



A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland Information on WERAC

On February 28, 2020, government 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.

Who is WERAC?

WERAC is a council of volunteers appointed by government under the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act to advise government on the establishment of provincial wilderness and ecological reserves. WERAC is not an environmental advocacy group. Anyone in the province can apply to become a member of WERAC through the independent appointments commission. Click [here](#) for more information on becoming a WERAC member.

Efforts are made to ensure representation from all regions of the province. Over the years, WERAC has included representatives from southwestern Newfoundland, the west coast, Northern Peninsula, western Labrador, coastal Labrador, central Newfoundland, and the Avalon Peninsula. The 11-member Council currently has three vacancies.

What is WERAC's role?

WERAC examines areas proposed for wilderness and ecological reserves. Reserves can be proposed by government or by members of the public, including individuals and organizations. WERAC gathers public opinion on the creation of individual reserves and the management options for each one.

With respect to *Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland*, WERAC's role at first is to present the proposed plan, listen to public concerns, answer questions from the public, and make recommendations to government on the implementation of the plan. If directed by government, WERAC will initiate consultations on individual reserves through the legislated WERAC consultation process involving public meetings. At that time, WERAC will seek people's recommendations on boundaries and management options for each proposed reserve and work with the people to determine what existing activities should be allowed.

WERAC is a group of citizens listening to citizens – the Council is set up to gather and convey to government the opinions of residents in a non-partisan, independent manner. It is WERAC's duty to reflect both the conservation needs of the area and the collective opinions of the people. No boundaries can be made final before consultations occur.