

A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland – Information on Permitted Activities

On February 28, 2020, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador directed the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) to release a plan for protecting natural areas on the Island of Newfoundland. **Phase 1 of public consultation on the Protected Areas Plan extends until October 1, 2020.** The public can access the Plan and an online feedback form at www.engageNL.ca.

What activities will be affected in proposed reserves? Why can't WERAC just tell us what will or will not be permitted?

At this time, there is no proposal for what activities will or will not be allowed in a proposed reserve. In Phase 1, the Council is gathering feedback from people on the whole plan for protected areas as well as what areas they use and what activities are important to them. With that information, in Phase 2 WERAC can suggest management options for the public to consider. Meanwhile, the boundaries proposed in the Plan are not final.

The following are examples of activities currently allowed in at least one wilderness or ecological reserve:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Snaring
- Trapping
- Snowmobiling
- Hiking
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Boating (with motor)
- Berry picking
- Landing of aircraft
- Biking
- Horseback riding
- Camping
- Vehicle use on existing roads
- Outfitting businesses
- Private cabins

The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act is a flexible piece of legislation. It enables strong protection of natural features where needed (section 24 of the Act), for example, rare plant sites or breeding seabird colonies. It also offers flexibility to accommodate existing activities (section 25 of the Act) such as hunting and snowmobiling. Although boil-ups and domestic firewood harvesting have not been permitted in reserves that were established in the past, there is an opportunity to include them in newly designated reserves where such activities have long existed.

Several proposed reserves are being considered because they represent a unique natural landscape of Newfoundland. No regulations currently exist for this kind of reserve. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have the opportunity now to help set direction for how this type of reserve could be managed. Protected areas must be managed with respect for the people's relationship to the land and the activities that they value as important.