



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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

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NO. I

This issue of The Blue Heron is full of interesting and thought provoking information. Two topics of significant interest are the New Harris quarry near the Seal Island bridge and the proposed development of a 70 slip marina at the head of East Bay. Both these projects involve 'environmental issues' that have suffered minimal public debate to date.

The Society's board has discussed the impact and the specific threats that each project may have. One might think that such significant issues concerning the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed would be of greater concern to the general public.

This is often not the case. There are always topics which emerge from the shadows of the past and color the future forcing the Society to revisit themes that directly impact the future of the Bras d'Or Lake and its watershed. The threats often target the watershed's physical attributes that define and crystallize our perceptions of how we individually feel about development in and around the Bras d'Or Lakes. Talk is talk! Action requires more than talk. Action requires commitment.

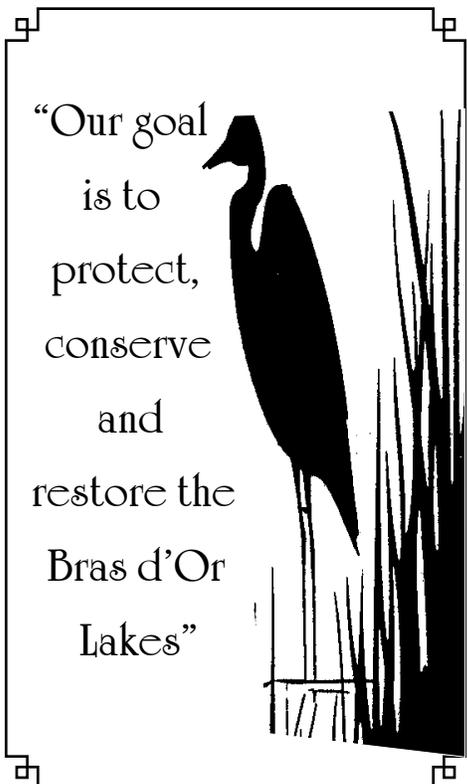
The fact is that there is really no effective "public forum" to bring concerned individuals together to discuss environmental concerns when challenging development issues arise suggests a lack of coordination at various levels. The flow of information is often non-existent or impeded by its absence. Often there is not the '*desired transparency*' as proposed projects are funneled through special interest channels.

We feel that every person who has an interest in the Bras d'Or Lake should know what is going on. In this Blue Heron several letters written by Society Chairman, Pat Bates, show the extent we go to in taking care of the business at hand. This work is part of the Society's self imposed mandate. We know the dangers of laissez-faire attitudes that fail to produce responsible oversight. The real issue is the integrity of due process. History has a way of repeating itself.

NOTICE
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2012 AT 10:00 A.M. MASONIC HALL BADDECK 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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NEWS ITEMS:

SEMI-ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

The semi-annual meeting of the Society was held in Baddeck on August 15, 2011.

A review of the Society's activities was provided by Pat Bates. Susanna Fuller, a recent Dalhousie PhD. recipient, spoke about the state of the North Atlantic fishery and the efforts being made to develop sustainable fishing policies. Her presentation was informative. About 25 individuals attended this gathering.

NEW HARRIS QUARRY UPDATE:

There has been minimal update on the proposed expansion of the New Harris quarry. Residents of the area are concerned about the potential negative impact of this expansion with regards to truck traffic, dust and the expansion of operations to produce gravel and fill. No environmental assessment is required to expand the pit as it is less than four hectares. The following was submitted by Mike Dolmont, a member of the New Harris Community Group:

"The New Harris Community Group, were very active in their opposition to a proposed rock quarry in their community. They were very concerned the potential impact it would have on their residences, primarily their safety due to the increase in traffic. The proponents stated that they could quarry 30,000 tons of aggregate annually which could put 3,000 trucks over their narrow, one bridge, road, in a five month construction season. The

road runs parallel with the Bras d'Or Lake which is not protected by a guard rail. One truck in the water has disastrous consequences.

The truck route runs through the center of Camp Carter, a Scout camp, and passes in front of the K.O.A campground. There is a provision in the NS Environment Act that states you cannot ballast with 800 meters of a structure. The Scout camp is within those parameters but the Nova Scotia Council of the Scouts Canada, who own the property, decided to sign a waiver allowing the quarry to go ahead. One of the provisions of the waiver states that the proponent will provide traffic control if there are more than 75 people in attendance at the camp. What about the safety of the one to seventy four children--is their safety not important?

There are concerns with pollution through run off from the quarry. There is overflow the operation into the Lake below. The abutters are worried about the noise and the impact the operation will have on the eagles' nest about 900 meters west, at the same elevation.

There was consultation and many meetings with the N.S. Department of Environment outlining the negative impact that the operation would have on the quality of life of the residents and environmental hazards it could represent. In spite of our concerns, the NSDOE issued an approval on Oct. 28, 2011 to the company, Broadway Enterprises, to operate the quarry.

The NHCG are now considering their options are looking at ways to lessen the negative impact on their community and to protect the safety of their residents. Lets hope our way of life and our Lake don't have to suffer in the shadow of industry."

NEW DIVING SOCIETY:

At a fall board meeting Donald Gallop was invited to speak about the clean up of the bottom of the lake in Baddeck by members of the Barnacle Diving Society. He also spoke on the potential for attracting recreational divers to the Bras d'Or Lakes by creating and artificial reef with a sunken vessel. Concerns were raised about the optics of such a plan and the issue of environmental contamination. The significant question that concerns many is who would be responsible for any environmental damage that might occur from sinking a vessel for recreational scuba diving?

NEW AQUACULTURE VENTURE:

Cold Water Fisheries has entered into a partnership with the First Nation Community in Whycocomagh to raise rainbow trout. Six fish cages are now in place. The partnership plans to raise rainbow trout and market the fish. The labor is supplied by local natives with cold water supplying capital and expertise. (see www.coldwaterfisheries.com)

BEN EOIN MARINA:

Proponents of the 70 slip marina project in Ben Eoin have filed for a permit from the NS Department of Environment to destroy a coastal saline barrier pond which will allow the construction of a marina facility. This project is a multi-million dollar undertaking to compliment the Ben Eoin golf course. To build this facility a shallow barachois pond will require to be dredged to get the required depth for the construction

...cont'd on page 3

of floating docks. The site is a coastal saline barachois with a small stream entering it. A full fledged environmental assessment has yet to be completed.

This is not required as the wetland area to be excavated is less than two hectares.

WETLAND CONSERVATION POLICY:

In September 2011 the Nova Scotia Department of Environment tabled a new policy document pertaining to the conservation and protection of wetlands. The document emphasizes the loss of wetland and the need to protect existing wetlands from destruction. Wetlands create unusual habitat for flora and fauna as well as support barrier beaches that protect the wetland. The document stresses the value of wetlands and the need to conserve them while embracing the issues associated with responsible development.

NOVA SCOTIA COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT:

The province of Nova Scotia has tabled a draft coastal zone management strategy that has resulted from initiatives put forward by the Halifax based Ecology Action Center (EAC). The draft document has been submitted for public input and support. Nova Scotia has no coastal zone management strategy providing a guideline for the management of Nova Scotia's extensive coast. The draft documents available at www.gov.ns/ca.

NEW BOARD MEMBER:

The Society welcomes a new board member. At the December 2011 monthly board meeting the board unanimously voted to elect Jared Tomie of Sydney as a new board member. Jared has recently completed his MA thesis at the University of New Brunswick. His topic was eels. Jared works at ACAP in Sydney.



Opinion: How We Perceive Ourselves

GROWING GREEN: FROM THE ENVIRONMENT TO THE INVIRONMENT

By Lucy MacDonald

My earliest and fondest memories have happened outside. I remember trying to dig to China with my little brother and best friend. I remember countless days spent at the beach, navigating jellyfish and spending hours in the water. My childhood gave me the foundations for a lifelong appreciation of nature; although, I didn't know it at the time. Back then, I also didn't think things would ever change. I would never have guessed that some of my favorite, most treasured places would become ghosts of a place. I would never have believed that species of animals would go extinct, or that the air I would breath, and the food I would eat could be toxic. Perhaps the worst of it all was that people would be the driving forces of environmental change, mainly because of our culture of

consumption and the patterns of economy, technology and politics that make it possible.

In modern day, it is easy to commodity the environment – detaching ourselves from what is all around and inside of us. We ignore our feelings of loss and instead try to replace our nature with stuff: clothing, TV, even with pre-packaged vacations. We worry about climate change, but not enough to really do anything about it. Really, would the majority of people in the region recycle if it weren't enforced? We've jumped on a treadmill of production and consumption that doesn't feel right – but we don't know how to jump off just yet.

Humans are searching for something that is literally already inside of them: an environmental conscience, or what environmental sociologists Michael Mayerfeld Bell and Kris van Koppen refer to as the invironment.

The invironment is described by Bell as the "inner zone of the environment, where we find the body in perpetual dialogue with the environment." Thus, it is our invironment that worries about the food that we consume, it is our invironment that can make positive or negative choices that will greatly impact the environment, and it is our invironment that is vulnerable to negative realities like climate change. As these examples illustrate, we really are not as detached from the environment as we seem to think we are. As Bell puts it: "The environment is not only something 'out there.' It is also something 'in here.'"

With the acknowledgment of both the environment and your invironment, you can begin to make

...cont'd on page 4

the jump from the treadmill to the ground where learning to walk again is as simple as getting in touch with nature, nurturing perhaps, your inner child.

Relearn how to play outside and gain an appreciation for the natural world. Often the first step to protecting the environment and the environment is to know it – as so many of us have before and can again.

(Lucy MacDonald is the Editor-in-Chief of Cape Breton University's student newspaper, the Caper Times.)



**Bras d'Or Lake
BIOSPHERE
RESERVE
Celebration!**

are now members of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (<http://www.unesco.ca>) and the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (<http://www.biospherecanada.ca>).

A major event this year was to host a Celebration Weekend – September 17 and 18th – all around the Bras d'Or watershed. The centre piece was an afternoon celebration concert at the Highland Village Museum in Iona. Over 600 people came to the multicultural celebration of this achievement. There were dignitaries – both local and national, celebratory words, music and dance - from Mi'kmaq, French, Gaelic and English cultures.

There were 17 other community

events held throughout the weekend that drew an estimated 1800 people! The activities ranged from a hike up the Ben Eoin hills to a SCUBA diving cleanup in Baddeck Harbour. The celebration was co-ordinated by Jessica Farrell of Washabuck!

The association is now focusing its energy on organizational development and program planning for the biosphere reserve. The 20 member Board of Directors meets every month to oversee this work – all carried out by volunteers.

Check out the web site (<http://www.blbra.ca>) for the latest news and answers to common questions – it also provides a way to contact the association if you need more information or if you want to get involved.

Jim Foulds,
Chair, BLBRA

BRAS D'OR LAKE BIOSPHERE RESERVE - JANUARY 2012 UPDATE

2011 has been an historic year for the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve. In February the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves gave its unanimous approval to the nomination for the Bras d'Or lake and its watershed to become part of the global Biosphere Reserve network. They recommended that the Man and the Biosphere's International Co-coordinating Council official designate the Bras d'Or at its meeting in Dresden, Germany. This recommendation was accepted and we officially became a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve on June 29, 2011 – Canada's 16th!

We are now a part of a global community of over 580 biosphere reserves around the world in more than 100 countries. Nationally, we



Site of Ben Eoin Marina ~ Coastal Barrier - Barachois Pond, East Bay

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water levels rising...erosion increasing - time for set back building rules

The Editor

The discussion on the related subjects of climate change, coastal zone management, erosion, and increasing costs to property owners, have increased in time. Typical was a radio interview on October 14th wherein a Nova Scotia Government official spoke again of the loss of beach properties, roadways, and embankments due to a number of factors, but principally water level increase, combined with wind and tidal action.

The Bras d'Or Lake is unique in many respects, generally regarded as an inland sea but with less tidal water fluctuation. However, it is experiencing a level of risk from the elements similar to the Atlantic Ocean to which it is connected. The government official commented on the need for co-operation between the different levels of government if the current draft coastal management plan is to be adopted and implemented. Two obvious and important components of the plan are the means to control and hopefully reduce the costs of land erosion and second, the ability to secure and maintain public access to beaches and recreational areas on the Lake. The Nova Scotia Government can, if it wishes, establish regulations governing "set backs" from the water line for development project very much as it permits wharf and jetty construction at the moment. It also can approve a repeat excavation of barriers protecting Barachois Ponds. Certain federal government departments also have some jurisdiction in this regard. The gov-

ernment of New Brunswick has already established a set of regulations requiring specific "set back" distances for buildings and development projects in coastal and tidal zones.

Within the Bras d'Or Lake Watershed, the anxiousness to get as close as possible to the water is evidenced by the number of cottage properties constructed virtually at the edge of the Lake. These are instances where buildings are built on narrow beach areas separating the Lake from land-locked lagoons. The cost of damage from tidal or sea level rise, we understand, is not covered under general property insurance type coverage. Yet, it can be costly. In a recent experience, extensive erosion and wash out of the Mi'kmaw gravesite at Malagawatch cost near one half million dollars to repair.

The matter of issuance of building permits for construction rests with the respective Municipal authorities. With respect to buildings near the Bras d'Or, there are no set back requirements, yet the indications are that tides and wave action are increasing each year.

As an aid to the four municipalities and four Band Councils around the Lake, and with the objective of protecting the environment of the Lake system, an important study was released in 2008.

The work, entitled "Bras d'Or Lakes Development Standards," was commissioned by the Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) with participation and support of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society and

Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs. The work, carried out by "EDM, Environmental Design and Management Limited," set out anticipated climate changes and current experiences with indicators of costs where no action is taken. The study was very comprehensive in both describing probable consequences as sea levels rise, together with temperature changes and describing actions by governments and citizens to protect properties and the Lake from damage and dislocation in future. Included in the many recommendations were precise measures that municipal authorities could implement requiring that building permits include specific set back and elevation distances.

Presentation of that Study, together with other relevant information on the Bras d'Or Lake, was presented to each of the Municipal Councils on the Island in the 2008-2009 period. The Study produces much of the information required by municipal councils to establish or amend regulations to implement the recommended actions. As the EDM Report has been completed and paid for, the financial costs related to taking action are quite minimal. However, some forward planning now will reduce damage to property and distress in future years. Municipal Councils are encouraged to dust off the EDM Study Report, and act to implement its substantive recommendations now.

*Pat Bates, Chairman,
Bras d'Or Stewardship Society*

Responsible land ownership



Gus van Helvoort

It may have come as a surprise to the land owner to learn that he wasn't going to be allowed to infill a tidal pond and drainage channel on his Bras d'Or Lake property. But it was an even bigger surprise when the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) learned that the work was carried out anyway. The land owner's actions not only destroyed critical fish habitat but, following his conviction, cost him a \$3,000 fine and an order to completely undo all of

the infill work.

The Fisheries Act contains a very important clause addressing harm to fish habitat - commonly referred to as HADD (Harmful Alteration, Disruption or Destruction). It prohibits - well - harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat. Its effective use depends on team work and various levels of government working together. When DFO is notified of a project proposal that may impact on fish habitat, habitat officers review the project and visit the site before making a recommendation based on the potential of the proposed activity to damage habitat. If it's their opinion that the work could harm fish habitat, the information is considered by the responsible regulating agency when making a final determination

DFO in the community

on issuing a permit.

Tidal ponds, with their protected, warm and shallow water, provide ideal habitats for plankton and nurseries for young fish. In the case of the above land owner, both DFO and the Province notified him that he should not proceed with the proposed work because it would likely destroy critical fish habitat.

Although convictions under section 35(1) of the Fisheries Act are not uncommon, the sentencing on this particular conviction was unusual; the land owner was ordered to pay the fine to the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society to support local habitat enhancement projects. He must also completely restore the old pond and drainage channel to their former state - a project he estimates will run between

\$8,000 and \$10,000.

A costly lesson, to be sure. But, with a few remaining tidal ponds and the important role they play in the Bras d'Or Lakes ecosystem, the price of not repairing the damage done would have been far greater.

Gus van Helvoort is the DFO Area Director for Eastern Nova Scotia.

Questions about this column? Or would you like to read about other DFO issues that affect you and your community in future columns? Send an email to CommEnquire@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca <mailto:CommEnquire@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca> or call (902) 426-3550.

LETTER WRITTEN BY PAT BATES TO MANAGER OF NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION PROGRAM

November 2, 2011

Navigable Waters Protection Program
Transport Canada
P. O. Box / CP 1013
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
(N.-E) B2Y 4K2

Sir/Madame:

Subject: Ben Eoin Marina Limited,
Ben Eoin, Cape Breton
Property Identification number:
15690357, 15332224, 15603673

We want to comment on the subject project in two respects. First, by way of introduction, the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation under the Societies Act of the province of Nova Scotia in August, 1997. The mandate of the corporation is the Conservation, Protection and Restoration" of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

With respect to the subject matter, our first concern regards the destruction or the elimination of a well-defined Wetland to accommodate mooring arrangements for pleasure craft. This is unusual at a time when protection of wetlands is of heightened concern. We must reference an instance within the past five years regarding a site on Baddeck Bay, Victoria County. A property owner at Lakeside filled in and significantly altered the characteristics of a wetland area. The accused was subsequently charged and convicted of the offence by the Federal Department of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act and Regulations. A portion of the court-assigned penalty was assigned

to our Corporation to undertake an exercise in public education in respect to the importance and preservation of Wetlands within the Lake. That work was carried out. In light of that instance and other instances, we must object to destruction of the identified site without alternate accommodation. Second, we are alarmed by the proposed construction of two finger piers projecting out into the Lake. One of the two pieces is of 252' and a second pier, to the east of the first, is 113'. The nature of tides, currents and wind combinations within the Lake have demonstrated repeatedly the shifting of sands and gravel, constantly realigning beach and Barachois entrances.

The Nova Scotia Government Dep. of Natural Resources takes issue and forbids construction of wharves and jetties where serious alteration of beach lines are likely to occur. A useful example is the site of MacKinnon's Harbour on the Bras d'Or Lakes in Victoria County. Without the impediment of any physically constructed structure, the sands are shifting constantly, necessitating costly change of access to this valuable sub lake or pond.

For special treatment of this subject, we refer you to the article entitled "Coastal Character and Coastal Barrier Evolution in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Nova Scotia" by R.B. Taylor and J. Shaw. The article appears in Proceedings of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Volume 42, 1002; ISSN0078-2521. Copy of that publication is attached.

We object to this project until and unless a comprehensive study is carried out on anticipated changes and risks to adjacent shore lines, beaches, and property erosion caused by the proposed action.

For your information, we enclose a copy of one of the information pieces prepared and circulated by our Society following the referral to court action in Baddeck Bay.

We appreciate and thank you for the

opportunity to intervene in this matter.
Respectfully yours,

P.J. (Pat) Bates
Chairman

c.c.

Mr. Robert Sampson, QC
Sampson, MacDougall Barristers

***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.***

LETTER WRITTEN BY PAT BATES TO THE HONOURABLE STIRLING BELLIVEAU

November 4, 2011

Honourable Stirling Belliveau,
Minister
Nova Scotia Dept. of Environment
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax, NS B3J 2T8.

Dear Minister:

Subject: Nova Scotia Coastal Zone
Management and The Bras d'Or Lake

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society was incorporated in 1997 with a mission to conserve, protect, and restore Nova Scotia's Bras d'Or Lakes. Our efforts, together with the work of others, have had some success in protecting the Lakes and correcting some flawed practices that heretofore have damaged and compromised the integrity of this important eco-system. While our work is ongoing, we continue to identify issues that either have now, or are likely to have, a negative impact on the Lakes' environment in the future. It is in that respect that we have reviewed your government's draft proposals to establish a Nova Scotia Coastal Zone Management Policy. The Lakes are considered to be an inland sea or for all purposes, an extension of the Atlantic Ocean influences. While the tidal changes are not as variable or great as those of the adjacent Atlantic, when coupled with wind and wave action, have a near identical impact on the surrounding land mass and resident infrastructures.

One of the important issues that places the environmental projection of the Lake, as well as personal property, at risk, is the absence of a policy framework and/or regulations

governing Land Development Practices. While it may be argued that such experience is not unique to the Bras d'Or Lakes, the more confined geography of the Lakes offer an opportunity for your Department to encourage and support certain measures that could demonstrate the viability of your planned Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy now.

To be specific, some very useful work has already been completed that, if implemented in its entirety or in part, would address the absence of good Land Development Practices. The Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI), with the support and participation of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society and some financial assistance from the Nova Scotia Dept. of Municipal Affairs, commissioned a comprehensive study entitled, "Bras d'Or Lakes Development Standards Report." The study was carried out by Environmental Design and Management Ltd. The significant value of the Report is in the detailed treatment of risk to the Lake from climate change and an inventory of measures and remedies that can be implemented to address the risks. The actions essential to implement the Report's recommendation fall primarily under the jurisdiction of the four respective municipalities bordering the Lake.

Specifically, the need for the municipal governments to establish Land Use Development criteria requiring building development permits to set out and enforce standards to protect property and the environment. A copy of the Report is herein attached.

As this work is already in hand, we ask you and your Department to, as an advancement of your thrust towards finalizing a Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy, consider engaging municipal government officials responsible for the Bras d'Or Watershed area Land Development. The objective should be to encourage and support the respective municipal

councils to implement measures requiring more robust Land Development standards.

For the benefit of you and your officials, I am enclosing a copy of the proceedings of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science, Vol. 42, Published in December 2002. The text is a valuable review of many of the physical characteristics of the Bras d'Or Lakes as a useful aid in contemplating protective action regarding the Lakes. Along with this letter, we are attaching this communication to all the signatories to the Bras d'Or Charter which will include your colleagues, the Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs and Natural Resources. Also included will be the Mayors, Wardens, and Band Chiefs on Cape Breton.

Respectfully yours,

P.J. (Pat) Bates
Chairman

c.c.

Premier Darrel Dexter,
and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Honourable John MacDonell,
Minister of Service Nova Scotia and
Municipal Relations
Honourable Charles Parker
Minister, Nova Scotia Department of
Natural Resources
Mr. Duart MacAuley, Warden
Municipality of the County of Inverness
Mayor Billy Joe MacLean
Port Hawkesbury
Mr. Bruce Morrison, Warden
Municipality of The County of Victoria
Mr. John Boudreau, Warden
Municipality of The County of Richmond
Mayor John Morgan
Cape Breton Regional Municipality
Chief Terry Paul
Membertou Reserve Band Council
Unelected Officials, and Signatories to
Bras d'Or Charter

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

2012

BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

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

NOVA SCOTIA COASTAL STRATEGY NEEDS STRENGTHENING

On October 16th, the province of Nova Scotia released a draft coastal strategy for the sustainable management of Nova Scotia's coast. The strategy is available online at www.gov.ns.ca/coast along with other documents produced by the province. Although the public consultation period officially ended on December 16th, the province will accept comments on the strategy via email or mail until the end of January.

The coastal strategy has been a long time coming; the province officially announced this process back in 2007. So what do we have to show for 4 years of effort? Well there are some good things in the strategy; notably a commitment to develop coastal development standards and a focus on coastal governance as a key aspect to ensure successful coastal management in Nova Scotia. The creation of a provincial multi-stakeholder advisory board, and to finding a meaningful way to engage Nova Scotians in coastal management are also welcome. However, by and large, the Strategy seems to lack clear focus on direction, and is without measurable goals and time lines.

A number of individuals and groups have made submissions to the coastal strategy process, including the Ecology Action Centre and the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia. All submissions will be available online at gov.ns.ca/coast. Many community and environmental groups have made similar points, notably that: (1) The Coastal Strategy should include a strong message about the ecological significance of our coast and the ecological services it provides, as well as of the inherent value of ecological integrity, coastal biodiversity, and wildlife habitat. (2) The province should set a time line of 2015 to have in place coastal development standards with rules and regulations about how and where we build. (3) Coastal Governance needs to be a clear overriding priority of the Coastal Strategy with clearly defined roles stemming from a clear statement of purpose for managing the coast (4) The Coastal Strategy needs to include all coastal activities including aquaculture. It is inconceivable that the fastest growing industrial activity in the coastal zone is not included in the strategy (5) The need for clear rules, regulations, and accountability through a provincial Coastal Act.

What are the next steps? The government will review (and hopefully incorporate) the comments from the public as well as the expert working groups meeting on each issue. They expect to have a final strategy ready by late spring. The draft strategy will only be strong if the public and politicians take on this issue. The next months are important in spreading, pushing for a stronger coastal strategy; one that commits to the necessary legislation through a Coastal Act. Help spread the word via our "Post For The Coast" campaign to send a postcard directly to the premier asking for a Coastal Act at <http://www.ecologyaction.ca/post-coast>. You can also watch our voices for the Coast videos on youtube and "like" our campaign on facebook at Actfourcoast now.

Yours in coastal care,

Jen Graham
Coastal Coordinator
Ecology *Action Centre*



The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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January 15, 2012

Dear Members,

This is the time of year when one has some time to reflect on the past as we move forward into the future. The myriad of uncertainties that face us everyday suggest that any predictions of what the future may bring are foolhardy. Looking backwards, may provide some comfort if one can say we have made some positive contributions to the things we care about.

I believe that during the last fourteen years of the existence of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society that our efforts have contributed to fostering a higher awareness of the need to respect and protect the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. The Society has worked hard to raise the awareness of stewardship obligations. We have made positive steps to interact with groups and individuals regarding cooperation and communication amongst those who care at various levels.

The recent designation of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve resulted from a collaborative effort by dedicated people who worked diligently to bring this honorable designation to Cape Breton. This accolade should not just fade away.

The current edition of The Blue Heron newsletter highlights some of the current issues that the Society is dealing with at our monthly meetings. On the surface, it may appear that the Bras d'Or Lakes are just a mirror of reflection of those attributes we seek to protect. However, there are issues that also reflect a threatening aspect to the ecological soundness of the watershed. They may appear inconsequential, but taken cumulatively there is cause for concern and ongoing vigilance in an uncertain future.

I want to thank you all for supporting the Society in 2011 and previous years . Our 2011 membership was up which is reflected in the funds received . We do need your support given that we depend on membership contributions to provide the necessary financial sustenance to allow us to do the work we do. Many thanks and all the best in 2012.

Sincerely,
Pat Bates, Chairman



"Our Goal is to Protect, Conserve and Restore the Bras d'Or Lakes"