



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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

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This edition of The Blue Heron covers a variety of topics that focus on issues that relate to The Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. Along with the excellent content diversity is the fine variety of contributors. We are grateful to them all.

There are always significant issues that provide the need for continued focus on the Society's behalf regarding the future care taking of the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed.

Constant vigilance is required with regards to activities within the watershed that impact upon the health, visual appearance and ecological integrity of the Bras d'Or Lakes and properties contiguous to the shore front and backlands.

A recent shoreline drive from St. Peter's to Dundee revealed an increased number of sub-divisions scattered along the shore front and high up on hills overlooking the Bras d'Or Lakes' West Bay. Property sales may have slowed, but the inventory of sub-divided lots is increasing.

Along with development activity, there evolves work undertaken to protect shorelines from erosion. Several properties in the Marble Mountain-Dundee area have placed large white boulders along their shoreline. This creates unsightly land disconformities in juxtaposition to the natural original forested shoreline. From an esthetic point of view, this activity is certainly questionable.

There is a growing interest in the development of a Nova Scotia coastal management plan. Nova Scotia has yet to adopt a coastal management plan. New Brunswick has one in place. Any future plan adopted for Nova Scotia should and would hopefully apply to the Bras d'Or Lakes. The society has been supporting the efforts to formulate such a plan. Geoff Le Boutillier, founder of the Mahone Bay Stewardship Association, has provided a piece on the current status on the creation of a coastal zone management plan for the province of Nova Scotia.

Jim Morrow, editor of the Victoria Standard, has provided his recent article regarding the biomass initiative with regards to cutting forests for co-generation of electricity. This issue is a sensitive one that needs a thorough review as to its economic viability and how harvesting of Nova Scotia forests will affect future wood land sustainability. A fair amount of tree cutting has occurred within the watershed as the spruce bark beetle kills off over mature white spruce trees.

Recently, the Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve Committee

completed and mailed out the application for UNESCO Biosphere Status for the Bras d'Or lakes and its watershed. This has been a long demanding process that required much work and consultation. The committee is to be congratulated for its dedication to see this process to its final end.

NOTICE

THE SEMI-ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY WILL BE HELD AT THE MASONIC HALL IN BADDECK ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2010 AT 10:00 A.M. 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:

*Annual AGM:

The annual general meeting of the Society was held on April 21, 2010 at the Alexander Graham Bell Museum. Close to 25 individuals were present. Pat Bates reviewed the year's activities of the Society. Jamie Simpson provided an overview of the biomass initiative in Nova Scotia. (See Jim Morrow's article) The production of electricity from forest harvested trees is a growing concern. To date it is unclear what the long term harvest of trees for electrical generation will do for the (un) sustainable management of Nova Scotia woodlands.

New Board Member:

Leah Noble has been elected to the Society's board of directors. Leah grew up in Baddeck, completed college at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick. Leah has now returned to Baddeck. She is currently working at Baddeck Marine. Leah represents our first new young board member to be recruited from the local community. We are pleased she is a board member providing a most fresh perspective to the Society's work. Leah has provided a piece stating her sentiments regarding the Bras d'Or Lakes.

2010 Summer Students:

Two summer students have been hired by the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, through the Service Canada - Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) 2010 program. The students will be employed for an eight week period, starting on June 28, 2010.

One student, Matthew More, will be located at the Highland Village Museum in Iona, where he will index the Blue Herons since it first went into publication.

The second student, Aurilie Cormier, will be located in Whycocomagh and will be working out of the Whycocomagh Eco-Centre. The student will be working on a general assessment of the water quality in the Skye River. The assessment will be based on field data including conductivity, temperature, turbidity, pH, nitrate, phosphorous and color. Hopefully this work will lead to a better understanding of the significance of the underlying geology and the land use in the watershed, to water quality in the river.

Because this student will be located at the Whycocomagh Eco-Centre, she will also be involved in a pollination Canada survey of native pollinators in the watershed.

Board member Lynn Baechler will be supervising both students, with help from the Whycocomagh Eco-Centre and staff at the Highland Village Museum.

Biosphere Meeting Held: What are we going to do?

A recent meeting was held at Eskasoni by the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Committee to begin discussions of what will transpire once the UN Biosphere designation becomes official. The three functions of the Biosphere Designation are to promote sustainable development, conservation and capacity building.

The plan is to hold a series of meetings throughout the watershed to gain input from as many people as possible.

Bras D'Or Lakes Co-coordinator:

A recent letter from the Minister of Natural Resources has confirmed the NDP government's commitment to maintain the position of the Bras d'Or Lakes co-coordinator. Several years ago, the Society worked diligently to have such a position created. It is considered important to have an individual well informed about the various aspects of the watershed's sustainability within the Nova Scotia government.

Bequest of Property:

David Gunn, a long standing board member of the Society, has made a bequest of his West Bay property to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. This is a 1,000 acre property with shorefront at Dundee. David and his family will retain a life interest in the property.

His intent is to work with the NSNT to create a vision and plan for the future use of this property. David has strong Cape Breton family roots going back generations. His gift is one of true heart felt conservation philanthropy moving the protection of ecologically significant land on the Bras d'Or Lakes up a huge notch.

*In Memory of
Simon Chiasson*

Former Society Board member, Simon Chiasson, died on July 18, 2010. Simon was a stalwart resident of Big Harbor since his retirement. He loved sports that included basketball, golfing, curling, kayaking and fishing and most of all his family. This issue of The Blue Heron is dedicated to Simon and his family.

GROUNDWATER ON THE HORIZON

By Jocelyne Rankin

It is evident to anyone who has been out on the water lately that this year's warm and dry spring has brought about low water levels in lakes throughout Nova Scotia. While not immediately alarming, it could be a harbinger of conditions to come as our climate changes. There are a number of other water issues that can be observed in our lakes, streams, wetlands and groundwater. Blue-green algae blooms in the Carleton and Wentworth watersheds have persisted for the last 5 summers as a result of intensive mink farming, and lowering water tables in some areas have meant more expensive well maintenance costs to access retreating groundwater sources. Without a well-implemented water management plan that sets a clear direction for managing our water, it will be very challenging for the provincial government to take action to protect this life-sustaining resource.

Nova Scotia Environment in collaboration with twelve other provincial departments has been working on such a plan. In April of this year they released a draft water strategy entitled **Options for a Water Resource Management Strategy for Nova Scotia**. Nova Scotia Environment conducted targeted stakeholder consultations until June 7th and has until the end of this year to present a Water Resource Management Strategy to cabinet.

So far, the members of the Water Caucus of the Nova Scotia Environment Network are pleased to see a draft water strategy, yet they are concerned with important elements that are missing from the

draft. In essence, they would like to see watershed-based land-use planning across the province, well-enforced legislation that protects surface and groundwater from pollution and degradation and more effort to align other provincial policies that impact water like Wetlands, Coastal and Natural Resource Management policies.

One area that is poorly understood and managed is groundwater. We know that certain regions around the province have adequate groundwater supplies, yet there are many localized groundwater quantity issues. To help address these localized issues the Ecology Action Centre has partnered with the Department of Natural Resources, Nova Scotia Environment and six other environmental NGOs to develop and deliver a two-year project called **Groundswell: Community-Based support for Sustainable Groundwater Use in Nova Scotia**.

The purpose of Groundswell is to initiate action on groundwater monitoring, education and sustainability. The three main objectives of the program are to identify locations that are at-risk of experiencing groundwater shortages; to develop a community-based groundwater monitoring program in order to help inform municipal planning in areas where groundwater is at-risk; and to educate and share information with municipal planners, councilors and individual homeowners in affected communities.

A summer student is conducting preliminary research to identify at-risk areas and to design and implement a questionnaire for municipal planners, hydro geologists and well contractors. To help support this and other projects you can get involved by becoming a member of the Ecology Action

Centre. For more information visit www.ecologyaction.ca

Jocelyne Rankin is the Water Coordinator with the Ecology Action Centre and a keen hydrophile.

WHAT THE BRAS D'OR LAKES MEAN TO ME

By Leah Noble

In the early morning, 7:55 am, driving with my window down, I have a private moment, just myself, the lake and all the photographs each minute could be. The clouds mirror an oil painting, textured, impossible to duplicate.

From a lifetime of driving, I know each bump in the road and the dips in Washabuck's spine, across the water. Then, there are swims on a hot summer's day: cooling off, floating on my back. Go for a quiet sail, watching a bird fly in on huge wings, eagle. Seals on ice floes, early December, and we're wiping down the windows of the boat's cabin as fast as they fog up. Binoculars to spot the fat grey dumplings before they splash back into ice water.

On an overcast afternoon – a bike ride and I've stopped to nibble on rosehips. Eat the sweet-sour orange-red flesh, but not the seeds! Spit them out. Meanwhile, I can hear the splashing of water on rocks. Just think of this word: Shoreline. This flat, wide-open space – necessary calm, space for my mind to drift away. I couldn't live anywhere else. I know, I've tried.

The lakes are here year-round.

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Every minute of every day! Every raindrop that falls into the lake, every muskrat that paddles in it, each bit of sea glass on the shore, exists even when I'm not thinking about it. Even as I'm here writing this, West Bay and Dundee and Bras d'Or and Ross Ferry and so many more are all there, currents and seaweeds and the smell of salt tang.

I leave my small village and drive to another part of the lake and I begin to see what we have. The hugeness of it, and of our luck. And then - what do you do with lucky? Do you simply stand before it, taking in the beauty? Do we have an obligation, once we see it for what it is, to care for it like we would a small just-born baby? That lovingly, that carefully?

Our lakes are not empty space in the middle of the island. Water is different from land, yes, but a real element too. Not a place for dumping or ignoring but a space that calls on us to simply respect it. Doesn't demand you honor it but more like an elder, like the old man you visit who can teach you things. And you drink tea with him, maybe play some crib. And you care for him and esteem him just because you do.

The lake means – people gathered at bridges to fish. Respite. Crab shells. Old bricks softened by waves. Beach peas and shore walks. Boat motors and hulls churning up series of waves that eventually comes to shore. Water, water, everywhere. Rivers and creeks flowing to it, crows swooping low over it. Summer people coming every year for their little part of it. My mother ice skating, ecstatic. Snow mobilers crossing an iced-over bay to get to the Highlands. Ice fishermen's huts like lanterns against a growing dusk. The lake means we are lucky. Now

what do you do with lucky?

THREE LAKES AND THREE LESSONS

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has been in business now for thirteen years and in our efforts to encourage protection of the Bras d'Or Lake and its watershed, we find it helpful to compare circumstances regarding the Bras d'Or with Lakes in other geographic regions. Among our principal interests are the state of the ecology of the various Lakes and the systems of governance.

For our exercise, we chose Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba and Lake Champlain in New York State. The characteristics of each Lake are quite different but the experiences reflect lessons learned.

As a baseline, some physical characteristics are important. Lake Winnipeg has a watershed of 380,000 square miles, a length of 258 miles, a width variation of 258 miles, surface area of 9,465 miles and maximum depth of 118 feet with an average depth of 39 feet. The Lake drains north into the Nelson River and forms part of the larger Hudson Bay Watershed.

By comparison, Lake Champlain is located mainly in the northern part of New York State but bordering on a portion of the state of Vermont and on the Province of Quebec in Canada. Both Lakes Winnipeg and Champlain are fresh water lakes. The Champlain Basin rests between Canada and the United States. Its watershed or catchment area is 8,234 square miles; surface area is 440 square miles, an average depth of 64 feet and a maximum depth of 4000 feet.

The Bras d'Or Lake by comparison has a watershed of 3,589 square

kilometers and a total surface area of approximately 2,500 square kilometers. The Lake varies in depth of between 50 and 180 meters. The Bras d'Or has a high level of salinity.

For a quick comparison, Lake Winnipeg is managed for the Manitoba Government by the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. Establishment of the Board took place in 2003 and was one of a number of recommendations arising from the earlier commissioned Lake Winnipeg Action Plan. The principal thrust of the Board is to reduce the levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in the Lake to pre-1970 levels. The Government expanded the terms of reference for the Board in 2007 which has representatives from various interests including fishing, agriculture, urban land use, First Nations, federal and provincial and municipal governments and non-governmental organizations. The Board reports through the chair to the Minister of the Water Stewardship.

By comparison, Lake Champlain is governed and protected by a multi-governmental agency called "The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)." This program is administered jointly by several agencies: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (New England and Region 2), New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Quebec Ministry of Environment, and New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission.

Common to the three Lakes is the concern with sewage discharge, the pre-occupation with run-off of high levels of phosphorus in some instances related to improperly performing sewage treatment plants

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and in other situations a direct result of run-off of both nitrogen, phosphorus and other chemicals connected to the agriculture industry. The Bras d'Or Lake, while not free of total improper discharge of chemicals, is not as severely impacted as the other two. Lake Winnipeg has a high level of contamination which is the cause of dispute between economic sectors. The agriculture industry, featuring a high level of hog raising and grain farming and a contributor to the contamination, is at odds with the highly developed and important fresh water fishery. The value of the fishery is approaching \$30 million and is negatively affected by the significant discharge of chemicals. The Stewardship Board has established a mediation service to find a resolution to the current dispute between competing interests.

On balance, sewage and chemical discharge along with inadequate land development practices are the concern for ecological protection of each of these lakes. Measures to combat these problems are driven by the economic impact of contamination on each area and the commitment of the respective governments to act.

The governing operatives for each of the Lakes have some similar features but appear to be arrived at differently. For example, in Lakes Winnipeg and Champlain, it appears that several levels of government established the framework for management and governance and proceeded to invite stakeholders in. In the case of Bras d'Or, it appears that citizens (organizations) created the momentum for a more collaborative form of association and in a manner of speaking, invited governments in. Earlier attempts to have the Provincial Government approve a Bras d'Or Lake Management Commission failed. To state that

the system of governance for any one Lake system is superior to the others would be difficult. But it does appear that in both instances, senior governments play a more influential role in setting priorities in Winnipeg and Champlain as opposed to Bras d'Or.

It might be useful to conduct a more comprehensive review of the management or governance arrangements of other Lake ecosystems. With regard to CEPI, the collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative as applies to the Bras d'Or Lake, this is actually a planning group rather than governance mechanism. Significant information is available by Googling each of the Lakes by name.

Pat Bates
Chairman

The Forestry Resource: Numbers do not support a 60 MW biomass generator

by Jim Morrow

The future of the forests of eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island will be decided by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board's decision to approve or not Nova Scotia Power Inc.'s capital work order C139029 Port Hawkesbury Biomass Project.

This \$208.6 million project's future rests with the decision. So too may the future of New Page Port Hawkesbury, present owners of the pulp and paper mill on Point Tupper and lease holders of the majority of crown land in the seven eastern counties.

The proposal is to use an underutilized 30 year old boiler to burn wood scraps and wood fibre as well as sludge from the five Eastern Counties to generate 60 Megawatts of electricity for the next forty years.

For NSPI a biomass generator would go a long way in their meeting the Renewable Energy Standards requirements of 10% by 2013. For New Page they have a future by increasing their harvest for the biomass energy market and a power plant next door for all its heating and electrical needs. Serious testimony has been sought and submitted to the Utilities Review Board for the public hearing on this work order. Submissions for standing at the hearing closed on June 16th.

The hearing is set for Monday, July 26th at 9 am in Halifax. Testimonies are now available on the UARB website. Some testimonies are questioning why NSPI paid \$200 million up front without assurance it will ever gain full benefit for forty years and the risk is with NSPI and consequently its customers. The proponents estimate some 655,000 tons of fuel, at 48% moisture content, will be required to fire the generator. However, testimonies are estimating 740,000 tons will be required at an average moisture content of 51%, while another fuel consumption analysis shows that a 60% boiler efficiency with 50% moisture content will require 895,000 tons of biomass per year.

Others question the sustainability of the biomass itself, stating that in fact there is less wood fibre available than the NSPI submission has accounted for in its requirements. Nor are private woodlot owners likely to harvest their woodlots for the price being offered by New Page for their wood. Indeed the roadside prices for a metric tons of biomass

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offered by New Page to producers in the seven eastern counties of Nova Scotia is substantially less than what is offered in the rest of the Province. For example New Page offers between \$9 and \$13 per metric ton for sawdust and between \$18 and \$22 per metric ton for hardwood/roundwood/pulp biomass whereas in the rest of the province where there is competition for forest products sawdust goes for \$24 to \$26 per metric ton and hardwood/roundwood/pulp biomass is purchased for \$30 to \$32 per metric ton.

If increased harvesting occurs to meet the fuel requirements a concern is being expressed by watershed organizations which have experienced the results of high sedimentation due to higher run-off from clear cuts.

Questions are also being asked if biomass electrical generation should be allowed to be used as a Renewable Energy Standards. Not only is carbon dioxide a being produced in the creation of the electrical energy, but the forests which turn carbon dioxide into oxygen, are being cut to create more carbon dioxide.

Anyone wishing to make comments in writing may file Letters of Comment with the Board by Wednesday, July 14, 2010. Letters should be addressed to the Clerk of the Board at Box 1692, Unit "M", Halifax, NS, B3J 3S3, or by email to: board@gov.ns.ca or by fax at (902) 424-3919.

NSPI's Application and pre-filed evidence may be examined during normal business hours at the offices of the Board and at the office of the Secretary of the Applicant, Suite 1800, Barrington Tower, Scotia Square, Halifax. The complete Application is also available on NSPI's web site (www.nspower.ca)

and on the Board's web site (www.nsuarb.ca). Document #: 174667.

OPEN COAST

Considerable ink has been spilt in recent years on the sorry state of Nova Scotia's coasts. Despite their vital importance to the province, we still don't have a coherent coastal policy. Unplanned development continues ad hoc

under an incoherent hodge-podge of federal, provincial and municipal laws and regulations - jurisdictional mayhem. However, at long last there are signs of progress - the public is getting engaged.



This house is going up on a rocky causeway on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. (Colin Cameron)

Now nearing completion is a series of public consultations on the province's "State of the Coast" report, commissioned from CBCL by the previous government and released last December by the NDP. While the report is silent on key issues like aquaculture and tidal power, and while some find the report's purview baffling, through the consultations the province is hearing loud and clear, even from its own party, that the number one problem is coastal governance. The report's six priority issues, "Working Waterfronts," "Water Quality," etc., are all subservient to this greater concern.

At the June 14th public consultation at Dalhousie, strangely the only multi-stakeholder session in the current public review process, a number of interesting ideas surfaced all worthy of further discussion. Even though many key coastal players were not present (mining, forestry, energy), there were several seasoned veterans from the province's protracted coastal dialogue.

One suggested, to help achieve regulatory consistency at the municipal level, the province should adopt a clear coastal "Statement of Provincial Interest." Good idea. A breakout group of participants suggested, in light of rising sea level, we need consistent regulations governing setbacks and elevations. Another good idea, and not rocket science. Another group reported back to the committee of the whole, as coastal access concerns many Nova Scotians, maybe as we push to protect 12% of the province by 2015, to avoid most of these lands being in the cheaper interior, we should declare that 20% of the 12% be coastal. Interesting. All great ideas worthy of further open debate by those most involved, the stakeholders. This dialogue must be encouraged, broadened, and given voice and scope.

At last month's Nova Scotia NDP convention a unanimous resolution called for binding legislation to protect the coast, to ensure its sustainability, for climate change adaptation plans for all municipalities, and a coordinated coastal governance structure involving all three levels of

government, aboriginal people, NGOs, and communities. Big goals, but given leadership and energy, highly achievable and called for by the rank and file of the governing party itself.

The government has promised us a coastal strategy by December 31st, 2010, an ambitious goal. They cannot do it alone. To drive the process forward to the strategy and beyond, to realize intelligent coastal management, to steward our coastal birthright for the benefit of future generations, and in realpolitik terms, to secure along the way the buy-in of all coastal stakeholders, the government needs a broad-based process - a panel of experts, multi-stakeholders, and the proactive engagement of those most knowledgeable about the coast, our coastal communities themselves.

By Geoff Le Boutillier, *founder of the Mahone Bay Stewardship Assoc.*

Reprinted from Halifax Chronicle

Pjila'si **Welcome** to the **Pitu'paq Communique**, published regularly to inform people on Pitu'paq's activities. Pitu'paq represents the five Unama'ki Mi'kmaq communities and five municipal units in Cape Breton on issues surrounding sewage in the Bras d'Or Lakes and other environmental issues affecting its water quality.

We have lots of comings and goings to report in this issue. Pitu'paq founder and member of UINR staff **Laurie Suitor** has moved to a new position and is no longer serving on the Pitu'paq committee. She will be missed...UINR Executive Director **Lisa Young** will be joining the Pitu'paq committee in Laurie's place...Long-time bookkeeper **Donnie Patterson** has retired and he has been replaced by Potlotek resident **Mary Collier** as the committee's bookkeeper...Pitu'paq has organized a group meeting to review the consultant's report for the Waycobah/Whycocomagh sewage treatment and to plan to deal with the plant nearing the point of full capacity...Pitu'paq is assisting Potlotek in planning for this year's annual Chapel Island Mission. Pitu'paq does not have the capacity to organize the sewage, waste and forestry program this year but has offered to help however it can. Potlotek has hired **Jamie Johnson** to coordinate the Mission program this year...A proposed Wastewater Management District in Richmond County has three families signed on to cooperate in a micro-sewage treatment plant in their community...**Alan Berringer** from Environment Nova Scotia gave a report to the committee on the federal government's Canada-wide strategy for the management of municipal waste water...**Charles Bernard** made a presentation to Pitu'paq on a project that he is involved with—Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources (BEAHR)...**Shirley McNamara** has been representing Pitu'paq at the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Association meetings and gives a positive report on the activities of the organization...Pitu'paq supports establishing a new pump-out station in George's River. Another station will make it easier for boaters to comply with the non-discharge designation now in effect on the Lakes...Pitu'paq is looking to expand it's membership to include a representative from the Mi'kmaq Grand Council...

www.pitupaq.ca

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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

2010

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:*

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