



# THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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

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Crunch time has rapidly reared its unwelcomed presence as economic uncertainties ripple through our economy. Business slowdowns (shutdowns) and job losses are increasingly present in the local economies of communities surrounding the Bras d'Or Lakes. Such times force individuals and communities to 'rethink' the sustainability of marginal rural economies to say nothing of their urban counterparts.

Non-profit and charitable organizations must also 'rethink' their viability as money tightens and priorities force change. Public donations tend to decline as disposable incomes seek restructuring as individuals cope with growing economic adversities.

Some of the first entities often to suffer economic duress are environmental organizations of charitable and non-charitable status. People forego making donations as essential needs

take precedence over long term environmental concerns. The fact is environmental matters often get short changed.

Given the various threats to our global and local environment what better time is there then now to concentrate on embracing green technologies and healthy environmental strategies to assuage future effects of global warming?

The recent dramatic drop in fuel prices signals a false sense of complacency making it too easy to relapse to status quo thinking. Oil is cheap. Costs to drive have fallen dramatically from their summer 2008 highs. Heating oil has dropped almost \$.50 per liter. Those who impulsively purchased wood pellet burning stoves to offset high heating oil costs are having a hard time sourcing pellets!

Hence, unpredictability is today's rule of thumb as world markets gyrate from irrational highs to current market bottoms that have wiped unprecedented paper money wealth. Underlying this is on going pressures on resources and commodities. Alternative energy projects are being placed on the back burner as credit markets freeze up and investors scurry for safety as deflation takes it toll.

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is fortunate in being a financially conservative environmental advocate. We have on going expenses, but no high overhead costs such as staffing or office rental. Hence, with continued public support and good management of our resources we should ride out the current economic storm continuing our work to protect, conserve and restore the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed.

We hope you continue enjoy The Blue Heron and support the Society.

## NOTICE

**THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY WILL BE HELD AT THE**

**BELL MUSEUM**

**IN BADDECK ON**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2009**

**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.**

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



## NEWS ITEMS:

### **Society Semi-Annual Meeting**

On August 13, 2008 the semi-annual meeting of the Society was held at the Community Center in Baddeck. Close to 30 individuals attended the meeting. Fred Baechler spoke about his trip to Greenland and showed slides depicting the affects of global warming. Charlie Denis, Eskasoni First Nations Chief, made a presentation focusing the current status of fish stocks in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Pat Bates reported on the Society's activities.

### **Planning Document Tabled**

A planning document has been tabled reflecting the work of CEPI ( Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative) with regards to establishing guidelines and recommendations for future development with the Bras d' Or watershed. The results were a collaborative effort by various groups and levels of government to arrive at acceptable standards that will enhance future development that considers environmental issues proactively. (See Pat Bates's piece ['Bras d'Or Lakes Management'](#))

### **Kildare Landing**

By late fall 2008 Kildare Landing was well on its way to closing in the six condominium units currently under construction. This is the first phase of a 34 unit condo minimum development on property contiguous to the Bell Bay Golf course. This is a high end venture with regards to buy in costs and service infrastructure. A big issue is the cost of sewage management. It has yet to be made public how the treatment of sewage from the condominium units will be handled. Recent communication reveals that plans are in the works to build a sewer main that will hook up with Baddeck's sewer line at the Bell

Museum. This would entail a 6,000 foot line running along the Baddeck Bay road.

### **Middle River Watershed**

The Middle River Watershed Society is actively formulating potential projects to enhance the Middle River watershed and protect the Middle River. This society is concerned with protecting the river, minimizing riverbank erosion, maintaining fish stocks as well as water quality. The society will meet with CEPI in February 2009 to discuss potential actions for developing a strategic plan.

### **Geo-Connections**

A new an innovative mapping project has been announced by Cape Breton University's Bras d'Or Institute for the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. Bruce Hatcher, current director of the institute, is overseeing this project with cooperation of Imagine Canada ([www.imaginecanada.ca](http://www.imaginecanada.ca)) to utilize cutting edge mapping tools to better delineate and describe cartographic details of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

### **Habitat Remediation**

Recently, the Society has been contacted by a consulting engineer regarding advice about habitat rehabilitation in connection to a Baddeck waterfront dredging and wharf construction project. The project is waiting clearance from appropriate government agencies. If a habitat is disturbed the federal Dept. of Fisheries policy is to enhance and restore habitat in another location to replace that which has been disturbed.

### **2008 Summer Boat Traffic**

Summer 2008 witnessed a decline in boat traffic as high fuel prices and poor weather combined to throw a spanner in recreational boating on the Bras d'Or. Figures have not been

sought for number of boats transiting the St. Peter's Canal, but the number is significantly less. Given the current economic uncertainties, it is doubtful that boat traffic will increase in 2009 even though fuel costs have witnessed a significant decline.

### **Lake Uist Project**

Despite a letter written to principals of this project by Pat Bates, no response has been received regarding the status of this project. It is hoped that some relevant information will be forth coming that will provide information requested. With out solid facts it is difficult to assess the impact of the project on Lake Uist and the surrounding watershed.

On December 16, 2008 the Cape Breton Regional Municipality voted unanimously to support a "call" for a full federal environmental review of the proposed wind and hydroelectric power project at Lake Uist. This review had already been requested by a community group, the Save the Grand River Watershed Association. Initial plans called for 44 wind generators and a hydroelectric plant pumping water up to a reservoir which would then be released to create electricity.

### **Nova Scotia Property Tax Alleviation**

The Province of Nova Scotia has recently passed legislation to eliminate property taxes on ecologically significant land which has a conservation easement in place or is owned by a legitimate land trust entity. This is a great leap forward in the campaign to preserve 12% of Nova Scotia's land base for conservation and environmental protection. Private property owners with ecologically significant property should jump at the opportunity to conserve their land given the new tax incentives for so doing.

## ***Watersheds Within a Watershed*** **Communities Get Involved**

**W**e tend to think of the Bras d'Or Lake and its watershed as one large mass of land and water encompassing the heartland of Cape Breton Island. In reality, the water's perimeter is made up of 12 smaller community watersheds or settlements.

There are movements underway in some of these communities either through Development Associations or Watershed Associations to clean up dump sites, streams and brooks and generally improve the environment and aesthetics of a distinct area of the Lake.

One such group is the "Stewards of the River Denys Watershed Association." Members of this community organization have worked diligently to improve and upgrade the area in and around Denys Basin. Their efforts summarized in a concise reporting format were captured in the Executive Summary of that Report as follows:

### ***Executive Summary***

The Denys Basin watershed is one of the 12 sub-watersheds of the Bras d'Or Lakes, a unique semi-enclosed inland sea on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. The Denys Basin watershed is approximately 300 km<sup>2</sup> and is comprised of the north and south basins, the River Denys and its catchment area. The River Denys is one of only four major rivers flowing into the Bras d'Or Lakes. Important ecological features in this watershed include: The Bornish Hill Nature Reserve; Bald Eagle nesting sites; salmon, trout, and herring spawning areas; a significant wetland complex at Big Marsh; a large deer wintering area at Eden; the presence of a provincially vulnerable Wood Turtle population;

and an oyster fishery once of regional significance. Past and present uses in this area include gypsum mining, agriculture, cottage development, forestry, marble mining, a landfill, oyster fishing and aquaculture.

Since 1999, a non-profit community group, the Stewards of the River Denys Watershed Association, have been concerned with restoring, maintaining, and protecting the aquatic environment of the Denys Basin watershed. To this end, the Stewards' group has formed strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Georgia Pacific, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, the Nova Scotia Youth Corps, and other government departments.

The Bras d'Or Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) has also been operating within the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed in order to develop an overall management plan to support addressing the many issues occurring across the whole watershed. CEPI consists of a broad range of federal, provincial, municipal, and First Nation governments; NGOs; industry representatives; academics; and community members, and has a formal secretariat based at the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources in Eskasoni. A framework to advance this overall management plan is being developed where 12 key planning tasks are to be completed for the whole Bras d'Or and for each of the sub-watersheds. The CEPI look to the progress of the Stewards' group in River Denys as a good model to support and promote in the other 11 sub-watersheds around the Bras d'Or.

Work to date of the Stewards and their partners has been focused on two main areas: the restoration of freshwater aquatic habitat and the development of an overall management plan for this sub-watershed.

The restoration projects have been undertaken on McIntyre Brook and on Big Brook, at a former gypsum mine site, where in-stream habitat,

riparian habitat, and stream bank erosion issues are being addressed. These projects have taken place over several years with support of the former mine operator and are ongoing (see Appendix D for summary of restoration efforts).

Efforts to develop an overall management plan include planning studies conducted in 2001 by Parker and 2005 by Barrington. These efforts were supported by Fisheries and Oceans Canada under the federal Oceans program. Parker undertook a biophysical assessment of the freshwater and estuarine systems by reviewing aerial photographs to identify high priority areas for remediation related to water quality, sedimentation, ecosystem health, riparian habitat, and hydrology. Barrington complemented this work by assessing the issues and concerns of the community by mailing questionnaires to all watershed residents (approximately 300 homes) and conducting interviews. She also summarized the published scientific literature on the environment of this area as an ecosystem overview and tested some community based monitoring protocols for oyster and aquatic habitat (see Appendix D for summaries of Parker and Barrington studies). A broad range of issues were identified by Parker and Barrington which were further prioritized by the community through public meetings. The highest priority issues included:

- improving fish habitat (particularly from sedimentation),
- increasing public education of environmental issues,
- assessing impacts from former landfill site,
- addressing illegal dumping or garbage, and
- restoring oyster populations in the basin.

Based on these priorities, Actions Plans have been developed that aim to translate the issues identified in

*...cont'd on page 4*

the planning process into tangible projects (see Appendix A for Action Plans). Part of the requirements for completing these Action Plans is to ensure that the Stewards' group has sufficient support to coordinate the actions identified. A funding proposal to secure this support has also been developed (see Appendix B for financial needs).

Questions regarding this Management Plan can be directed to:

Randy MacDonald, President  
Stewards of the River Denys  
Watershed Association  
RR #1 River Denys, NS B0Y 1E0

(902) 756-3338  
r.macdon@ns.sympatico.ca

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## ***Bras d'Or Lakes Management***

The public's appreciation of the importance of the Bras d'Or Lake has grown significantly over the past decade and nowhere is it more evident than in the various activities underway to ensure the Lake's protection over the long term. Some of these activities are carried out under the auspices of the "Collaborative Environment Planning Initiative" (CEPI). Other actions, although initiated separately are, in nearly every instance, carried out in liaison with CEPI.

Some examples of the many activities appear as special items from time to time in this Newsletter. However, the linkages between them are not always apparent and a listing of some of those activities might be helpful forum

First, as a reminder, CEPI is a forum for planning and cooperation involving a representative group of federal, provincial, municipal government departments and agencies, members of the five First Nations,

as well as business and not-for-profit organizations. To the extent possible, all or any projects having an impact on the Lake or adjacent Watershed are initiated by and/or reviewed by CEPI.

Following is a sampling of some projects now completed or underway:

- Amended Federal Regulations prohibiting discharge of sewage from pleasure craft.
- Changes to Federal Regulation restricting dumping of ballast water in the Bras d'Or Lake region.
- Requesting full disclosure and environmental hearings prior to approval of Lake Uist power project.
- Completed consulting study on suggested best practices for Land Development Standards near the Bras d'Or Lake. It is planned to present the recommendations to the respective planning councils in the area for their consideration and possible adoption.
- Completed project recommending to the public the importance of Wetlands and fishery habitat around the Lake and stressing importance of destroying such areas with improper or illegal infilling or dredging.
- In progress: development of a Bras d'Or Lake and Watershed Environmental Management Plan.
- In progress: Bras d'Or Ecosystem Report Card.
- In progress: Preparation in advanced stage on Nomination Submission to secure UNESCO Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve.
- Liaison with Developers of Golf Course at Ben Eoin now under construction to encourage best methods to avoid discharge of run-offs and wet clays into the Lake.

- Surveillance and monitoring of aggregate and gravel pits within Watershed area to minimize run-off and erosion.
- Advocated changes in the New Land Registry Migration System to prove sufficient safeguards for landowners and buyers in land sales or purchase transactions.
- Supporting initiatives by Middle River Stewardship Group to develop a Watershed Management Plan.
- Assisted and supported: Whycomagh Community Eco-center.
- Offered a scholarship to a deserving student submitting worthy essay in support of protecting the Lake.

There are many actions executed on a day-to-day basis both by members of CEPI and individual organizations directed toward protection of the Lake. And while improper sewage discharge remains a problem in some areas around the Lake, growing concerns with land erosion and sea level rise are becoming more alarming and will require closer monitoring in future years.

Pat Bates  
Chairman



## ***The Coast Is Clear***

*Prepared by Jennifer Graham  
Coastal Coordinator  
Ecology Action Centre*

**D**oes it matter that the province of Nova Scotia promised to develop a Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy by 2010 as part of their Coastal Management framework announcement in June 2008? I think it does matter. This announcement reflects public interest and concern around intensifying coastal development, coastal water quality, accelerated erosion, dwindling coastal access, the impacts of climate change on Nova Scotia's shorelines, coastal ecosystem and habitat degradation, and the fate of important coastal infrastructure such as harbours and wharves.

The provincial government has commissioned a State of the Coast report, which will highlight current knowledge of, and issues affecting, Nova Scotia's coast. This report will be publicly available in early 2009. In the spring of 2009, the provincial government will hold a series of public consultations about coastal management in Nova Scotia. The input from these meetings will contribute to the upcoming Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy.

Groups like the Bras D'Or Stewardship Society have spent a great deal of time finding solutions for coastal issues at a local and regional level. There is an enormous amount of expertise within the organization – and a demonstrated commitment to research, analysis, collaboration, and problem-solving. Volunteer organizations like the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

have an important role in influencing the provincial sustainable coastal development strategy. Your contribution does matter, and I look forward to hearing what your membership has to say. For more information, contact Jennifer Graham at [coastal@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:coastal@ecologyaction.ca)

In other news, the Ecology Action Centre recently hosted a workshop called True Grit: Towards a New Vision for Healthy Beaches in Nova Scotia. The discussion paper and workshop report are available from [beach@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:beach@ecologyaction.ca)

The Ecology Action Centre recently partnered with Clean Annapolis River Project, Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition on Sustainability, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nova Scotia Chapter to host a workshop called "Headwaters to Headland to the Oceans: Exploring Collaboration for our Coastal and Water Futures.. One of the many spin off of this "H2O" event was a new provincial network for watershed groups, which will be housed within the Nova Scotia Environmental Network's Water Caucus. The network will help watershed groups exchange information and also provide a forum for groups to engage in the upcoming provincial water strategy process. For more information, contact Jocelyne Rankin at [water@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:water@ecologyaction.ca)

Jen Graham kindly updates the current progress or lack there of developing a Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy for the province of Nova Scotia.



***The Bras d'Or  
Stewardship Society  
is interested in  
contributions from  
our members. If  
you have something  
to contribute to  
the Newsletter or  
would like to work  
with the society's  
board, please let us  
know. The society  
is an all volunteer  
organization that  
welcomes input from  
individuals interested  
in promoting the  
conservation,  
protection and  
restoration of the  
Bras d'Or Lakes and  
its watershed.***

Pjila'si **Welcome** to the first release of the **Pitu'paq Communique**, published monthly to inform people on Pitu'paq's activities.

Pitu'paq represents the five Unama'ki First Nations communities and five municipal units in Cape Breton on issues surrounding sewage in the Bras d'Or Lakes and other environmental issues affecting the Lake's water quality.

Welcome **Mike Routledge**, interim Nova Scotia Environment's Bras d'Or Lakes and Pitu'paq coordinator who is filling in for **Sharon Munroe** while she takes maternity leave to care for her new daughter...Pitu'paq's new website is up and running at [www.pitupaq.ca](http://www.pitupaq.ca)...The Chapel Island Mission's environmental initiative coordinated for the second year by Pitu'paq, was a great success this year with new service roads being built, clean-up of debris before and after the Mission, daily sewage pump outs, garbage and recycling programs, and education. There are many challenges ahead for the Mission to continue to minimize it's environmental footprint and expand Pitu'paq's initiatives...Inverness County has hired ABL Consulting to provide recommendations for the Whycocomagh sewage treatment...Waycobah has hired the MacDonnell Group to look closely at their sewage treatment needs...With municipal elections over and most First Nation's communities having had theirs, some of Pitu'paq's representatives will be changing. Stay tuned...Nova Scotia Environment has a process in place to evaluate innovative new technologies for sewage treatment...Pitu'paq is responsible to oversee the application for the Canada Shipping Act designation of the Bras d'Or Lakes. In 2010 it will be against the law for any type of vessel to dump untreated sewage into the Lakes. A working committee has been established to oversee this process with Transport Canada...A workshop is being planned on federal and provincial roles in protecting freshwater and wetland resources... Discussions are underway with Richmond and Victoria Counties and Eskasoni on a pilot project for small wastewater management districts...A presentation on Emergency Measures Planning is being arranged for a future Pitu'Paq meeting...Pitu'paq's next meeting will be held 21 November.



Pjila'si **Welcome** to the second release of the **Pitu'paq Communique**, published monthly to inform people on Pitu'paq's activities.

Pitu'paq represents the five Unama'ki First Nations communities and five municipal units in Cape Breton on issues surrounding sewage in the Bras d'Or Lakes and other environmental issues affecting the Lake's water quality.

Potlotek's new Chief Kenny Basque was welcomed as Pitu'paq's latest member. Esmond (Blue) Marshall is now Eskasoni's new representative on the committee...Pitu'paq has established a working committee to review the organization's responsibilities regarding the Canada Shipping Act designation of the Bras d'Or Lakes. In 2010 it will be against the law for any type of vessel to dump untreated sewage into the Lakes. Vessels with toilets must have a holding tank or marine sanitation device and pump-out stations must be used to discard untreated sewage. Pitu'paq's responsibilities include education and making sure that proper enforcement mechanisms are in place...An interesting presentation was made to Pitu'paq by Clark Paul who has built a special ceremonial drum for Chapel Island to be used during the annual Mission. Among the responsibilities of the drum keeper are a weekly smudging, and an annual fast and sweat lodge ceremony...A committee was formed to pilot wastewater management districts in Eskasoni, Richmond and Victoria Counties. The committee will also identify other areas that might participate...Pitu'paq has developed a new system to keep track of correspondence and archive all minutes, financial statements and meeting handouts. Central to the new system is a separate post office box dedicated to the organization's correspondence...A Certificate of Status for on-site sewage disposal systems that would be issued when properties are sold is a project that Pitu'paq has recommended There will be discussions between Nova Scotia Environment and Nova Scotia Association of Realtors (NSAR) to review materials from training courses that have been held with NSAR members... Pitu'paq's next meeting will be held 16 January 20089 in Wacobah.



# **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](mailto:stewardship@baddeck.com)

**2009**

## **BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY**

MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15.00		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through responsible stewardship.
FAMILY	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25.00		
CONTRIBUTOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$50.00		
SUPPORTER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100.00	Name	
LIFETIME MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$500.00	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