Black Ash buffers: A case study

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This oral presentation focuses on factors limiting protection offered to an endangered species by required buffer zones. The presentation examines the current situation regarding Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) /Wisqoq buffers affecting a harvest plan (AP022053) on Crown land in Annapolis County. When the harvest plan for AP022053 was posted on the Harvest Plan Map Viewer in November 2024, citizen scientists identified and reported 12 species at risk in the plan area, including 3 Black Ash. Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources responded to these discoveries, and 33 comments from the public opposing the planned harvest, by applying buffers of 100 m for the three different species of lichens, and 200 m for Black Ash. The location of the Black Ash buffers, if respected, would have made road access to the harvest area impossible. The harvest area was reduced from 37 to 25 ha. A further hectare was removed as a result of an ARIA assessment that identified an area with a high probability of Mi'kmaw traditional use. In September 2026, a roadway was cut through the Black Ash buffers. In spite of strenuous and documented objections by both Mi'kmaq and citizen scientists, road-building proceeded in October 2026. Black Ash is covered by Nova Scotia's Endangered Species Act. For Mi'kmaq, Wisqoq is a plant of cultural, ecological, and spiritual significance. How have these two facts influenced harvest plan decisions by DNR and road-building activities by WestFor?

Key words: Black Ash, buffers, endangered species, Wisqoq