

McNabs and Lawlor Islands: Park In the making

BY WAYNE GROSZKO

McNabs and Lawlor islands, situated in the mouth of Halifax Harbour, are going to become a park.

Last weekend, the beaches of these two islands were swept clean by volunteers (see *Cleaning up McNabs Island*, page 1). The Friends of McNabs Island Society, who organized the cleanup, also used the opportunity to inform the public about upcoming discussions on the future of the harbour islands.

McNabs Island is visible from the Halifax waterfront, and has a long historical significance to the people of the area, beginning many centuries ago with the Mi'kmaq people. According to the book "Discovering McNabs Island," published by the Friends of McNabs Island Society, large piles of shells are evidence that the Mi'kmaq people frequently visited McNabs Island.

After the arrival of Europeans, various areas of McNabs Island were used for farming, for drying fish, and for establishing military forts to guard the harbour. Fort Ives and Fort McNab are now national historic sites. Among the more grisly historic areas is Hangmans Beach, so named because around the year 1800, the British Admiralty used this beach as a place to hang deserters. Hangmans Beach is highly visible to incoming ships, and the deserters were left hanging there as a message to incoming sailors.

Only one family lives year-round on McNabs Island now, and they are the caretakers of the island. Trees have grown back over the former farmland, and the green islands of McNabs and Lawlor are a striking contrast to the urban and industrial mainland of Halifax and Dartmouth.

Both McNabs and Lawlor are designated as parkland, but are not officially protected as a park. Since 1964, several proposals have been made concerning the fate of the islands. Most proposals have called for a public park, but massive shipyards were also proposed twice, and in 1976 the Nova Scotia Department of Development was promoting a \$14 million amusement complex with golf courses, marina, aquarium, and whale pool. Most recently, in 1991, Ives Point, just off McNabs Island, was proposed as a site for a huge sewage treatment plant.

Now the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada have published a discussion paper outlining a plan for a natural and historic park on the islands. The paper is published jointly by the two departments because 63% of the land is provincial crown land, 36% belongs to the federal government, and 1% is private land.

In the discussion paper, the two government departments state that their goal is to ensure the islands will "be carefully protected, wisely managed, and sensitively developed for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations." Their preliminary plan is to maintain picnic areas, interpretive trails, washroom facilities, food services, an outdoor education centre, and a camp-

ing area on the islands. It is clear from reading the discussion paper that the emphasis is on providing outdoor recreational activities. The Department of Natural Resources and Parks Canada are actively seeking public comments about the plan.

According to Roger Pocklington, a member of Friends of McNabs Island, one advantage of

keeping McNabs and Lawlor Islands as a park is their location. Many people cannot often go to a distant park such as Kejimikujik, but it would be possible to go to the McNabs Island park just by walking down to the waterfront and taking a ferry.

Alan Jean-Joyce, a director of Friends of McNabs Island, encouraged people to get involved in the

public consultation and make their opinions heard, because the kind of park the islands will become is still an open question.

"Hopefully we can have a nice park and not jeopardize the flora and fauna that live there," he said.

The public consultation process will include Open Houses at the beginning of October, where people can go to learn more

about the proposed park. Then, at the end of October, there will be public hearings where anyone can make a presentation and say what they think the new park should include.

The schedule of events and list of people to contact are included in the sidebar on this page. Written comments will also be accepted.

Schedule of public participation

OPEN HOUSES:

2:00 to 5:00 pm and
6:30 to 9:00 pm

Monday, October 2

Eastern Passage
Volunteer Fire Department

Tuesday, October 3

Holiday Inn, Dartmouth

Wednesday, October 4

World Trade and Convention
Centre, Halifax

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

2:00 to 4:30 pm and
7:00 to 10:00 pm

Monday, October 30

Eastern Passage
Volunteer Fire Department

Wednesday, November 1

Holiday Inn, Dartmouth

Thursday, November 2

World Trade and Convention
Centre, Halifax

CONTACT FOR INFORMATION:

Friends of McNabs Island

Phone: 434-2254
email: ac559@ccn.cs.dal.ca
World Wide Web site:
http://www.ccn.cs.dal.ca/
Environment/FNSN/hp-fomis.html

CONTACT TO MAKE A SUBMISSION:

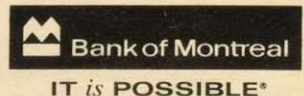
Nova Scotia Dept of Natural
Resources
Phone: 424 4938

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