of Bear River. Other respondents stated that all Nova Scotians have a stake in the Tobeatic, and encouraged DEL to include the broader public in all aspects of planning and implementation.

A unique suggestion was that DEL form a stewardship advisory group made up of citizen representatives to help the Department implement and evaluate the completed management plan. Another citizen involvement opportunity that was discussed by some respondents was a "Wilderness Watch" program. Such a project could be designed to promote active stewardship, monitoring, and reporting by users. Some cautioned that such a program should not involve motor vehicle use, while others noted the benefits of opening roads to improve citizen patrol monitoring. The Annapolis County "Backcountry Watch" program was raised as a successful model for DEL to review and emulate.

### Complementary Land Use

*To facilitate and integrate complementary land use.*

Complementary land use within, and adjacent to, the Tobeatic is an important consideration in planning and management for mutual goals. The Plan will address approaches for working with neighbours to identify opportunities for collaboration. In addition, it will help focus the Department's approach to respect pre-existing interests (campsite leases) and private land rights (inholdings) in the Tobeatic Wilderness Area.

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The challenging topic of complementary land use received thoughtful attention from respondents. Many encouraged DEL to continue its work with the Department of Natural Resources to encourage voluntary measures and stewardship on public and private lands.

Specific sites were noted as having value as potential additional lands for protection, or as special management zones. Many suggested a potential role



Campfire ring and tenting site at the foot of the Granite Falls carry (photo credit: Heartwood Institute).

for “buffer” lands to maintain a range of wilderness, habitat, connectivity, heritage, recreation and scenic values. Most frequently noted to serve a buffer or connectivity function were lands at Siskech, Roseway, Bluffhill and Moose Lakes. Some respondents felt that the Wilderness Area boundary should be modified to reflect natural features, such as watersheds.

Many respondents suggested that DEL develop incentives for voluntary private land stewardship within, and adjacent to, the Wilderness Area. Other suggestions focused on campsite leases, and developing active stewardship measures with leaseholders. Contracts, land trades, compensation, and special access routes were tools suggested as having some utility.

### Development, Tourism & Marketing

*To facilitate appropriate development, tourism and marketing.*

The Plan will describe the desired level of development, tourism and marketing for the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. These topics require careful consideration for the future use and management of the area, and may impact users and surrounding communities. The Plan could address various management approaches to support safe and responsible use. Such approaches may address tourism and promotional opportunities, which respect the integrity of the Wilderness Area, and include potential regional economic benefits.

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In general, people wished to share this area with visitors and residents from other parts of the province, noting that tourism facilities can also benefit local users, and stimulate new business or economic spin-offs.

Some respondents were hesitant to develop new tourism products, or to widely market the Tobeatic Wilderness Area. Many comments stressed that new tourism projects be given a lower priority than protection and stewardship goals. This caution was related to a strong desire to maintain ecological integrity of the Wilderness Area, and not introduce new activities that may diminish it.

Many suggested using the Tobeatic as a regional tourism draw, with facilities located outside, or at the periphery, of the Wilderness Area. Others cautioned that carrying capacity should be used as a tool to set limits on intensity of use, to ensure the wilderness is not degraded by over-use.

Creative approaches were suggested for tourism and marketing including, supporting limited and small-scale nature tourism opportunities, working directly with local guides and outfitters to develop a “code of ethics” for tour operators, and use of niche marketing techniques to promote and support high quality trips for travelers seeking wilderness experiences.



Old growth hemlock and red spruce forest in the Sporting Lake Nature Reserve within the Tobeatic Wilderness Area.

## New Themes, Priorities & Approaches

Public input generated many creative suggestions for themes and issues. While many of the suggestions were captured by existing themes, some led to new or revised categories for consideration, such as:

- Mechanisms to ensure full implementation of the management plan,
- Landscape connectivity between other natural areas,
- Restoration of viable populations of native species, and/or extirpated species.

## Further Information

For more information, or to be added to the Tobeatic Management Planning Exercise mailing list, please contact Mr. Leif Helmer lead planner for the project:

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*Thank you for your interest in the protection and management of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area.*