



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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

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NO. 1

A Holistic Approach

The word holistic has entered our vocabulary some 30 years ago. Or at least, that is when I became aware of it. Its appeal reached everywhere and the concept grew.

To be a business that uses holistic techniques means that the entire organization is considered in its process and policies, as opposed to focusing on its specific components. In order to implement such a process, "thinking out of the box" is surpassed by removing the box altogether.

It takes training for a holistic business strategy to work because it doesn't involve only a handful of an organization's team members, but instead the entire team. To achieve success the situation of a company must be considered completely. This is possible only if the entire staff is working on the same level of understanding.

If we look at the holistic characteristic of nature, it is obvious that water, soil, and plants

ceaselessly interact. Soil needs water to help provide growth to plants. The introduction of human interaction through the clear cutting of forests completely ignores the holistic concept whereas selective cutting offers a more holistic or sustainable perspective, both protecting nature and providing long term subsistence for the forester.

Nature responds to human activity. If cutting trees indiscriminately is the action, one of the reactions can be erosion, resulting in soil loss and suspended sediment in a stream, a lake, or another body of water.

Recognizing the short sightedness of this practice as an obviously wrong decision calls for corrective action.

Education can accomplish much to support clear thinking, the team that supports a desire to choose the right solution.

This is where the holistic business model comes in. The players involved are the Environment, the woodlot owners, the DNR, and the companies or contractors involved in harvesting trees. All of us need to be on the same page. We all need training to understand how each team member is to work with the others to achieve maximum potential of our forests.

William Lahey's Report on forestry practices gives us his management solutions. I have chosen one recommendation out of 45 for this newsletter to illustrate the effort to change a dismal record. I am providing the link for you to explore this pathway better. In fact it is a duty for all to do so to the best of

our understanding.

https://novascotia.ca/natr/forestry/Forest_Review/

So here is Recommendation # 8:

In general, those responsible for forestry practices, including DNR and licensees on Crown land, should make decisions that favour uneven-aged management and which recognize that clear-cutting is inappropriate in the following circumstances: a. In natural stands that are governed by gap dynamics and infrequent stand initiating regimes. b. In young stands that are still exhibiting rapid growth in volume and/or value, c. In forests with high recreational or social value. d. Where ecological values are likely to be impaired at a landscape level. e. In areas characterized by sensitive or thin soils or on steep slopes. f. In situations that may cause deterioration of aquatic values through processes such as erosion and siltation. g. In municipal watersheds or when a high proportion of any watershed area has already been clear-cut or otherwise disturbed. h. Adjacent to the boundaries of parks, nature reserves, wilderness areas, or

...cont'd on page 2

In This Issue

	Page
A Holistic Approach	1
Presentation by DND at the CEPI Meeting	2
Concerned Citizen Letter	2
A Tribute to Anna Curtis Steele	3
Letter to Minister of Environment	3
RV Park Approval	4
CEPI Youth Conference	7



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

Concerned Citizen

other ecological reserves.

Even though this report is calling for a clear improvement over past practices and asking for a reform NOW, it is not a complete recipe. As one might infer from one comment that the Ecology Action Centre has pointed out in its article **The good, the bad, and the missing**, it will be a long time before we get another chance at improving our forest management.

“Most shockingly of all, the report completely avoids comment on the significant new consumptive pressure of high-volume harvesting of trees to feed large biomass electricity generators, both here and abroad. It’s a glaring omission.”

The Chronicle Herald, September 8, 2018. Ecology Action Centre.

Preserving the Bras d’Or Lake is challenging when the whole of its watershed is constantly stressed. Healthy forests are a must. Giving them time to rest and grow should be the preferred option. The Lahey report also could and should have been given enough time to deal with the practice of harvesting forests to feed the “biomass” hunger. We must wonder why this important issue was sidestepped.

Diane J. Sober, Editor

Presentation by DND at the CEPI Meeting Concerning UXOs on Legacy Sites

UXOs : used/discarded munitions that remain unexploded.

Feb. 20, 2018 BSS Meeting

To the Bras d’Or Stewardship Society (BSS):

The BSS is of extreme importance to the vitality of our local population, the environment of the Bras d’Or watershed, and the entire Cape Breton region. I think the BSS should work in perpetuity to protect all of the above.

I wonder if the BSS could take the lead, determining and then showing how we can become effective stewards of our region.

My idea is that the BSS could assist to organize, monitor, and share the data from smaller defined neighbourhoods, similar to the ones created by DFO for watershed management regions. Helping to establish these smaller defined regions would enable effective ‘environmental watches’ and create community at the same time. We could pool our resources.

My understanding is that the Victoria Standard is a strong supporter of protecting our environment, however, private enterprise can always change hands. The wish to protect our environment cannot be bought or sold; stewardship direction should come from concerned citizens and their non profit societies or associations, and the many hands of our communities will be inspired to put their shoulders together to accomplish this most important work.

Sincerely yours

Sylvie Rosewood

Concerned citizen and BSS member

Legacy Sites: they are sites that are not owned by the Department of National Defence.

The DND speakers visited five sites around the Bras d’Or Lake: Johnstown, Ben Eoin Practice Range (East Bay to Middle Cape), Eskasoni, Little Bras d’Or Gunnery Range/ Torpedo, and the Royal Canadian Navy Torpedo Range-Little Bras d’Or.

The DND reviewed historical data and interviewed residents in the (5) communities to determine if any new devices had been found since 1948. They did not find any new evidence and that includes munitions of a chemical nature.

Interestingly, an old map turned up in the early 2000s about a chemical weapon dumping site in the BOL (Myles Doyle-antique dealer from Margaree Forks), however the map was stolen in 2002 and no one else ever saw it. In 2003, a Navy dive team deployed in the alleged area but found nothing.

Based on the DND Risk Assessment for the presence of UXOs, it was reported that the Low to No risk findings of the sites would not initiate further investigative work unless something came up in the future.

...cont'd on page 3

Presentation by DND cont'd ...

However, Terry Long who has a different perspective, believes that there should be more sampling of soil and water at each site. See an article by Erin Pottie in the Cape Breton Post of Feb. 06, 2019, Interview with Terry Long.

A community information session on the DND report hopes to gather stories from all segments of the population about this time period, supplying maps and posters to help. It could trigger more research from the DND. The meeting will take place at the Big Pond Firehall on March 22, 2-5 pm. Contact person: stan.johnson@brasdorcepi.ca

A Tribute to Anna Curtis Steele

By Lynn Baechler

Anna was a long time public servant, a formidable force at the NS Department of Environment (NSE). She took her role as "servant to the public" seriously, and made herself available to tackle environmental concerns on our behalf whenever requested.

If she couldn't help directly, she could point us in the right direction. She did not 'suffer incompetence' well and more than once found herself embroiled in personality disputes within her department.

She was one of the founding members of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society (BSS). Always an advocate for the environment, she saw the advocacy role of the BSS as a



key component for maintaining the ecological integrity of the Bras d'Or Lake (BOL) and its watershed. More recently, as the representative of NSE on the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) she volunteered on a wide range of committees. She could be counted on to follow through on her responsibilities. She was passionate and worked hard advocating for best practices in forest management in the BOL watershed. Her next task was to be the Aquaculture and Recreation Fisheries Committee; now left to others.

I considered Anna a good friend, dependable and always straightforward. We didn't always see 'eye to eye' which led to good discussion; often with a resolution to the project at hand. Besides feeling sorrow for the loss of a friend and a life cut short, Anna's death led me on many paths of reflection. Reading her obituary made me realize how little I knew of her family and her accomplishments. We've known Anna since the early days of our careers (30+ years). We frequently met for lunch, especially

over the last year where we had wonderful conversations, good laughs and even shared in a few common rants!

Over the years I knew very little about her private life, only that her family life had been challenging and that she had some health issues. She never complained or elaborated on her situation. After she died, I realized I knew very little about the life forces

that created this woman. Without sharing many aspects of our personal lives, I wondered if our relationship really was one of friendship or perhaps we were merely acquaintances on this highway of life. The grief I felt over my loss however was real, deep and sincere; I have lost a good friend.

Photo courtesy of Nadine LeFort

Letter To Minister of Environment

The Honourable Margaret Miller,
Minister of Environment
Nova Scotia Environment
PO Box 442Halifax, NS B3J 2P8

Dear Madam,

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is a registered, non-profit organization established in 1998. The goals of the Society are to promote accountable and responsible stewardship of the Bras d'Or Lake and their watershed and to help implement an appropriate strategy for conservation, restoration and protection of the Bras d'Or Lake for ourselves and future generations.

Since the Bras d'Or Lake and its watershed is a primary and essential resource for all of Cape Breton, we believe its economic sustainable development, by applying regulations established with the clear cooperation and understanding of all levels of governance, would greatly enhance the future of this priceless resource.

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Our desire is that the Municipalities and Indigenous Communities that border the Bras d'Or Lake thereby recognize and implement in their planning strategy the economic benefit of responsible development that will prove to be an asset for generations to come.

We are aware of the Provincial initiative for public consultation with respect to the development of the new "Coastal Protection Legislation". The Bras d'Or Lake as a large tidal estuary with 14% of N.S. Coast including the Lake's islands is subject to coastal deterioration and flooding due to sea level rise and more frequent severe storm events. We are hopeful that this new legislation will provide the necessary regulations to protect this precious resource while permitting responsible and sustainable economic development.

We realize the Province of NS bears the primary jurisdictional responsibility for the environment in Nova Scotia. However, this responsibility should not exclude the cooperation of Municipalities, Indigenous Communities and individuals to safeguard such a sensitive ecosystem.

To reiterate: the estuary and watershed of the Bras d'Or Lake are too important to have environmental judgements made in municipal planning decisions without open communication between governments.

We are requesting that the Province of Nova Scotia look seriously at planning and development activities on the Bras d'Or Lake with respect to current and future initiatives so that development is environmentally

responsible and sustainable.

Sincerely,

Don Crosby, Chair,

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

RV Park Approval: A BACKWARD PROCESS

As a follow up from the previous Blue Heron newsletter, Mike Britten, a continued voice opposing the Big Pond RV Park proposal, has written a convincing letter to the Minister of the Environment.

Although showing good will to support the protection of the environment, Minister Margaret Miller's response lacks the power to enforce anything simply because the legislation is nonexistent. We have a lot of work to do, attempting to change or improve laws. Both letters are shown within this article.

Conversely when this angle of resistance seemed disheartened, the appellant of the rezoning for the Big Pond RV Park won, as ruled by the UARB. This restored our faith even though the cloud of environmental concerns is still present.

For the benefit of our readers, an article from the Cape Breton Post sums it up.

MacInnis was part of a group of seven people that appealed a March 2018 decision of CBRM council to approve an application to amend the municipality's land-use bylaw. The narrow and controversial 7-6 vote paved the way for developers to move forward with the next steps of approval for the proposed 211-site RV park that was to be located

on land immediately adjacent to the MacInnis farm, 36 kilometres west of Sydney.

On Tuesday, the UARB released a 95-page decision that agreed with the appellant group's claim that council's decision did not reasonably comply with the intent of the CBRM's Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), which ironically allows for campgrounds in rural areas.

However, the three-person UARB tribunal, chaired by 20-year board veteran Roland Deveau, wrote in its decision that there were no zone provisions that would protect nearby residents from the noise and that the project was not visually compatible with its surroundings.

"Given the topography of the entire area and the higher elevation of the campground site (relative to properties on the barachois), the residents located on the barachois will be able to observe most, if not all, of the proposed campground and recreational uses being carried out on the subject lands," the board wrote in its summary.

"This is especially so when one considers the potentially imposing nature of up to 211 RVs parked on the hill up from the barachois."

David Jala (david.jala@cbpost.com) Published: Jan 22

For those of our readers who might enjoy going into more details, the following link will give them a part of the script that became the turning point of the whole appeal.

<https://capebretonspectator.com/2019/01/23/uarb-big-pond-rv-park-cbrm/>

...cont'd on page 5

To: The Honourable Iain Rankin,
Minister of Environment
(Sent March 4, 20018)

RV Park Approval: A BACKWARD
PROCESS

Mr. Minister:

Big Pond, Cape Breton is a rural area of large tracts of lands, dotted with farms and sparsely populated with homes. The proposed RV Park project will front along the shore of a barachois pond (Lochmore Harbour). This barachois (a term used to describe a coastal lagoon separated from a lake or ocean by a sand bar or barrier beach) is the fifth largest of the 400 barachois within the Bras d'Or Lakes. Salt water may enter and exit the barachois during tide changes and the barachois provides an essential "nursery" habitat for the Bras d'Or Lake marine ecosystem. The Bras d'Or Lakes received the official UNESCO Certificate designating it as a World Biosphere Reserve in June 2011. A "Biosphere Reserve" is an international designation of recognition from UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) for an area in the world which is deemed to demonstrate a "balanced relationship between humans and the biosphere."

It is the applicant's intention to develop this RV Park in phases. The first phase will include 211



serviced RV sites and phase two and three have the potential to include an additional 330 RV sites with 64 tenting sites. In total the applicant is proposing 541 RV

The current approval process for this proposal **does not assess** any environmental risks or impact. The process only requires:

- Zoning Amendment approval by CBRM focusing on: visual compatibility, noise, dust and fumes, and traffic (impact study responsibility of DOT after zoning amendment approval) in accordance with Policy 2; 17E of the CBRM Municipal Planning Strategy.
- Permits (Authorizations) such as: building permit, onsite sewage treatment, water withdrawal & quality, campground operator license, any work below mean high water including moorings & wharves.

With respect to current legislation/regulations under the NSE, I was advised by staff that the only "trigger" for a Class I Environmental Assessment is the alteration and/or destruction of more than 2 hectares (4 football fields) of wetlands. Given that this project will be conducted in phases, the delineation with respect to the hydrological link between wetlands is of concern to me. The wetlands delineation will only be carried out by the proponent **AFTER** the zoning amendment is approved. CBRM Council and staff do not have any consultative mechanism with NSE with respect to environmental issues and will not be made aware of environmental assessment status prior to making a zoning decision.

Current legislation **will not** and **does not** address any environmental impact of this

project to protect our community, homes and surrounding environment as it does not identify and mitigate the risks associated with environmental impact. Consequently, the following **will not be** examined:

- Risk to the ecosystem of Lochmore Harbour and the connecting Bras d'Or Lake: (topography and drainage, oyster leases, fish, eel, crab, mussels, and eelgrass habitat, shore bird habitat on the barrier beach, hydrocarbons, leachate from the on-site sewage treatment (prescription & non-prescription drugs), solvents & detergents, plastics (cosmetics), air quality, and increased human activity.
- Risk to the barrier beach: the human impact on the barrier beach that provides habitat for migratory and nesting birds as well as flora and fauna specific to barrier beaches on the Bras d'Or Lake.
- Risk to habitat for endangered species and migratory birds: increased human activity and polluted habitats provide less food, and birds that ingest toxins during migration may continue to suffer from the poisonous effects long after leaving the area. Furthermore, pollution will reduce available food supplies and suitable habitat, making it more difficult for birds and wildlife in the area to complete their migration successfully.

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(prescription & non-prescription drugs), solvents & detergents, plastics (cosmetics), air quality, and increased human activity.

- Risk to the barrier beach: the human impact on the barrier beach that provides habitat for migratory and nesting birds as well as flora and fauna specific to barrier beaches on the Bras d'Or Lake.

- Risk to habitat for endangered species and migratory birds: increased human activity and polluted habitats provide less food, and birds that ingest toxins during migration may continue to suffer from the poisonous effects long after leaving the area. Furthermore, pollution will reduce available food supplies and suitable habitat, making it more difficult for birds and wildlife in the area to complete their migration successfully.

The Province of Nova Scotia, unlike the provinces of New Brunswick, PEI, and Newfoundland does not identify campgrounds and RV parks as an entity requiring an environmental referral, impact or risk assessment prior to project approval. As an example, a 700-unit RV park proposal in Shediac, New Brunswick (2014) was required and completed a Provincial Environmental Assessment. As of July 2017 there were still over 80 issues yet to be mitigated, and construction has not commenced.

In Nova Scotia, if an environment assessment is not triggered by a wetland provision of the legislation, then the only option is enforcement action after an environmental offence has occurred. Too little, too late!

I understand that CBRM does

not have any legislative or constitutional authority with respect to environmental risk assessment. However, I feel that as a signatory to the The Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI), they have a moral and ethical responsibility to consult with its CEPI partners on the impacts of such a development.

Given that the Federal budget has recently put a "spotlight" on the environment, and has committed \$500 billion to a nature fund aimed at protecting sensitive ecosystems, expanding species protection and helping Indigenous

groups play a role in conservation efforts, perhaps a review of the current provincial legislation with respect to this Federal initiative coupled with a consultative process with the Municipalities, would be timely.

Therefore, I ask you respectfully Mr. Minister, if you would review this project due to its uniqueness in relation to the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere and within the spirit of the legislation on the environment.

Regards:

M J Britten Mike Britten BSc Eng.
(Chemical)



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Our File number:
10700-40-53534

SEP 05 2018

Mike Britten
mike.6613@hotmail.com

Dear Mike Britten:

Thank you for your August 06, 2018, correspondence concerning the proposed Ceilidh on the Lakes RV Campground in Big Pond, Cape Breton Regional Municipality. I appreciate you taking the time to forward your concerns to me.

Our department continues to follow the proposed development and is in receipt of an application to construct and operate a wastewater treatment plant. While additional applications for other activities from the proponent are anticipated, campground and recreational vehicle parks do not require an environmental assessment under the Environment Assessment Regulations.

Nova Scotia Environment is responsible for delivering effective and efficient regulatory management for the protection of our environment. All applications submitted to this department concerning the proposed development will be reviewed with thoroughness by the appropriate staff, the same as any other application received by the department. Such a review is undertaken to ensure that the proposed activities associated with the development, that are within our jurisdiction, adhere to the applicable legislation.

Should you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our Sydney District Manager, Mr. Mark Farrell, at Mark.P.Farrell@novascotia.ca or by phone at 902-563-2100.

Sincerely,

Margaret Miller, MLA
Minister of Environment

c: Mark Farrell

CEPI YOUTH CONFERENCE

In November 2016, the Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) held a sustainable practices workshop called The People of the Lake Speak. At this workshop, CEPI's focus was on six pillars – Forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries & Aquaculture, Mining, Tourism and Renewable Energy. The hope was that by bringing experts together in these fields, we as a community would be better equipped to deal with future projects, industry changes or potential development around the Bras d'Or Lakes. One other thing the chair of CEPI, Senator Dan Christmas, noted was the lack of young people around the Lakes. Whereas perhaps twenty or thirty years prior, during a drive around the communities of the Lakes one would see many young people and young families out playing – now the scene is very different. Young people seem to be finishing their education here and then moving away to pursue careers. What is the driving force behind them leaving? What would keep them here on the island? CEPI wanted to find out.

Thanks to our collaborative efforts and partners at our table, CEPI undertook a youth survey – the original goal was to get approximately 500 youth surveyed. The survey asked questions like; If the person was planning to stay in Cape Breton after finishing school? Why or why not? What types of careers or jobs were they looking for? If given the opportunity to stay – would they want to? The survey went extremely well, with about 2000 youth surveyed from all

over the island. These survey findings were presented by a group of youth at the conference, the beginnings of what is now known as the CEPI Youth. The survey results included that youth wanted to explore other fields and not the 'traditional' Cape Breton jobs like mining, forestry or fishing. An overwhelming amount also said that they were planning on leaving but given the opportunity, would like to come back to raise their future families here. The youth also told the conference that they would like their own conference, a chance for them to explore these different fields and network themselves.

Fast forward to October 2018 and the inaugural CEPI Youth Conference. This two-day conference was held at and in conjunction with the NSCC Strait Area Campus. This conference gave the youth who registered the ability to follow the conference in one of four streams – one was focused on starting your own business or social enterprise, one was about success stories around the Bras d'Or Lakes right now, one was focused on tech-oriented careers and opportunities, and one was art-focused. Each of these streams showcased what is happening around the island and really brought to light a lot of the really awesome things happening right here in Cape Breton that people may not have even known about.

After the youth conference, we didn't just want to 'end' the CEPI Youth focus. The youth involved are also passionate and really want to get things done. We formed a committee of interested individuals after the youth conference and they have ideas that they are moving forward with

– for instance, a group of them were in attendance at the CEPI Steering Committee meeting where DND came to make a presentation to learn how a steering committee meeting runs and to listen to the presentation. They also want to take the youth conference topics and workshops and put them on around the island – after talking to their friends who didn't attend the conference, the interest is definitely there to get these workshops put on for more youth. Our hope is that we can find avenues for these youth to pursue their dream job or career - right here in Cape Breton!

If you know of an upcoming event, workshop or conference that would benefit from a youth contingent, please let us know and we will spread the word. Our CEPI Youth Coordinator is Tracy George – tracygeorge05@gmail.com and the CEPI Youth website is cepiyouth.ca – keep in mind it is about to undergo a huge construction change but should be back up and running soon!

Annie E. Johnson, BBA, BACS
Director of Administration, UINR



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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
any of the directors listed above.

Our Email: www.brasdorstewardshipsociety.org

2019

BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15.00
FAMILY	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25.00
CONTRIBUTOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$50.00
SUPPORTER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100.00
LIFETIME MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$500.00

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

*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

Name

Address

Phone

Fax

e-mail