

Action is Our Middle Name

WILDERNESS

It's time for a new Protected Areas Strategy for Nova Scotia, and the provincial government did deliver one just before Christmas. The Wilderness Team had advocated for a strategy that included a new slate of proposed sites for protection but the new strategy did not do that. The province really needs to get moving on identifying new sites to reach its 20 per cent land and water protection commitment by 2030. Instead, the high-level strategy released in December 2023 contains a vision and guiding but falls short of starting to get the job done. The EAC will be here every year until 2030 (and beyond) to push for actual site-specific protection, and we'll keep advocating for sites not yet legally protected from the 2013 protected areas plan.

Gold mining continues to rear its ugly head in Nova Scotia. For now, the pressure seems to be off for two places proposed for massive, open pit gold mines. The company advancing those plans, called St. Barbara, withdrew from the environmental assessment process for the Beaver Dam (East River, Sheet Harbour) and Cochrane Hill (St. Mary's River) locations. But they are doubling down at the Fifteen Mile Stream site (inland on the Eastern Shore along the East River, Sheet Harbour), where they want to mine four gigantic pits, after they relocate Seloam Brook! The Wilderness Team staff hosted two workshops for community members to demonstrate how to engage with the environmental assessment for this site and for other industrial projects.



PHOTO Sara Farias

TRANSPORTATION

Our team collaborated with local NGOs on Let's Walk, Roll, and Ride, Spryfield! The goal was to promote and celebrate active and multimodal mobility in the Spryfield community. This two-week-long event series offered opportunities for engagement via events and programming, such as our Pop-up Bike Hub and Walking and Cycling audits, and culminated with the annual Bike Summit. The initiative also collected public feedback and concerns regarding active transportation to be collated in a report that will direct future collaborations in Spryfield.

In February, we collaborated with Mulgrave Park Caring & Learning Centre to host bike repair workshops for African Nova Scotian Youth. Over four sessions, participants gained hands-on experience in basic bike repair and maintenance. Dedicated bike stands and tools were also purchased for the Caring & Learning Centre so that youth would have access to the tools and supplies to apply their repair skills independently. We also led the 'Shifting Gears' workshop for Bike Again. This workshop series aimed to build capacity for our Sunday open hours catering specifically to femmes, trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming folks.

Winter Walk Day occurred this February, with over 80 schools and youth groups participating by going outside for a winter walk! We also completed two Youth Mobility Audits and provided reports to the groups and community decision makers. These reports can be used for municipal or community planning and can connect youth with organizations to build on their recommendations.



COURTESY Halifax Food Policy Alliance



FOOD

In December, we completed Part B of the *JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region* with our co-collaborators at the Halifax Food Policy Alliance. Part B includes implementation strategies and budget proposals for 2024 priority recommendations. Many implementation strategies were developed in partnership with community, including the Indigenous Working Group, the African Nova Scotian and Black Working Group and No One Is Illegal – Nova Scotia. Part B is the culmination of our ongoing work with community partners and regional food actors, aimed at envisioning a more robust and equitable food system. In February, Halifax Regional Council endorsed Part B of the *JustFOOD Action Plan*, and we mobilized community to demand that council approve the full budget for the plan. We are now beginning to implement our priority recommendations, with the first step being to form the Halifax Food Council, and are eager to continue working with our community partners.

Collaborative partnerships continue to inform and drive our work in 2024. We are collaborating with Feed NS to design and implement two pilots; one targeting rural food access and the other working on launching Halifax's first social supermarket. We continue to advocate for a national healthy school food program with the Nova Scotia Coalition for Healthy School Food that will benefit youth and families. We also continue to collaborate with Halifax Regional Municipality and community partners to support food distribution and reduce food loss in times of emergency.



PHOTO Kelsey Lane

MARINE

We played a critical role in the successful negotiations at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to adopt limits on fishing for blue sharks in the Atlantic Ocean. We released an in-depth analysis of the 53 Atlantic fishing countries' (including Canada's) adherence to their obligations regarding shark conservation measures, which led to new compliance and enforcement rules being agreed to.

Our Kelp Kurious project continues to help folks learn about the growing opportunities in the kelp farming sector. We spoke at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat Fisheries Conference as well as the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Association Sea Farmers Conference. We also led a "How to Create a Kelp Seedling Nursery" workshop and hosted a workshop with the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture on how to navigate the paperwork for licenses for small kelp farmers. Our baby kelp seedlings, grown in our demonstration nursery, were transferred to the ocean sea farm of Peter Darnell (Indian Point Marine Farms) to grow over the winter. The team expects another plentiful harvest just ahead of our second annual Kelp Fest coming up this May – join us in celebrating and supporting this growing sustainable sector!



COASTAL & WATER

Since last year's announcement by the province about the indefinite delay in the Coastal Protection Act (CPA) regulations, our work demanding their immediate release and implementation has not stopped. Throughout the last few months, the EAC mobilized over 1,100 Nova Scotians to send letters to the provincial government, all calling for immediate action. We held a press conference on the steps of the Halifax waterfront, calling on the Nova Scotia government to fully implement the CPA regulations and, in doing so, take the very first and most basic step in coastal climate adaptation: stop building in known risk areas. Because the continued delay unfairly offloads costs onto municipalities, 13 Nova Scotian municipalities joined the call for the implementation of the regulations. Five municipalities – Town of Bridgewater, Town of Clark's Harbour, Town of Digby, Town of Kentville and Town of Lunenburg – signed on to a joint statement organized by the EAC. Another six municipalities – the District of Chester, Kings County, Town of New Glasgow, Town of Trenton, West Hants Regional Municipality, Region of Queens Municipality, and Pictou County – sent their own letters.

We also continued to advocate for stronger protection of wetlands and to spread awareness of the importance of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation. In collaboration with Ducks Unlimited Canada, the EAC created a wetlands toolkit which launched on February 2, World Wetlands Day! This toolkit, which can be found on EAC's website, includes many resources about wetlands, wetlands conservation and policy and educational materials.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Municipal budget, plan reviews and an upcoming election have been the focus for the Built Environment Team. In light of provincial delays on coastal protection and updated building codes, we focused our energy on pushing the municipality to build sustainable complete communities. Following our summer research project, we created a new public resource titled "The Case for Building Complete Communities in Halifax Regional Municipality," which covers the history of urban sprawl, questions to ask yourself and the opportunities and barriers of building complete communities.

The Built Environment Team is developing new partnerships and strengthening old ones. We are exploring a new opportunity to collaborate with national not-for-profit Park People to advance our work on Halifax's green network and to promote urban parks and connected green spaces in Atlantic Canada. Lastly, we hosted another successful annual meeting of Our HRM Alliance coalition and welcomed nominations for a new coalition chair.



PHOTO Peijing Pu

ENERGY & CLIMATE

In December, we concluded our Energy Transition Deep Canvassing Pilot and have since published our findings in a project report and built internal support and recommendations for future deep canvassing projects at the EAC.

Our ongoing work with low carbon communities ramped up this year as we organized training for 12 home energy auditors to conduct observational energy audits on faith buildings. In March we launched our free energy audits for faith buildings in Nova Scotia program alongside our partners at Efficiency NS, Clean Foundation and Faith & the Common Good.

We have worked to engage, mobilize and participate in several coalitions and working groups both at home, and across Turtle Island. Alongside 13 other organizations, we have worked on the Energy Poverty Task Force to submit a series of joint recommendations to the provincial government for more comprehensive programming in support of low- and modest-income households.

We collaborated with the Marine Team to provide meaningful and holistic comments on federal Bill C-49 and participated in the provincial Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development. With the Wilderness Team, we engaged in ongoing, community-led discussions around onshore wind development for green hydrogen production and published our own stance in a comprehensive press release.

We continued to lobby, campaign and strengthen community ties through participating in several consultations, advisory groups and legislative sittings for a more accessible and affordable energy landscape for all.