



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

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NO. 1

This newsletter was put together in early January after an early onslaught of winter weather during the month of December 2007. Thin ice was observed forming on Baddeck Bay in late November as temperatures dropped to what seemed unseasonable lows in comparison to the last few years. Snow was on the ground by December 1, 2007 and has remained! A seal or two has been observed already in Baddeck Bay looking for ice strong enough to lie on. The Society celebrated its 10th anniversary in late July 2007 (See News Items).

Taking stock of the Society's accomplishments is a good measure of our work during this period. Looking back provides a history of an evolving entity that now has its feet firmly established as perhaps the most significant NGO promoting the conservation, protection and restoration of the Bras d'Or Lakes. The Society can take pride in its successes

to date, but must be ever vigilant about its future. Resting on past laurels is not a prescription for achieving future objectives. A lot of work is required to maintain our historical momentum.

In January 2008 the board met to discuss the future of the Society with regards to its strengths and weaknesses. For the past ten years the Society has had a dedicated and consistent board. Our monthly meetings are always well attended given the distances some board members must travel. We have been able to achieve a measure of financial security that allows the Society to pursue those issues that have significant impact on the well being of the Bras d'Or and its watershed.

Charting a path for the future will continue to require an on going commitment by board members. Many of the current board members have been on board since day one. We are concerned about attracting new board members who can step up and move the Society forward. Succession planning is always an issue in a non-profit volunteer organization. Finding dedicated board members is not an easy task.

As the Society begins its second decade, we see a continuing and growing need for an independent organization that will speak up for the Bras d'Or and its watershed. This need is crucial for the future stewardship of what can be best described as a great piece of nature's ecological capital. How well this capital is handled will determine the extent of future returns. To mishandle 'nature's capital' has long term repercussions that often jeopardize building environmental sustainability. We all see the impact with regards to the globalization of the

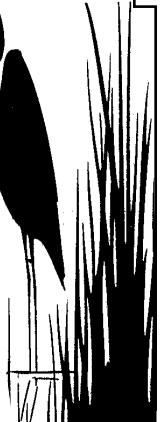
world's economy. We are today ever more aware of the issues of climate change on a global scale. The bottom line is that change on many fronts is inevitable. How well we embrace change determines how we are willing to work to protect what is sacred.

It is our hope that The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society can continue to meet the challenges ahead as it has during the past ten years.

NOTICE

**THE ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING OF THE SOCIETY
WILL BE HELD AT THE
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
MUSEUM ON
SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2008
AT 2:00 PM.
ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED
TO ATTEND AS WELL AS
INTERESTED CITIZENS WHO
ARE CONCERNED WITH THE
FUTURE STEWARDSHIP OF
THE BRAS D'OR LAKES.**

"Our goal
is to
protect,
conserve
and
restore the
Bras d'Or
Lakes"



SUBJECT: ECOSYSTEM OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT REPORT (EOAR) FOR THE BRAS D'OR LAKES NOVA SCOTIA

M. Parker, M. Westhead, P. Doherty and J. Naug. (C.250 pages)

(Canadian Manuscript Report of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 2789)

Reviewed by Jim O'Brien

Over the years, I have accumulated a number of reports, documents, studies, etc. either on or appertaining to the Bras d'Or Lakes. These are useful but the information in them is inevitably scattered and specific subjects are hard to locate. Some of these, such as Jamie Burke'2001 Bras d'Or Lakes subdivision study, were instigated and partially paid for by the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society (the Society) and others, such as the 2002 N.S. Institute of Science Report, without input from the Society as an organization though in the case of the latter Board Member (Tim Lambert) contributed one of the seven articles contained in this report.

Despite the high quality of this particular volume, the subject matter is a bit too technical for most people including yours truly. Of the seven articles, Tim Lambert's contribution 'Overview of the Ecology of the Bras d'Or Lakes with Emphasis on Fish' I think is the most easily comprehended by the non expert.

Technical terms and jargon are not a problem with the EOAR. All sections are easy enough to understand. It is to quote from it a "summary of the biophysical information about the Bras d'Or Lakes area (and watershed)." It includes much useful information on a wide variety of subjects from bedrock features to golfing, from mammals to ballast water, from atmospheric components to human activity. In Section 22.4 Development and Land Use Planning for instance, there is a useful précis of the responsibilities of different government agencies municipal, provincial or federal and the names of the Acts which underpin their separate jurisdictions. Section 11.4.2 Freshwater/Anadromous Fish provides good information on this subject and so on.

The EAOR has 30 colored maps and 50 tables. About 180 scientific sources are cited one such source is once again Tim Lambert. (There is also an O'Brien quoted but at best I can only claim him as a distant cousin, a very distant cousin ...).

To mention just a few subjects on which I was largely ignorant or wrongly informed. I was unaware of the importance of eelgrass as a vital

habitat ingredient for many aquatic species or that eelgrass seems to be either decreasing in quality and quantity or the locations where it is found is changing. I was equally unaware that the Great Bras d'Or Channel (beside which I live), is one of most biologically active parts of the Lakes. I had a quite exaggerated idea of just how much property within the watershed is owned by non-residents. In point of fact it is quite small and most non-resident are Canadians, followed by Americans followed all the others. Though I knew several fish species have taken a beating over the past 25 years or so I was not aware that large areas of productive salt marshes have disappeared or that several types of berries are rarer now than previously or that some plants have almost disappeared.

The EOAR also includes a 47 page report on a 2 day Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Workshop held in May 2006 on held at Eskasoni. This was attended by fifty elders equally divided between the Micmac and non-Micmac communities. I personally believe this was useful addition. The elders provided much useful longitudinal knowledge and scientific information of this kind is relatively recent, fragmented and limited. On most topics Science and TEK reported similar findings. Nevertheless the marriage is not without differences (what marriage is?). For example TEK indicates the overall water levels in the Lakes are dropping. There is as far as I know no scientific evidence to

suggest this is the case in fact Science suggests the opposite. Nor did the NS Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologists' find any objective evidence for the existence of cougars after fifteen years of careful follow up of a number of reported observations in Cape Breton (personal report from a retired DNR biologist). In addition the same biologist stated there never was an actual attempt to re-establish a wolf population in the Highlands though the idea was discussed in some quarters.

However despite these, shall we say inconsistencies, the EOAR is a wide ranging, well indexed, well researched, well produced treasure trove of information that should be a must on the book shelves or in the computer data base of anyone more than superficially interested in the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. It will be a long time, I suspect, before we get anything to match it.

Obtaining hard copies presents difficulties but I am looking into this and may have information in the near future. If you wish to contact me about this, you can do so at (902) 295 2344. However, the report is obtainable online by going into Google, typing in Fisheries and Oceans Canada Library Home Page, clicking on 'waves', type in 'Ecosystems Overview Bras'. Its cat. no. is 327652 or if you can't work this out try phoning the BIO Library at (902) 426 6224.

NEWS ITEMS:

Bagnell Property Remediated:

We are pleased to report that a property located on the shoreline of Baddeck Bay has been remediated. The work took place in November 2007 restoring a partially filled in pond. The work received the stamp of approval of the Department of Fisheries. The Society received in February 2007 the sum of \$3,000.00 which represented the fine levied for the infractions.

Student Project:

Two students were employed in conjunction with the Student Summer Employment program. The students inventoried wetland areas and produced a booklet entitled "Bras d'Or Lakes and Watershed: Protecting our Wetlands and Barachois". One hundred copies of the publication were printed and distributed. The printing costs were paid for by the monies received from the fine levied on the Bagnell infraction. The Society had committed to use the funds for promoting habitat conservation. (See Wetland Article by Pat Bates)

Conservation Easements Granted:

On July 29, 2007 The Bras d'Or Preservation Foundation held a celebration at Beinn Breagh to announce two conservation easements now in place on properties in Bouleceet (Maskell's) Harbor. These two conservation easements protect in perpetuity ecologically significant shoreline property. The donors of these easements are to be congratulated on placing conservation easements as this is the optimal way to protect privately owned shoreline from future development.

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society Celebrates 10th Anniversary:

Milestone anniversaries deserve to be recognized not necessarily with song and dance but rather with an afternoon of information sharing and of course good food!

On July 28, 2007 the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society did this very thing while hosting a 10th anniversary celebration at St. Columbus Parish Hall in Iona. The guest speaker for the afternoon festivities was Mr. Peter Corbyn, P. Eng. At that time Peter was one of twenty-one Canadians trained by Al Gore to present "An Inconvenient Truth" live slideshow.

For the one hundred and eighty people in attendance the two hour presentation was very informative; interestingly enough the topic was on global warming and it was one of the hottest days of summer. At the end of the presentation all those in attendance could attest to the result of extreme heat without some sort of air conditioning.

After the presentation Peter stayed to talk with interested guest to answer question and to share his knowledge on climate change. Later Peter told me the amount of time he spends answering questions by guest after a presentation is how he judges the level of interest on the topic of global warming. And that to date the group of people attending the 10th anniversary celebration was by far the most interested group of people he had spoken to. The expectations were that Peter would do approximately ten of the presentation during 2007. However, on July 28th he had given over one-hundred presentations regarding environment and energy related issues.

I feel it's safe to say the people of

Cape Breton are very interested in the environment & energy related issues. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has played a fundamental part in the protection of the watershed area surrounding the Bras d' Or Lakes over the past ten years. Keep up the good work board members, property owners along the lake, and Cape Bretoners in general; we all need to be good stewards of this precious lake.

I have no doubt the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society will celebrate many more anniversaries; as the wellbeing of the environment becomes more important to each of us and we strive to maintain and advance the health of the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes.

"The greatest sin of our time is not the few who have destroyed but the vast majority who sat idly by. When people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory. Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." (Martin Luther King Jr.)

Mabel MacEachern, Board Member

2007 Memberships:

Society memberships decreased in 2007. The issue was addressed at our January 2008 planning session. We are concerned that former members may have lost interest in supporting the objectives of the Society. It was also discussed that we may lose membership due to the fact that the Society does not have charitable status. We urge you to continue supporting the Society. Please tell a friend about the good work we do?

Financial Support Provided:

Two donations of \$1,000.00 each were made by the Society in 2007.

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News Items cont'd

A \$1,000.00 donation was made to The Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Initiative to defray the costs of printing brochures. A \$1,000.00 donation was also provided to the Pitupaq group to assist in costs associated with waste management for the Chapel Island festival celebrations. The board felt that these two donations help build cooperation and support amongst important people, projects and events.

Condominium Potable Water and Waste Management:

It was brought to the board's attention that several condominium developments are on the drawing boards within the Bras d'Or watershed. Concern has been raised as to the carrying capacity of the designated sites will have with regards to water quality and sewage management. A letter was sent to the appropriate provincial department ministers asking for clarification regarding the rules governing on site sewage treatment for sites of proposed cottage/condominium developments.

Board Meets with NS Government Agencies:

At the November 2007 monthly board meeting representatives from the Nova Scotia Departments of Natural Resources and Environment and Labour met with the board to discuss existing rules and regulations and the enforcement thereof. The board considered it important to receive first hand information to be better informed. Enforcement of current regulations is the only mechanism for preventing land use infractions.

Coastal Zone Management Policy:

In September, Jen Graham, from the Ecology Action Center met with the Board to review issues related to

creating a coastal zone management policy for Nova Scotia. The aim is to muster support from organizations to motivate the provincial government to undertake consultations working towards the implementation of a coastal zone management policy. (See Article by Jen Graham)

Cape Breton Weather Book:

One just never knows what is in store as weather patterns become seemingly more eradicate. If you are interested in a well written and well illustrated book on Cape Breton weather, a great read is a new book entitled Cape Breton Weather Watching (for the naturally curious). This engaging book has been written by Bill Danielson and by the Cape Breton University Press.

Henry Powicki:

On November 8, 2007 Henry Powicki died in Sherborn, MA. He was a retired engineer having worked for General Telephone and Electric Corp. for 32 years. For many years Henry with his family has summered on Boularderie Island which he considered his sacred heaven: a place surrounded by magnificent beauty, cherished friends and relatives. Contributions in his memory have been directed to the Society. We are most grateful and will do our best to use the funds to sustain Henry's love for the Bras d'Or.

Crowdis Mt. Update:

The Society received a letter dated November 17, 2007 from the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour stating that the Crowdus Mt. septic site has been remediated and closed out. It was felt that this letter should be printed in this newsletter to provide the public with information regarding this issue which consumed much time and personal energy. At times the debate was rancorous and heated. Hopefully, we have all learned a lesson from the fact that dumping of

toxic waste in an unmonitored setting can not be tolerated.

Taking a Position:

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society believes that environmentally sensitive land use planning and / or zoning is essential for the protection of the Bras d'Or Lakes. Currently there is such a zoning by-law in place covering The Sporting Mountain watershed in Richmond County. The by-law specifically protects the aquifer from pollution.

In the past there have been attempts to establish a hazardous waste site on Sporting Mountain. Current zoning would prohibit this. We believe there is still the desire by several individuals to reactivate this project. Richmond County has scheduled a review of zoned lands in St. Peter's, Sporting Mountain and Isle Madam.

The Society has taken a position in this matter which supports an orderly zoning process. The position is as follows:

1. We strongly support periodic reviews of zoning plans.
2. We support the existing Land Use By-Laws overriding principle to protect the environment of Sporting Mountain, specifically its aquifer.
3. We believe that any review should utilize existing procedures recently followed in the St. Peter's Review.
4. Any Organization or individual seeking to locate a waste disposal site within the plan area must request a zoning variance.

In addition, in the event that an application for establishment of a contaminated soil treatment site is considered then a separate Federal and Provincial environmental review would be required.

We are hopeful that Richmond County will proceed in an orderly manner to

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News Items cont'd...

Protect the Lake - they are signatories to The Bras d'Or Lakes Charter which Commits them to the long term protection of the Bras d'Or.

David Gunn, Board Member
St. George's Channel

SOCIETY OFFICIALS BRIEFED ON CURRENT BASE METAL MINING EXPLORATION AT LITTLE NARROWS

On May 10, 2007 Stewardship Society officials, Dr. Jim O'Brien, Lynn Baechler and Pat Bates, along with Chief Charlie Joe Dennis of Eskasoni First Nation and Shelly Porter of CEPI (Bras d'Or Lake Planning Secretariat), met at the request of the Merrex Gold Inc. for the purpose of being briefed on the company's ongoing exploration activity at Little Narrows. The company, represented by Mr. Greg Isenor, President and CEO, along with various personnel, was advised to brief the Society on its plans for future exploration and development at the site identified as the Jubilee Zinc Project.

The Stewardship Society has made known over the past ten years that it will be concerned with respect to any development project within the Watershed boundary that may present risk of contamination to the Lake.

The Company's current program of exploration involves extensive drilling on lands presently controlled by the Little Narrows Gypsum Company and generally located toward the western limitation of the Gypsum Company's operation. The Merrex people report that extensive drilling reveals encouraging deposits of zinc/lead extending over an elongated section running under the narrow neck of St. Patrick's Channel and into property areas southeast of the Trans Canada Highway.

Mr. Isenor reported that while considerable drilling activity was yet to be carried out, a large physical sample of the ore would likely have to be mined and shipped to a processing mill to complete final analysis and evaluation. He explained to those in attendance that current project activity was exploratory only and designed to "prove up" the quantity and quality of the ore deposits. Since Merrex Gold is not necessarily in the development of ore extraction companies specializing in mine development and operation would be contracted to undertake the next phase of the project if it is proved.

The meeting concluded with a clear statement by Society officials that a detailed plan would be expected to be presented prior to the commencement of any actual mining activity indicating the potential risks to the Lake and proposed safe guard measures that would be taken. This material would be expected as part of an Environmental Assessment Hearing.

Chief Charlie Joe Dennis inquired as to the economic benefits of such a project for aboriginal and other people, indicating that the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources already has a model for a benefits agreement in place with a local Gypsum Company that could be of interest to the Developer of the Jubilee site if it proceeds.

Stewardship officials will keep members and the public informed of any future activity on this site.

Pat Bates, Chairman

The Bras d'Or Oyster Once Again Under Siege

By James Crawford

Malpeque disease has invaded the Bras d'Or Lakes!

In the late summer and early fall 2007 large mortalities upwards of 90%

were observed on an aquaculture lease around the Boom. Samples were tested at the NS Department of Aquaculture & Fisheries laboratory in Truro. The results were inconclusive. Split samples were sent to the Virginia institute of Marine Science. VIMS declared that MSX which invaded the Bras d'Or Lakes in 2002 was not the cause of mortality, but they could not identify and virus or parasite. Subsequent investigation by NSAF concluded that due to the poor growth, recessed mantle, poor gonad development, inflammation associated with the digestive tract mirrored historical information and slides which the Department had on Malpeque disease.

Malpeque disease is neither a parasite nor virus and has a history in the maritime Canada region. In 1915 the first outbreak occurred in Malpeque Bay Prince Edward Island. Heavy mortalities followed and the industry was crippled. Then again in the 1930s other bays in PEI were infected. From there the disease found its way into the northern New Brunswick and the Gulf shores of Nova Scotia during the 1960s. Since that time these areas have been protected by a natural tolerance that developed in their oysters.

An important note is that oysters with Malpeque disease are not harmful to human health.

On December 4, 2007 the eastern Nova Scotia Oyster Board assembled to the given a review of the outbreak and options were discussed. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has been involved with assisting the oyster population in the Bras d'Or Lakes since its inception. This is accomplished through our constant watch dogging of water quality, shore degradation and ballast water. Our sponsorship of a science enhancement project where four million oysters were seeded out into the waters of the Bras d'Or represent the largest NGO commitment to the survival of the oyster in the Lakes.

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The Bras d'Or Oyster Once Again Under Siege cont'd...

During the ENSOB meeting, a number of options were discussed. There was no consensus arrived at. Unfortunately, if there are no champions and bold steps taken, it will become harder and harder to find live oysters in the Bras d'Or Lakes. The results are obvious; a lessening of water quality and a traditional fishery lost.

The Bras d'Or Stewardship's members are definitely one of the champions of the Bras d'Or Lakes oyster. The question remains: what will come to the aid of the oyster in the Bras d'Or Lakes?

THE STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY STEPS IN TO PROTECT BRAS D'OR WETLANDS

Over the ten years of our Society's existence, we have made every effort to protect the Bras d'Or Lake through our concentration on control and prevention of sewage discharge into the Lake, the control of ballast water discharge into the Lake from commercial vessels, and the protection and preservation of the Oyster fishery. There are a number of other issues related to safeguarding the Lake that we are currently working on, one of which is protecting "Wetlands and Barachois".

Over three years ago, a property owner near the head of Baddeck Bay was charged, convicted and fined under the Federal Fisheries Act for illegally infilling a wetland deemed to be a fisheries habitat area. The Fisheries Department, with the approval of the court, asked the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society to undertake a project of education, information and awareness, building on the importance of Wetlands, Barachois and Bogs to the environmental protection to the Bras d'Or.

The financial penalty to the offender was modest but was directed to the Society to assist in defraying the cost of the special project. The Society committed its funds and received some assistance from Service Canada to engage two university students to carry out the work. Ashley Drohan, a student in Biology and Science at Acadia University, and Grant Petruskavich, a student in the Engineering Department at Cape Breton University, was hired to complete the project. The work outline was developed with the assistance of Shaun Barrington MSC of Mabou.

The work involved visitation to various areas of the Lake and interviews with government officials and scientists to ascertain the characterization and importance of Wetland areas to the long term protection of the Bras d'Or Lake ecosystem.

The project was concluded with the completion of a report, printing of two thousand copies of a brochure and the compilation of the essential information on a CD for Power Point presentation. There has already been delivery of the material to government offices as well as to a number of real estate firms and general contractors. In addition, quantities of the material were delivered to a number of schools around the Lake.

A copy of the Brochure is enclosed with this newsletter and the "Forward" to the report is printed as follows:

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

The Bras d'Or Lakes provide a unique habitat made up of estuarine bodies connected in a way that creates a diverse ecosystem. Located in the heart of Cape Breton Island, they play a huge role economically, socially and environmentally in our society. The Bras d'Or Lakes can be found in all four counties on the Island (Cape Breton, Richmond, Victoria and Inverness). The Lakes are influenced by eight primary fresh water rivers and three channels leading to the salty Atlantic Ocean. Due to the narrowness of these channels, the Lakes receive a limited amount of tidal flushing. This means that pollutants that enter the

system are not easily removed.

Wetlands that are situated in the Bras d'Or Lakes and surrounding watershed play a key role in maintaining the health of this inland sea. They provide a sheltered habitat and food for both plants and animals, slow down shore erosion and sedimentation, regulate water levels within the watershed, cool down the area during extreme warmth, detoxify ground water and even assist in slowing down global warming.

Other important habitats along the shores of the Bras D'Or Lakes are barachois ponds and barrier beaches. These diverse systems, involving a sand bar or protective beach and an inland Barachois pond, provide the Lake with its basis for its food web. Barachois ponds are, like wetlands, a sheltered environment, usually containing shallow, warm water. This makes them an ideal home for species along the lakes to raise their young. These ponds can also slowly develop into wetlands.

Both wetlands and barachois are threatened by human activity within the watershed of the Bras d'Or Lakes. Altering these fragile environments, by excavation, infilling, dredging, flooding or draining, has harsh consequences to the health of our lakes. The wetlands and barachois ponds are protected by acts put into place by the Department of Environment and Labor, Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Failure to abide by these rules results in legal punishment.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the key functions and roles that wetlands and barachois ponds play in the Bras d'Or Lakes system. It is designed to educate the people of Cape Breton on how to protect and save these crucial environments.

Pat Bates
Chairman



Department of the Environment and Labour

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B1P 6H7

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December 17, 2007

Mr. Pat Bates
Bras d'Or Stewardship Society
PO Box 158
Baddeck, NS
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Dear Mr. Bates,

The clean closure of the Crowdus Mountain septic facility has been completed. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank your organization for their contribution to the community liaison committee and the close out process. The committee was established in 2005 as a way to provide for the exchange of information regarding the closure of the Crowdus Mountain septic facility and to provide an opportunity for CLC members to make a recommendation on a closure alternative for this site. The work of the CLC lead to the recommendation to carry out a clean closure of the site. The Department of Environment and Labour complied with that recommendation and commenced the closure work this past summer.

The clean closure as defined in the 2006 Guidelines for the handling, treatment, and disposal of septic is removal of all lagoon contents (liquid and solid) for disposal in an appropriate manner. The clean closure plan developed by NSEL for this site included the removal and disposal of supernatant (liquid), removal and disposal of sludge, site contouring and stabilization and groundwater and surface water monitoring. To ensure septic sludge impacted soil was removed from site, soil samples were collected from the floor of the lagoons and walls. All sampling results confirmed the sludge has been removed from the site.

The physical close out work finished on Friday, November 23 with final site contouring and stabilization. The groundwater and surface water monitoring program will continue for at least another year. All groundwater and surface water monitoring data to date do not indicate the lagoons have impacted MacDonald Brook.

During the site contouring component of the close out, an area of soil impacted by hydrocarbon was found. This is a separate issue. The Department is working with the property owners, Island Vacuum, to ensure the site is assessed according to established NSEL requirements. This property will be held to the same standard that is applied to any Nova Scotian that has hydrocarbon impacted soil on their property.

As a wrap up to the CLC process, a final report will be sent to all CLC members in the new year that summarizes the close out work and the results of testing on Crown Land.

If you have any questions, regarding the close out of the Island Vacuum site, you can contact me at munroesz@gov.ns.ca

Regards,

Sharon Munroe

Sharon Munroe
A/District Manager

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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Bras d'Or Watch
to report any observed acts, incidents and violations that threaten
the integrity of Bras d'Or Lakes please call:

1 800 565 1633

Our Email: stewardship@baddeck.com

2008

BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

MEMBER \$15.00
FAMILY \$25.00
CONTRIBUTOR \$50.00
SUPPORTER \$100.00
LIFETIME MEMBER \$500.00

Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the
Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through
responsible stewardship.

Name _____

Address _____

Mail check or money order along with your name
and address to:

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society
P.O. Box 158
Baddeck, Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0

Phone _____

e-mail _____

Fax _____

The Coast is Clear

Nova Scotia needs a provincial coastal strategy

By Jen Graham

Fighting for the coast

"There's something wrong when you have to fight like this just to keep your friggin' harbour." These poignant words by fisherman Eugene Broome adorn the front of a postcard prepared by the Friends of Port Mouton Bay as part of their campaign against a 70 hectare salmon fish farm in Port Mouton Bay. Their struggle illustrates the tremendous need for Nova Scotia to develop and implement a provincial coastal strategy as a framework for decision making in coastal areas, such as Port Mouton Bay.

The recently proclaimed provincial Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act states that the health of the economy, the environment, and the health of the people of the province are interconnected. Why then does the government seemingly ignore citizens groups resisting environmentally destructive, unsustainable, and ultimately economically unviable projects in coastal areas?

Groups like the Friends of Port Mouton Bay embody the stated intent of the Sustainable Prosperity Act by fighting to protect the sensitive coastal and marine environment that is the basis for the area's economy. This is just one of the few coastal issues making headlines in Nova Scotia, and these local heroes but one example of how much people care about the coast.

Loving the coasts

Our coasts inspire a range of feelings and perspectives. Some of us highlight the importance of coastal infrastructure such as wharves and shipping facilities to the province's economy. Others marvel at the astounding biological productivity and the ecological services provided by coastal wetlands, barrier beaches, headlands, intertidal flats and coastal barrens. Few can deny the allure and mystique of undeveloped, wild

coastlines. Some point out the rising value of coastal real estate and tourism to Nova Scotia's economy; and still others sound the alarm that the most endangered species in the country are coastal dwellers.

Each of these perspectives is true. Nova Scotia's coasts are our greatest asset. Yet like any undervalued and under-protected treasure, it is at risk



Protecting Nova Scotia's Shoreline?

of disappearing from right under our noses.

Understanding the current reality

Nova Scotia is one of the few jurisdictions in North America without an overarching coastal management strategy. Consequently, there is no provincial policy or legislation that protects coastal areas from unwise development or that regulates the type of activities that can take place in coastal areas. As a result, the coasts are literally falling between the cracks.

Currently, all three levels of government - federal, provincial, and municipal have some responsibility for an aspect of coastal management. There are a maze of regulations and policies that impact the coast, which are outlined in the accompanying table. Yet every analysis of Nova Scotia's coastal policy shows the need for a comprehensive coastal policy framework. The publications page of

the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia website <http://ccns.chebucto.org/index.htm> features many reports and backgrounders on coastal issues in Nova Scotia.

Suffering the consequences

Poorly regulated and largely unplanned development has resulted in the loss of coastal biodiversity and ecologically significant habitats, a sharp decline in coastal water quality as evidenced by growing number of beach closures and areas closed to shellfish harvesting, and a reduction in the overall stability and resiliency of the coast in certain parts of the province. It has also led to construction of homes, roads and other infrastructure that are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, increased flooding, accelerated erosion and storm surges.

The way forward

To prevent further destruction and mitigate the consequence of poor planning, the province needs to stand up and deliver a provincial coastal strategy that includes a package of measures to guide decision making on the coast.

Presently, much of the leadership on coastal issues in Nova Scotia is coming from the grassroots. They are sounding the alarm about unwise coastal development, researching issues and alternatives, and dedicating thousands of hours and oodles of money into protecting coastal areas. They do this in the vacuum caused by absence of a coherent coastal policy framework. When, as it inevitably must, Nova Scotia implements a coastal strategy and better municipal land use planning, local municipalities and communities must be involved in developing and implementing these plans.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT	RESPONSIBILITY	
FEDERAL Department of Fisheries and Oceans	Integrated coastal management Water (from low water mark) Fish Passage and habitat	rate of erosion.
Environment Canada	National Parks and Historic Sites Species at risk (migratory birds and marine species) Wildlife and their habitat Federal wetlands Fresh water resources and their management Environmental Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public access: Nova Scotians and visitors alike feel a deep connection with the ocean. Current patterns of intensifying coastal development frequently block access to traditional coastal access points. This has implication for local recreation and livelihood activities, as well as the tourism industry. Yet indiscriminate public access to the coast can have negative impacts on wildlife and their habitat. Dunes for example are prone to erosion and blowouts after being repeatedly trampled by beach goers. Appropriate public access to the coast is key. There are times of year when some species need peace and quiet to successfully reproduce.
Transport Canada	Navigable Waters	
PROVINCIAL Dept. of Natural Resources	Provincial parks and protected beaches Shoreline alterations and infrastructure Species at risk (flora, fauna, nesting sites)	
Dept. of Environment and Labour	Water, watersheds, and waste water Wilderness protected areas Freshwater and coastal wetlands Off highway vehicle operations (ATV's)	
Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries	Inland fisheries and waters Aquaculture Fish habitat Marshland conservation	
Tourism, Culture, and Heritage	Promotes coastal tourism products Manages coastal tourism assets	
Service NS and Municipal Relations	Regulation of land use Implementing Municipal Government Act	
Dept. of Energy	Climate change Tidal power and wind energy	
Transportation and Public Works	Public Infrastructure	
Dept. of Education	Special Places	
MUNICIPAL Individual Municipalities	Land use planning	

Elements of a coastal strategy

- Coastal mapping:** Detailed, up-to-date and easily accessible coastal maps that identify sensitive and/or significant coastal features are the basis for sound coastal management. Decision makers need information make informed choices about the wisdom of certain projects. Coastal mapping also includes coastal waters and aquatic assets
- Stepping back:** Setbacks are essentially “no build zones” a certain distance from the water’s edge. Setbacks are important

because ocean coasts shift over time due to natural processes like erosion and accretion. Setbacks give the coast room to move. They also protect developments from the impact of the sea, including storm surges and floods. A wide setback, especially when it includes a vegetated buffer zone also protects coastal waters from the impacts of development including run off from lawns and roads, and chemical or organic contamination. Many scientists agree that the width of coastal setbacks should depend on the type of coastlines and the annual

- Working Waterfronts:** Nova Scotia’s coast is dotted with fishing and shipping infrastructure including harbour and wharves. These are integral to the economic survival of many coastal communities. New types of coastal activities like recreational boating sometimes conflict with traditional activities. A working waterfront policy, such as the one recently adopted in Maine allows for new tourism and recreational infrastructure, while continue to prioritize access and infrastructure for traditional users.
- Water quality:** The cumulative impacts of urban and agricultural run off, untreated sewage, malfunctioning septic systems, sedimentation, and other land based pollution is having serious consequences for water quality in coastal waters. Watershed management and land use are vital to protecting coastal waters, as is the clean up and re-opening contaminated shellfish harvesting areas in Chezzecook, the Annapolis Basin and St. Margaret’s Bay through provincial, municipal, community partnerships.