

Welcome to Tonight's Virtual Q&A!

Meeting will Commence at 6:30 pm

June 15, 2021

HALIFAX

Slide 1



REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW

Themes and Directions

Environment Q & A
June 15, 2021

HALIFAX



WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

We are reviewing the Regional Plan.

We are here to provide an **overview of the proposed Themes and Directions**. This is the first major deliverable of the Regional Plan Review. We are kicking off a month-long engagement period on this work, including webinars on 6 key themes. Tonight's Webinar is on the Environment:

- Social Planning
- Housing
- Climate
- **Environment**
- Mobility
- Long Range planning

We are here today because we are reviewing the Regional Plan, which means we are evaluating our land use policies and making sure they represent the direction Council would like to set. We are contemplating how the municipality is physically organized and growing.

We kicked off this phase of public engagement on May 20th at Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee – which is the primary advisory body for this work.

As one component of our engagement, we have been hosting virtual Q&A sessions on various topics of interest and tonight's session is focused on the Environment theme.

The Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) is a strategic document built on a common vision and principles for the municipality to achieve balanced and sustainable growth.

Originally adopted in 2006, the Regional Plan provided the first comprehensive guide for future growth for the entire municipality following amalgamation. It outlines where, when, and how future growth and development should take place between now and 2031.

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Now, just to step back and make sure everyone understands the Regional Plan – it is a strategic document – the first document post-amalgamation that provided a region-wide vision for land use. It was first adopted in 2006. It provided a comprehensive outline of how growth and development should take place between 2006 and 2031.

WHAT DOES THE REGIONAL PLAN DO?

- » Provides policy direction for planning at the regional and community level
- » Sets up region-wide land use by-law regulations
- » Establishes the Municipality's intent to conduct future research programs or studies
- » Identifies programming or partnership opportunities



So as a high-level policy document, the Regional Plan does a few different things -

- First, the Plan provides policy direction for planning at the regional and community level – the regional plan sits above the community or secondary plan level documents, and above our land use by-laws, and sets region-wide policy intent.
- The Regional Plan policy can set up land use by-law regulations that will be applied region-wide. So for example, for watercourse buffers, those policies sit in the Regional Plan, and the regulations are rolled out in the community land use by-laws.
- It can establish the Municipality's intent to do future research programs or studies. The Green Network Plan is an example of a study that was identified during our last Regional Plan Review
- And finally, the Regional Plan identifies where there are needs for different types of programming or opportunities to partner with community or other levels of government. Environmental protection requires cooperation across our community, and the Regional Plan can support partnerships with other groups to achieve our goals.

REGIONAL PLAN TIMELINE



This presents the progression of the Regional Plan over the past 14 years. In 2006 we approved the Regional Plan, in 2014 we conducted our first review – you might recognize the name RP+5 which was the brand for that review. You can see we are aiming to complete this review in 2022.



WHAT ARE THE THEMES & DIRECTIONS?

Key Ideas, Issues and Potential Changes.

The Themes & Directions document **shares ideas about key planning issues and provides details of the work** that will be completed during the Review. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate the scope of the Regional Plan Review to the public, stakeholders, Council, and ultimately to seek feedback on the content.

The feedback will help provide focus and direction for our work during the Review.

HALIFAX



The Themes and Directions document includes 11 Themes. They are all highlighted on the slide, and an overview of each theme is available to you on our website – shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/region-plan. Today we are focusing on theme 8

Theme 8 Enhancing Environmental Protection

Theme 8 is about enhancing environmental protection and I will go into a bit more detail about how we are considering this through the Regional Plan Review

THEMES & DIRECTIONS

Theme 8: Enhancing Environmental Protection

- Using the Green Network Plan Ecology Map to guide planning decisions
- Reviewing interactions between land use and important ecological areas and wildlife corridors
- Continue to support naturalization and green infrastructure
- Continue to support the implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan
- Continued development of Watershed Management, Water Quality Programs
- Improved consideration of watercourses and wetlands
- Improve coastal area management



Biggest Moves:

Developing a program of study for the protection of wildlife corridors

Reviewing the Municipality's ability to protect environmentally sensitive or important lands

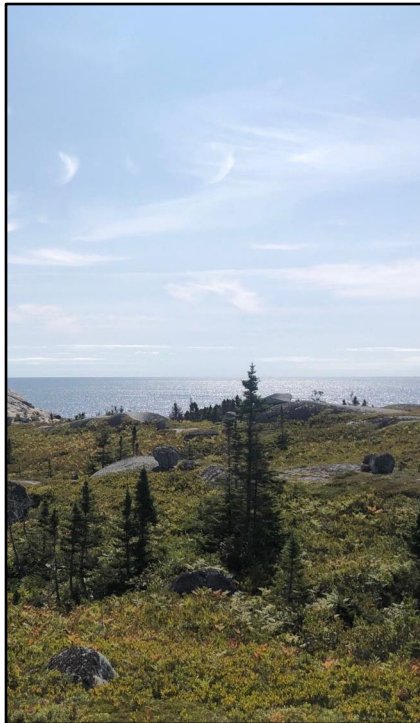
Improving protection for water course, wetlands and coastal areas

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Environmental management was one of the main focuses of the regional plan when it was first adopted in 2006. It identified the natural environment as one of HRM's defining features, and the plan homed in on this idea that growth and development in HRM had been and would continue to be shaped by a network of open space. The plan set up that when planning for new communities, we should start by examining these places on a watershed basis – this means determining how development should take place to ensure that the health of the watersheds is maintained.

Since that time, we have furthered this understanding with the Halifax Green Network Plan – it provides a high-level overview of the areas and features that contribute to the region's Green Network. The Green Network Plan is being implemented through many different ongoing initiatives across the organization, but our work on the Regional Plan Review will be instrumental in making sure that our region-wide policy is consistent with that plan.

We will be looking to complete some additional study and set up future work related to for example, naturalization and the protection of natural corridors, water resources and coastal areas. I'll talk about each of these pieces of work in a bit more detail in the next few slides.



Planning Tools for Protecting and Conserving Land

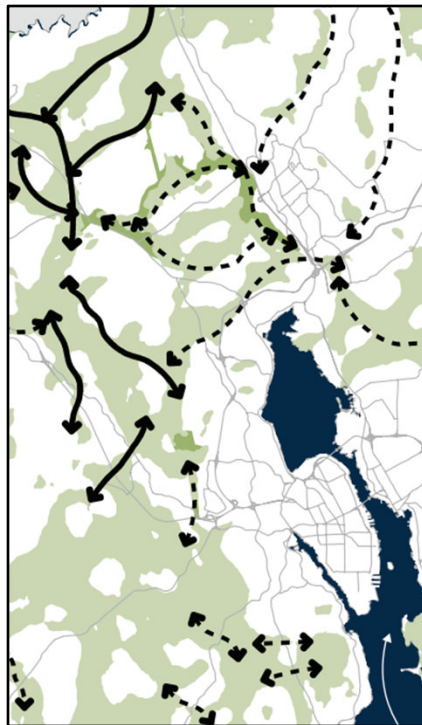
The HRM Charter limits the Municipality's ability to completely prohibit development. However, HRM has some tools to protect the environment which include:

- Mitigating negative environmental effects of development
- Protecting lands around drinking water sources
- Purchasing lands for conservation
- Limiting sprawl through subdivision and road development controls

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One of the most common questions is how the Municipality can protect environmentally significant land from development. The tools available are dictated by the HRM Charter, which –simply put- outlines the powers that the Province has granted the Municipality. In regard to the environmentally significant lands, we have four main tools under the HRM Charter – We are able to prohibit development in certain circumstances, for example in flood-prone areas, or where there are steep slopes and low-lying or marshy areas. This is also how we protect the lands around drinking water sources. We are also able to purchase or support a conservation group's purchase of significant lands to ensure no development takes place, a common example of this is our wilderness parks which we are continuing to work with our community partners to protect given their important role in our green network and as part of our parks spectrum. One of the strongest tools we have is limiting significant residential subdivision outside of the Urban Service Area – the Regional Plan and our Regional Subdivision By-law already do this – this was one of the most significant pieces of the original 2006 regional plan. We've been asked a number of times about whether the Municipality

should be asking the Province for changes to the HRM Charter, and in fact there were some requests that made when the Green Network Plan was adopted - but in the meantime, given the uncertainty around the timing of these requests, we are focusing on how to best use our existing tools to maintain our important environmental lands. So we are continuing to explore the full range of planning tools available to the Municipality, and that is something we will be doing through the Regional Plan Review.



Protecting Natural Corridors

Natural corridors are undeveloped areas that provide linear connections between larger patches of wilderness. These corridors are extremely important as they connect habitats and help to maintain healthy and diverse wildlife populations.

The HGNP identified the need for a clear approach for protecting natural corridors as the region grows and develops.

Additional study is needed to understand how we can best protect these corridors at a regional scale while managing the impact of individual developments.

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One major aspect of the Green Network Plan is the idea of natural corridors, which are undeveloped areas that provide linear connections between larger patches of wilderness. These corridors are extremely important as they connect habitats and help to maintain healthy and diverse wildlife populations. The HGNP identified the need for a clear approach for protecting natural corridors as the region grows and develops. The GNP identified these corridors at a high level, but where our regulations work at the site level, there is some additional study needed to understand how we can best protect these corridors at a regional scale while managing the impact of individual developments. We expect through the Regional Plan Review that we will set up for that future study.



Naturalization

The Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT both encourage the inclusion and maintenance of natural areas and the use of green infrastructure in communities where growth is located or planned. The Urban Forest Master Plan provides direction for planning, programming and maintaining HRM's urban forest.

Natural areas and green infrastructure help to:

- manage stormwater
- reduce the heat island effect
- improve water quality
- provide shade; and
- sequester carbon.

This kind of naturalization work is already being piloted in HRM to improve the environmental health in our urban areas.

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- improve water quality
- provide shade
- sequester carbon.

This kind of naturalization work is already being piloted in HRM to improve the environmental health in our urban areas.



Managing Water Resources

Protecting the Municipality's water resources is critical for our potable water supply, supporting wildlife and overall ecological health, recreation use and aesthetic values.

The Regional Plan Review will:

- Adopt policy to support a comprehensive water quality monitoring program
- Update policy to support ongoing work to improve stormwater management practices
- Review wetland and riparian buffer regulations
- Continue to require studies of environmental features as part of planning for future serviced communities

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Protecting the Municipality's water resources is critical for our drinking water supply, wildlife/ecological health, recreation use and aesthetic values. The Regional Plan directs land use policy to regulate water flow, mitigate flooding, reduce water pollution, and protect ecological function. Through the Regional Plan Review, we will both be supporting ongoing work and looking at ways to update our existing regulations.

-Some ongoing work includes the proposed water quality monitoring program. This program is currently being considered and, assuming the proposed approach is adopted by Council, we would plan to write Regional Plan policy which supports that work and the community partnerships that make it possible,

-Another ongoing piece of work has been on stormwater management – we are continuing to work with Halifax Water on updating the joint stormwater standards for private properties – as well as updating our own standards for public right of way and using green infrastructure.

-The HGPN identified the need to further protect riparian areas and establish a consistent watercourse buffer across the region. Greater protection for wetlands is also needed, as these areas serve important

roles for natural stormwater management, provide wildlife habitat and act as carbon sinks. So through the RPR we are intending to review our current land use by-law regulations/policies for these areas and make those updates.

-And finally, the Regional Plan sets out requirements for studying environmental features before development can take place for new communities, and we will continue to do that as we planning for future growth.



Coastal Protection

Sea level rise and extreme water levels, exacerbated by increasing frequency and intensity of storms, is expected to significantly impact the Atlantic Coast.

HRM can expect impacts from sea level rise and extreme water levels in coastal areas, including:

- Flooding
- Saltwater intrusion
- Coastal erosion

All of which can significantly damage infrastructure, property and natural features. Limiting damage to coastal communities and ecosystems will require carefully managing development in these areas.

HRM will continue to work with the Province to develop and adopt revised policies and regulations consistent with the Coastal Protection Act and tailored to the HRM context. 15

And finally – regarding Coastal Protection –

We expect that sea level rise and extreme water levels, exacerbated by increasing frequency and intensity of storms, will significantly impact the Atlantic Coast.

As a result of climate change, HRM can expect significant impacts from sea level rise and extreme water levels in coastal areas, including: flooding, saltwater intrusion and coastal erosion.

All of which can significantly damage infrastructure, property and natural features. As a result, it is very important to limit damage to coastal communities and ecosystems by carefully managing development in these areas.

The Regional Plan does set out vertical setback requirements that are implemented through the various community land use by-laws, but we've identified a few gaps in the way this regulation works.

The Province is continuing to work on the Coastal Protection Act regulations. We have been meeting with the Dept of Environment to understand their proposed approach. We are hoping that our timelines will align, so that we will be in a position to adopt revised policies and regulations that are consistent with the Coastal Protection Act and also tailored to the HRM context. If our timelines don't align, there are likely still some adjustments to be made to our policies to strengthen them.

To learn more, ask questions, join the project's mailing list and make your voice heard:

Visit: www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan

Email: regionalplan@halifax.ca

Phone: 902.233.2501

Stay updated on other events and engagement opportunities by following the Halifax Regional Municipality on social media and Shape Your City.

The logo for the City of Halifax, featuring the word "HALIFAX" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is positioned on the right side of a dark blue horizontal bar that spans the width of the page footer. To the left of the text, within the same bar, is a light blue geometric shape consisting of two overlapping triangles.

HALIFAX

**Thank You
For Your
Participation!**

Regional Planning



regionalplan@halifax.ca



902-233-2501

Shape Your City: www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan

Public feedback will be collected until July 16

Slide 17

Regional Plan Review

Transcript – Environment Virtual Q&A (June 15, 2021)

This transcript has been edited for content and clarity.

QUESTION: Why the delay in undertaking the further work on natural corridors until after completion of the Regional Plan?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

We are grappling with a huge amount of work. The Themes and Directions report includes the Halifax Green Network Plan which gave us many directions to work on a variety of things. The natural corridors obviously are one of the most important things that we will need to tackle in the coming months and years. We're looking at ways that we can advance that work through the Region Plan Review so I wouldn't describe it as a delay. We are interested in continuing on with that work. Given that the Green Network Plan is at that high level, and there may be a need to do additional field work, potentially ground truthing, to understand exactly what we're looking at on the ground and understanding how we can regulate those corridors at the site level. It's a significant amount of work, and so it may take some time. We will be working to resource our different projects through the Regional Plan Review and we'll tackle that as we go.

Kate Greene, Program Manager, Regional Planning

We know that there are some corridors that are more important than others in the sense that they are more sensitive or may be closer to development and more under threat. We want to prioritize how we work on them and work in a more coordinated fashion on those as quickly as possible. We've also been meeting with community members and have been working with Karen Beazley (Dalhousie University School for Resource and Environmental Studies) and others to try and rely on expertise in the community to learn more about the important corridors and ecologically sensitive areas. We're certainly not delaying the work, but we're trying to be clear about how we're working on it. We won't be able to get all of that done by the time the Regional Plan comes forward for adoption. A lot of it will be setting up to make sure that we can do that work over the next number of years.

QUESTION: Does the Regional Plan have any role to play in preserving and enhancing the health of wilderness environment that is within HRM but is provincially owned?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Plan

The Municipality is a creature of the Province. We're at the whims of the Province to manage their land as they choose. The Regional Plan does set out the Open Space and Natural Resource designation and we have included much of that Crown Land in that designation. There are specific requirements in there around how land can be subdivided. For example, if the Province chose to sell land, that land would be subject to our municipal regulations, our zoning.

QUESTION: Is there a way to measure carbon sequestration to determine the effects of changes in urban development that affects wilderness areas within HRM?

Shannon Miedema, Program Manager, Energy and Environment

That's a tough one. We do contemplate carbon sequestration in HalifACT, our climate action plan, as part of an important way to help us get to our targets of 2030 and 2050. Recognizing that we have to deal with our relationship and treatment of nature if we're going to be able to improve our climate situation and recognizing that preserving what we do have is really important. Not just for climate mitigation purposes, but also on the adaptation side with reducing flood risks, providing shade, those kinds of things. In our climate plan we also have some actions around regreening initiatives. That is slower. We have to do a lot in a really short term. We also are thinking long term out to 2050 and beyond. You might have heard about different tree goals that the federal government and internationally, around – let's just plant millions of trees – and that will help us ultimately in the long term get to our climate targets. It's not going to help us very much in the short term.

Penelope Kuhn, Policy Coordinator, Parks and Recreation

I would just add that it's incredibly complex to understand carbon sequestration changes in a wilderness area, in a forest. There's a lot of academic literature out there. Folks that have tried to do that. Something we could look at, possibly down the road, is partnering with academics that are studying and measuring these types of changes in forests. Again, it's

complex and depends on the types of trees and the climate, for example. There is lots of work to be done on that.

QUESTION: What steps are being taken to protect stream and lake watershed areas in the Sambro and Purcell's Cove wilderness areas? I mean areas outside the Terence Bay Wilderness or outside existing protected areas like the Shaw Backlands. In particular areas around Governors Pond, First and Third Pond, and even Grover Lake -- where it seems there are several major subdivisions being proposed.

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

The land use by-law regulations have watercourse buffers around watercourses. We're interested in ways that we can better protect watercourses and wetlands. The presentation covered some pieces of that.

These lakes are outside the Urban Service Area, so there is limited subdivision that is allowed in this rural area. Most large-scale development would need to be considered through a [conservation design development](#) process. There are some subdivisions that were approved before the Regional Plan was adopted in 2006, which may just be developing now. Development on those lands will need to meet the watercourse buffer requirements in the applicable land use by-law.

QUESTION (With respect to water bodies): #2) what out of these areas has to be directly protected by the Province, and where are there areas of cooperation needed between the Province and Municipality?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

There's jurisdictional overlap between what the municipality is able to do, what the Province, is able to do. For example, the Province is responsible for approving wetland alteration permits. There is definite coordination required to make sure that we are, from a municipal perspective, using the full range of tools that we have available to us to make sure that we're protecting things as much as we can. Where there are gaps in what we're able to do, that we're coordinated with the Department of Environment to understand their processes and work together on ways to improve.

Shannon Miedema, Program Manager, Energy and Environment

It's almost always a multi-stakeholder partnership when it comes to any

type of water. We do work closely with the Province but also with all the land-owners in the area – developers, quarries, homeowners. There's a lot of moving parts and we know that our urban lakes and watersheds are stressed and it's a whole complicated series of reasons that you can't really tease out. We're talking about the need for multi stakeholder management of these water bodies and we're really excited about some of the work we're doing internally. We've proposed a new water quality monitoring program for a series of lakes within HRM that's gotten the approval of the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee of Council and it's going to Regional Council at the end of this month¹. If they approve that, then we'll be launching a new program and we haven't had a program to regularly monitor our lakes for quite a number of years now. That's the piece that we're really looking forward to, and then we continue to do a lot of work in particular lakes like Banook and MicMac and some other lake across the region.

QUESTION: Does the delay in implementing the Lahey report affect the environment within HRM?

Kate Greene, Program Manager, Regional Planning

In our Regional Plan, the focus on Crown land is on protecting it as open space. It plays an important role in our open space network. We're always wanting to work with the Province on continuing to monitor protection of open space and sustainable practices around management of land and forests. I think that's part of an ongoing conversation that we're continually having with the Province. The Regional Plan reinforces the underpinnings of the with a focus on environment and environmental planning. I think the Lahey Report starts to refocus our practices, and I think that aligns with the Regional Plan and what we're trying to do with the outer reaches of the municipality.

¹ This will be discussed at Regional Council on June 29, 2021, see item 11.4.1: <https://www.halifax.ca/city-hall/regional-council/june-29-2021-halifax-regional-council-special-meeting>

QUESTION: How is the Open Data Initiative being promoted in this process? For example, existing water quality data collection in a Machine Readable format so then it communicated in a community-accessible way.

Emma Wattie, Water Resources Specialist, Energy and Environment

There is open data policy for HRM and that's really what will help guide us moving forward. If the Water Quality Program gets approved by Regional Council that information would be made available in an accessible way but also in a manageable way. Community members will be able to not just see raw data on its own, but also be able to understand it. In terms of open data there are several different open data platforms within HRM. There are other open data platforms that would be for the water quality side and we'd looking to make our data available moving forward.

QUESTION: (FOLLOW UP): Great, how about Open Data with regards to Regional Planning data collection?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

We are interested in getting much better at our data collection overall, for the Regional Plan. We have a set of indicators in the Regional Plan that need to be updated and we're interested in just getting better overall at data collection and tracking as much as we can over time and making sure we're understanding how we're meeting our goals and objectives.

Kathleen Fralic, Planner III, Regional Planning

Some of the open data from our priorities plans, for example, the Halifax Green Network plan data is available through our Open Data portal. There is a fair amount of our grounding data, that is that we're working with for the Regional Plan Review, is available through that portal as well.

(For more information on HRM's Open Data initiative, see here:
<https://www.halifax.ca/home/open-data>)

QUESTION: What will expansion of green infrastructure look like in both municipal right of ways and private/residential properties (as outlined in the presentation) look like and what modifications and policies within the Regional Plan can be implemented to promote putting more green infrastructure in place - including in the Regional Centre?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

The Regional Plan is a high level document and so it will be supportive of other initiatives. The green infrastructure piece has been worked on by our Infrastructure Planning group. In terms of the right-of-ways, we work with a wide range of people, including Halifax Water. That technical aspect may be Energy and Environment.

Shannon Miedema, Program Manager, Regional Planning

Within the Planning department there's some folks working on joint stormwater standards with Halifax Water and looking at what standards would need to be in place for different types of green infrastructure. By that we mean things like bioswales to try and reduce flood impacts, to stormwater to slow heavy rain events before it hits our water bodies to try and limit impacts and limit flooding.

We've also been working closely with the department that deals with their right of ways, Transportation & Public Works, and we actually have a project that's including some green infrastructure in downtown Dartmouth. Climate funding is being put towards that to enable it. That came about as a motion of Councillor Austin's a little while ago so that will be a really interesting project to look at. We've done some work with developers on getting some bioswales in but it's at the early stages. We flagged it as an area of focus as part of environment being a strategic initiative Council over the next four years.

Penelope Kuhn, Policy Coordinator, Parks and Recreation

We do have a naturalization program with a few pilot projects. One of them is in the right-of-way area. That was an initiative that was brought to us from a resident. They've taken a pretty large right-of-way area that was turfgrass and put in hundreds of pollinating plants. It's been very successful. We also have pilots within parks for naturalization, so we've got 3 pilots total and will be going back to Regional Council with the staff report about those pilots at the end of this year. We'll make some

recommendations on moving forward with the full naturalization strategy at that point.

QUESTION: The Urban Forest Master Plan has some neighbourhood goals to increase canopy cover. What role will these goals and/or the Green Network Plan have in the future when HRM urban forests or parklands may be at threat of sale or clearcutting for development. How can these parklands be saved?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

We have an ongoing challenge with trees on private property. We are interested in maintaining as many trees as part of our urban forest canopy as possible and when development is taking place there is always the threat that we will lose some of those trees. It's an ongoing challenge with our regulations. We are typically able to require tree retention through development agreements or if you're around a riparian buffer. We're limited what we can do when the trees are cut when no development is yet proposed. We're continuing to work on a staff report that will address this issue. It is an ongoing issue that we're dealing with our Urban Forester and we are continuing to look for different solutions.

Shannon Miedema, Program Manager, Energy and Environment

We've consulted with other cities across Canada as part of the research for that report to try and figure out what might be the right fit for Halifax. That report is still in draft right now.

QUESTION: What steps are being taken to protect stream and lake watershed areas surrounding the Preston areas? With new development going on close to the city's water supply, are there precautions being taken to preserve the natural function of Lake Major?

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

We do work with Halifax Water. They have their own staff, that work on watershed management and [source water protection](#) planning. They have source water protection plans for all of our drinking water supplies. We work regularly with Halifax Water to make sure we understand exactly what those source water protection plans are saying and that our

regulations are aligned with them. If there is any development that's proposed in the area that could affect those source water lands, we would be consulting with Halifax Water and making sure that we're taking the right steps to make sure that isn't affected.

Kate Greene, Program Manager, Regional Planning

We are also working on the [African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity](#) which focuses on African Nova Scotian communities and has specific goals for infrastructure and planning around water and land use. We're working with that group of people to try and identify issues that are important to community and I suspect that will be raised as part of that process. We will look at it through that through the road to economic prosperity.

QUESTION: Wondering what HRM is doing about sea level rise and storm surge?

Samantha Page, Adaptation Climate Change Specialist, Energy and Environment

It's a really big issue, especially with hurricane season already starting. We have recently flown LiDAR, which is detailed elevation models for all of HRM. This is really exciting because it allows us to very accurately map climate hazards. We'll be using this to overlay updated sea level rise and extreme water level numbers. We're currently doing an extreme water level mapping project. We're going to update our sea level rise numbers. We're waiting a little bit on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, they're the international body on climate knowledge and they are releasing their latest numbers next month. The last update was in 2013, so we're excited to get those updated sea level rise numbers and latest climate science which we'll be using to come up with localized projections on sea level rise. Then we'll be mapping those on our detailed LiDAR maps. Those will be made public. Stay tuned for those, but we're excited to be able to update those for all HRM. In the past we've only been able to do certain areas, but now with the LiDAR data we will be able to do it for all HRM.

QUESTION: Could you tell us a little bit more about the Water Quality Monitoring program that is coming forward?

Emma Wattie, Water Resources Specialist, Energy and Environment

It went to the Environmental and Sustainability Standing Committee earlier this month and was unanimously approved and will be presented to Regional Council later. This program, if approved, would monitor water quality at 74 different lakes across HRM, which have been assessed in a previous study that's also available publicly now. That was done by AECOM and these lakes are a mixture of the highly vulnerable and moderately vulnerable, lakes that have been identified through other previous HRM studies and have been qualified to have high concerns. There will be a mixture of different things that will be collected. The main thing about the program is that it will be a hybrid, in partnership with a lot of communities. We'll be looking for community groups to be involved with the program itself and to support some of the data collection. Training and protocols will be in place. That's a quick overview of what that program will look like.

QUESTION: In HalifACT there is an action item about promoting naturalization on private property. I'm just wondering where that stands and what we can do to support that.

Penelope Kuhn, Policy Coordinator, Parks and Recreation

That's an action item (in HalifACT) but I don't really have an update on what's been done, but perhaps after the staff report that I mentioned earlier about naturalization, there could be some synergy with that how the municipality moves forward on that.

Shannon Miedema, Program Manager, Regional Planning

Our first step was really to inventory all natural assets within the boundaries of HRM, whether HRM has any ownership or control over them or not. Looking at the pilot projects that Parks & Recreation is doing on HRM-owned land, then looking to promote or incentivize other people to do similar things on their lands and what the co-benefits are. There's a big public education component, community mobilization component to that, just like there is for a lot of climate action. We're in the very early stages of that particular action. I'll just say there are 46 actions in the climate plan, and they're all very large, long-term, multi-pieced actions. We're trying to

keep our eyes on all of them right now.

Penelope Kuhn, Policy Coordinator, Parks and Recreation

There's also a [boulevard gardening administrative order](#) that is new and that allows homeowners or landowners to, instead of just having turfgrass in the boulevard (the area between the road and the sidewalk), have all sorts of naturalized plants, such as pollinator plants. That's a new change for HRM, which is a great synergy with the other naturalization projects that we have started as well.

Kate Greene, Program Manager, Regional Planning

From the planning perspective, we are using the Regional Plan Review to frame up our objectives for our suburban and rural planning processes. That way we create detailed regulations in our suburban and rural areas, similar to the way we created regulations for the Centre Plan. One of the things that Council is talking about a lot is green-oriented design and how we consider open space and natural areas in designing or infilling communities. I think that would be an important part of our work going forward and I would say COVID has created more awareness around the importance of green areas, not just for their environmental function, but also for their health benefits and mental health benefits. We're seeing renewed energy around that as well in terms of community design, which is great to hear from Council.

QUESTION: Earlier we were talking about the Coastal Protection Act which is being developed by the province. How is HRM working with the Province on this on this initiative?

Samantha Page, Adaptation Climate Change Specialist, Energy and Environment

On the Energy and Environment side of things, with an adaptation perspective being such a huge part of HalifACT, we're in really close conversations with them. The Act was passed and they are at the stage where they're working on developing the regulations. We have a little bit of insight as to what those will look like, but we're still like everyone else waiting to see what those regulations are going to be and how they align with HalifACT. We were on the same page of the importance of having smart planning around coastal areas. It will be interesting to see what they come out with. We're going to continue to move forward with our climate

action and making sure that when we do our updated sea level rise and extreme water level maps that those are going to be integrated into our planning and updated vertical allowance numbers for development, how far above sea level you would need to develop and hopefully those align with the Coastal Protection Act. I think it's really important that we will align with them, but we may go above and beyond what the Province has suggested based on our localized context.

Leah Perrin, Principal Planner, Regional Planning

In the Themes and Directions Report there is a little bit of a laundry list of gaps that we've identified about the way our coastal requirements work right now. One example is that we have coastal elevation requirements, but the horizontal set back is the same as for inland watercourses. There really is a difference, obviously between the ocean and inland watercourses and regulations should probably reflect that. Another thing might be, how do we deal with barrier beaches or estuaries? These are partly inland but they're still coastal. They still are subject to storm surge and wave action, and need to be treated differently than a lake would be. It will be interesting to see how the Province moves forward and then it will be great if we're aligned. We can certainly go over and above whatever it is that they propose. We are over and above right now with our coastal elevation requirements anyway. That won't be much of a change.