

THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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

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he concept of "sustainability" is a notion that took its true flight during and after the "1992 Rio Conference". This event is still often referred to as the 1990's benchmark for initiating global dialogue regarding sustainable economic development in the face of ongoing threats to the global environment. The health of global environment was and still is the prime focus of this historic conference.

For the past four months, we all have has been active in assessing been affected by the escalating price of gas which has genuine impact on the sustainability of a wide spectrum of activities and businesses. Airline's fuel costs have drastically increased further eroding the economic viability of the global transportation industry. The car owner has seen his fuel costs rise significantly, impacting on travel decisions. Tourism is no doubt affected by fuel, a cost which in turn has a ripple effect through the economy of Cape Breton which recently was declared the "number two" tourist destination in the world by The National Geographic's travel magazine.

For five years, a federally funded "sustainable communities initiative"

In This Issue Page News Items 3-4 Sewage Lagoon Opened This is My Cape Breton... 5 Canada's Inland Sea

sustainable development within communities located within the Bras Lakes watershed Consultations have been held with numerous community groups to better understand the "sustainability issues" effecting local residents. The question put is "what exactly makes our communities sustainable?"

For those communities that boarder the Bras d'Or Lakes sustainability may reflect an "attitude" as much as anything else. Individual perseverance goes along way to create and maintain community sustainability. The quality of life is also a significant component of the sustainability equation within an increasingly marginal rural economic framework.

Locally, the political, economic and social aspects of sustainability are complex and suffer today from significant demographic and economic changes. Around the Bras d'Or Lakes, ongoing transitions in property ownership reflect an increasingly seasonal population base. The escalation of property values for shore front property on the Bras d'Or Lakes have surpassed affordability for most local year round residents.

From the Society's perspective, sustainability focuses recognizing the balance required

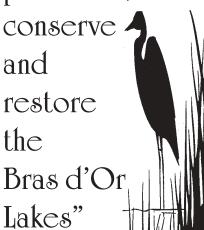
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NOTICE

THE SEMI-ANNUAL **GENERAL MEETING OF** THE SOCIETY WILL BE AT THE BADDECK **COMMUNITY HALL** ON AUGUST 14, 2004 AT 2 PM.

ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND AS WELL AS INTERESTED **CITIZENS WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THE FUTURE STEWARDSHIP** OF THE BRAS D'OR LAKES.

"Our goal is to protect,

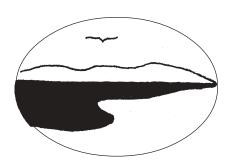


www.baddeck.com/bss

Cont'd from page 1

between environmental stewardship and the general well being of the community. The health of any community is a measure of its people diversity, economic viability and the state of its environmental capital.

During the recent federal election campaign, the "health (sick) care" of the Canadian citizenry was a major issue debated on many fronts. Little, if any, significant debate was focused on the health of the Canadian environment. No doubt, individuals willing to work together promote responsible environmental programs with sustainability, the focus must wage the campaign at the local level. The goal is to make the notion of "environmental stewardship" an integral part of sustainable community development. Not to do so is courting a slow, but steady unrelenting decline in the health of the Bras d'Or Lakes, its watershed and the communities that now exist within the watershed.



Collaborative **Environmental Planning** Initiative (CEIP)

Many critical issues continue to face the Bras d'Or Lakes. Invasive species, MSX, ballast water, sewage issues, land use planning, species depletion, habitat loss, sedimentation and climate change all pose challenges.

In recognition that no one agency or organization has the resources to face these challenges alone. the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative, or CEPI, has been formed in the Bras d'Or Lakes. To help develop this initiative, a conference was held last October to find a consensus among government and First Bras d'Or Lakes, regardless of Nation partners with respect to working collaboratively. This conference was very successful, and resulted in several solid directives. Among them, it was agreed that the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources is well placed to take the lead on gathering the various collaborative partners together and moving initiatives forward. Their strong science research base in Bras d'Or and extensive history of Development, CEPI, at 535-3830. public/government/private partnerships has given them the ability to move the initiative forward.

This October, a second workshop will be held to develop further collaboration with community partners. This will be an opportunity to share information and become full partners in developing solutions to the issues facing the Bras d'Or Lakes. Communities surrounding the cultural heritage, share a strong attachment and connection to the Bras d'Or Lakes. Their expertise, information and support are critical if we are to have successful, healthy communities well into the future - a goal we all share for future generations. For further information, or for copies of the proceedings of the October 2003 conference, please contact Laurie Suitor, Program and Business

> Information provided by Laurie Suitor

Bras d'Or Watch

The federal Department of Fisheries continues to pursue through the legal system the redressing of the infilling of an aquatic habitat along the Baddeck Bay Road. This violation of habitat regulations has occurred incrementally over a period of time as the property owner infilled a significant area of wet land habitat in preparation for constructing a

The understanding is that full remediation of this environmental indiscretion is being sought. The Society has written to the appropriate authorities regarding this issue as no environmental permits were issued to allow this blatant act of environmental degradation.

NEWS ITEMS:

Annual General Meeting:

On March 20, 2004 the annual general meeting of the society was held at the Alexander Graham Bell Museum. Forty-three individuals attended this meeting which was a record number.

Chairman Pat Bates provided a summary of the past year's activities. Treasurer Henry Fuller provided a year end financial statement for 2003. Guest speaker Inka Milewsky traveled from Mirimichi, NB to speak on the parameters of nutrient loading on watersheds. An extensive report entitled "Nutrient Pollution" is available from the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (www.conservationcouncil.ca).

Society Contribution:

In January 2004 the society directors voted to provide a \$5,000.00 contribution to the Unim'aki Institute to provide interim funds to pay the wages of Laurie Suitor, the former provincial Bras d'Or co-ordinator. Laurie lost her position due to an internal grievance procedure within the provincial department of Environment and Labor. Her contribution to the Bras d'Or Lakes no dumping designation proposal was a major undertaking. The society felt that without further support this effort could and would loose valuable momentum.

Society Sponsors Oyster Reseeding Proposal:

The Society acted as the lead proponent of an oyster reseeding project. The project would entail seeding oyster beds that have been ravaged by the MX parasite. The purpose is to see if by reseeding infected oyster beds with young

oysters, will the oysters grow to maturity uncontaminated by the MX parasite. To date, no proactive strategy has been tabled to address the devastation to the Bras d'Or Lakes oyster economy due to the MX parasite invasion.

Bras d'Or Yacht Club Renovations:

represents the 100th anniversary of the Bras d'Or Yacht Club located in Baddeck. The club has been the center of sailing activity on the Bras d'Or Lakes for 100 years. In March of 2004, renovations of the club house commenced. The building has been essentially rebuilt rectifying structural deficiencies and adding expanded space including public wash rooms that will be accessible to all that frequent Baddeck's wharf adiacent areas. improvements go far in providing amenities to all who enjoy the Baddeck waterfront and Baddeck's wharf. Total value of the renovations will be over \$180,000,00 with **Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation** contributing \$88,000.00.

Monies Granted:

An announcement has been made by Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation to fund the Ross's Ferry Stewardship Society in the amount of \$200,000.00. The funds would be used for marina development and general tourism enhancement in the area of Ross's Ferry. A boat waste pump out facility will be part of the project as well as upgrades to the existing former ferry wharf.

This project, along with the Grand Narrows Marina project and the recent upgrades to the Lion's Club Marina in St. Peters, have all received funding from Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. This infrastructure enhancement of

marine facilities on the behalf of community group initiatives has received well over a total two million tax payers' dollars in recent years through existing government programs.

Bras d'Or Lakes Designation:

Recent communications from federal government officials suggest that a decision for designation of the lakes as a 'no dumping' zone will not be tabled until 2006. The society is concerned that such delays may weaken the decision-making process. Hence, every effort will be made by the society to maintain pressure on the appropriate government officials to keep the designation application on their agenda.

Society Welcomes New Board Member:

It is always a challenge to find new board members that will work to carry out the aims of the Society. Recently, the board has appointed Dr. Chris Milburn to the board for a one-year term. Chris is a native Cape Bretoner. He is a stalwart proponent of environmental protection and accountable stewardship. Dr. Milburn was a "green party" candidate in the June 28, 2004 federal election.

Dr. Milburn, 34, is an emergency room physician at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. He also serves as President of Velo Cape Breton and is one of the original dozen members of ADAPT (Association of Doctors for the Advancement of Physical Transportation).

Society Logo:

It has been noted by one of our board members that credit must be

NEWS ITEMS:

given where credit is due. In this instance it has to do with the Society's logo. The logo for the Society was created by Berni Thorneycroft, a Cape Breton visual artist, who paints and operates a gallery in St. George's Channel, West Bay. The logo is simple and straightforward having been commissioned in 1997 to be a part of our letterhead and recognition strategy. Bernie is a long standing member of the Society.

Conference Attended:

In June 2004, the biennial conference of the Coastal Zone Canada was held in St. John's. Nfld. CZC04 was the 6th CZC conference and the first held in Newfoundland and Labrador. The conference marks the tenth anniversary of this gathering. The meeting provides an exemplary opportunity to review the progress that has been made in coastal zone management during the last decade.

Each CZCA conference builds on the previous meetings. Hence, they are closely linked. Taken together, the conferences have progressively expanded both the understanding of oceans and the ability to manage human activities in the coastal zone.

Because the Bras d'Or Lakes is now recognized as an "Inland Sea" with many of the characteristics and risks of coastal and offshore waters. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society was invited to participate at this recent conference. Hence, Society Chair Pat Bates represented the Society in St. John's, Nfld. between June 27-3-, 2004. The society is most grateful for assistance received from Coastal Zone Canada Association that made participating in this event possible. (See Pat Bates's article, Canada's Inland Sea)

Sewage Lagoon Opened: Controversy Remains Unsettled

sland Vacuum and Portables opened sewage lagoons on Crowdis Mountain for use again on June 1, 2004. This dumping site had been closed during the winter.

George's Vacuum Services of over 28 years and still does not meet Boularderie was fined \$2,500.00 in March for breaching the terms of its permit while it operated the site. This company has recently changed its name to Island Vacuum and Portables Ltd.

Regional Manager for the Nova Scotia Dept. of Environment and Labor, Lawrence MacDonald said. "We are keeping our "eye" on this site and monitoring it weekly. The company has developed an action plan and we are watching to ensure they are fulfilling the requirements which are being asked for."

"Although the final proposal is not in from Island, the Department of Environment and Labor is not finding anything in its sampling to concerned about", Mr. MacDonald said.

The Middle River Concerned Citizens group, which is also monitoring the site and has recorded numerous permit breaches in the past, is not pleased with the Department's authorization to re-open the pits. Spokesperson, Lillian MacLeod said, " I cannot understand how the Department of Labor and Environment can allow this site to function when it is hardly large enough to handle one residential sewage bed, yet the site is allowed to handle five truckloads a week at 2.000 gallons a load. This gives the site a theoretical capacity of 3.6 weeks of operation".

This site has been in operation for

any of the present day guidelines of sewage disposal. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is conducting an Integrated Resource Management (IRM) review based on a request by Island Vacuum Services to put in test pits and monitoring wells around the site on Crown Land.

The Middle River Concerned Citizens are anxious to here what the IRM study concluded and feel left out of the processes which allows decisions to be made that may have some deleterious affect on the local environment.

"We were told the site was not to be allowed to be opened until a site characteristic plan was submitted," Ms. MacLeod said. This plan was due in February, but the site is now open because of a name change of the company!

"There are no liners to protect the water table, nor does the site meet separation distances to property lines. We are unable to determine if there is any liability insurance, and the lagoons are on a porous gravel pit. This site does not meet the terms and conditions of the sewage handling guidelines, which are part of the approval. We are pursuing a meeting with the Deputy Minister of the Environment, William Lahey, to get this matter resolved," Ms. MacLeod said.

> By: Jim Morrow, Editor, Victoria Standard

This Is My Cape Breton Lighthouse At Seal Island Bridge

By Wally Ellison

, n the way to Sydney and crossing the Seal Island Bridge you glanced down to your right just as you were coming off the bridge and noticed a small picturesque lighthouse close to the water's edge. You may have noticed the strange land formation on which it was situated. You can't help noticing the strong tidal currents that pass to and fro under the bridge.

The Big Bras d' Or is the largest Fortress Louisbourg in 1734. The opening from the sea into the Bras d'Or Lakes and, four times a day, the tides rise and fall, driving millions of gallons of ocean water in and out of the narrow opening. Sediment in the form of sand, silt, and gravel move with the strong tidal currents. Slight changes in the coastline cause the currents to drop the sedimentary loads they are carrying, building beach bars of many different shapes. Some are long and thin, some are curved and hookshaped, some close off bays, and still others connect islands together.

The beach bars under Seal Island Bridge are yet very different. Two bars build outward into the inlet at different angles and eventually connect. A sort of triangular bar with a lagoon inside is formed. These are called cuspate forelands. The lagoon is quiet bodies of brackish water somewhat separated from the mainstream of sea water. Its waters can be slightly salty and slightly fresh depending on the quality of the water percolating through its beach bars. This is the land formation that this seldom-visited lighthouse is situated on.

Lighthouses are indeed very interesting structures and so are the people who used to inhabit and operate them. Today, most lighthouses are automated and destaffed. What a shame! Indeed a way of life is gone. The first lighthouse went into service at present light at Louisbourg is the fourth lighthouse at basically the same foundation and built in 1923-24. At its base are the foundation ruins of previous 18th and 19th century lighthouses. Nova Scotia has the largest number of lighthouses in Canada with over 150. Shipbuilding in Atlantic Canada led to a boom in the construction of lighthouses. The safety of people and ships at seas was an important concern.

Numerous shipwrecks at Scaterie Island and St. Paul's Island led to the construction of lighthouses on these two islands. The Sambro Light was built in 1760 and MacNutts Island (Shelburne) in 1788, just to mention a few of the early ones. Several lighthouses can be found around the islands and headlands of the Bras d'Or Lakes. Kidston Island near Baddeck and the islands of Marble Mountain are some lights that come to mind. Peggy's Cove light is probably the most photographed lighthouse in Nova Scotia and maybe in all of North America. It's probably not the most unique light to be found, but when its location and situation (the polished ice-scoured granites of the Atlantic Upland) are combined, it produces some pretty striking photographs.

Maybe lighthouses are buildings of a past era. Today with GPS (Global Positioning Systems) and an

assortment of other specialized electronic equipment there might not be much of a need for them. Although most lighthouses were built for a functional purpose, many are magnificent buildings of seascape architecture. More recently many have been torn down and a light on an uninteresting tower or mast has been erected in their place.

The little light under the Seal Island Bridge always catches my attention when crossing over the Great Bras d'Or. Maybe the "light conditions" are giving it a new look or mood. At any rate, it's probably time to stop and take another picture. One of these trips I'll stop and make my way down and onto the beach bars that it is built on. But then again, there are many more in Nova Scotia to seek out, learn about, and photograph.



Canada's Inland Sea

When we think of the Bras d'Or Lakes we often equate it with any lake, beautiful to observe, full of fresh water, and a great place to swim, sail or catch smelt. Like so many things that exist right in our midst and which we take for granted we need to be reminded from time to time of the value of this great resource and the awe and surprise expressed by many tourists and visitors when they view it for the first time.

While we, as Cape Bretoners and Nova Scotians, are inclined to be proud of the Bras d'Or Lakes we should ask our selves how well informed we are if or when asked to describe some of its features. For example do we know why it's frequently referred to as an Inland Sea? Well, unlike most lakes it has a high level of salinity due to its exchange with the Atlantic Ocean. It experiences a tidal rise and fall. It has three outlets to the Atlantic Ocean. Through one of these outlets ocean-going ships are accommodated.

The lakes are eleven hundred square kilometres in size, about one fifth the size of Lake Erie and are situated in a surrounding landmass of thirty-six hundred square kilometres. There is an existing population of about twenty thousand persons within the water shed. Of that number over one third are aboriginal first nation persons residing on five separate reserves.

Although some progress has been made over the past seven years, there remain reasons to worry about the health of the lakes over the long term. As of this date there are fifty sites in the Bras d'Or Lakes close to shellfish harvesting due to excess faecal coliform count. The MSX parasite has wrecked havoc on the local oyster industry. The herring stock in the Lakes has been depleted. After five years of closure there is little evidence of a rebound in the herring resource.

As our citizens become more aware of the importance of protecting the Lakes, the environmental health of this ecosystem should improve. We are receiving an increasing number

of reports concerning "observable risks" to the Bras d' Or Lake's environment that include summer bungalows and recreational trailers parked at many locations around the Lakes without toilet or proper sewage disposal systems. There are far too many cottages and trailers continuing to discharge sewage directly into the Lakes. Sewage waste from boats is still am on going issue the society is focusing on.

On a positive note, some very good mapping has been completed which, for the first time, will help identify and point to sources of pollution. This will assist the appropriate authorities to deal with current and future offenders. Another positive development has been the release of a publication entitled "Proceedings of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science" Volume # 42. This work which we have referred to in an earlier newsletter features seven excellent articles covering many technical and scientific features of the Bras d' Or Lakes. This is an excellent publication. It is available though the Society at twenty-seven dollars (\$27.00CN) per copy including the postal costs.

We are pleased to have participated in a major workshop addressing issues focusing on the Bras d'Or Lakes held in Wagmatcook in October 2003. We are currently participating with several other organizations, individuals, and certain government agencies for a management planning forum for the Bras d'Or Lakes. This will include a follow up workshop scheduled to be held at Wagmatcook on October 7-

of reports concerning "observable 8, 2004. More information will be risks" to the Bras d' Or Lake's forth coming on this event. An insert environment that include summer on the October 2003 workshop is bungalows and recreational trailers included with this newsletter.

We continue as a volunteer society to work diligently for the long term protection and safeguarding of the Bras d'Or Lakes. We wish to thank all members for their continued support, moral and financial. We do not receive nor have requested government funding for our work preferring to maintain independent posture not compromised by government association.

Pat Bates, Chairman

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.

LET'S TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BRAS D'O

one acre of water and force shellfish closures. • YOU CONTAMINATE • HOW DO WE AFFECT WATER QUALITY? Shellfish closures are the first indication of deteriorating water quality. There are already over 30 shellfish closures in the Bras d'Or Lakes. • DID YOU KNOW? The human waste from one person, in one day, can contaminate THE WATER IF YOU: (a) Flush waste into an overloaded sewage system, and most sewage treatment facilities in the Bras d'Or are overoaded. (b) Have an on-site septic system that is leaking and not properly maintained. (c) Are boaters flushing human waste directly into the lake.

to human health, a number of beaches around the Bras d'Or have been HEALTH: Bacterial contamination of water can cause skin rashes, eye and ear infections or, if ingested, can make one ill. Because of threats closed for swimming. (b) ECONOMY: Economic development in the Bras d'Or area depends upon a clean environment. If water quality in the Bras d'Or declines, the aquaculture, commercial fishing industry, and tourism could be seriously impacted. (c) RECREATION: If water quality is not ensured, recreational fishing, boating and swimming in • HOW DOES WATER QUALITY AFFECT US? (a) the Bras d'Or Lakes could become things of the past.

• WHAT CAN WE DO? I. CONSERVE WATER: Did you know that every time we flush, we use up to 22 litres of clean water? Using less water ensures less pressure on village sewage systems and on your septic system. II. PRACTICE THE 3 Rs OF WATER CONSERVATION: (a) REDUCE: Use water saving devices such as shower savers and toilets dams. (b) REPAIR: One small leak can waste thousands of litres of water per year. (c) RETROFIT: Choose water efficient fixtures and appliances when replacement is needed. III. TAKE CARE OF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM: A malfunctioning septic system can contaminate ground-water and effluents will leak into the Bras d'Or. Eventually, this will reduce your property value. Make sure your septic system is working, and have it pumped every 3-5 years. You can contact your local Department of Environment for information on septic system maintenance. The less water you flush into your septic system, the more completely treated each litre of waste will be. Do not feed your septic system any oils or garborated foods. This slows the effectiveness of your system and causes it to malfunction. IV. TAKE CARE OF YOUR SEPTIC SYS-TEM: Stop flushing raw sewage into the Lake. Deteriorating water quality will affect the enjoyment you get out of boating around the Bras d'Or Lakes. Have a holding tank installed and pumped regularly. Pumping stations around the Bras d'Or are located in: Baddeck, Dundee and St. Peter's.

• RAISING AWARIENESS: There are community groups around the Bras d'Or concerned with water quality issues. Consider joining your local community group. Ensure that the Bras d'Or does not face further contamination.

Raise your water quality and environmental concerns with the appropriate responsible authority. N.S. Department of Environment Baddeck: (902) 295-2159 • Sydney: (902) 563-2100 Environment Canada (902) 426-7231 WATER QUALITY ISSUES

WHO CAN BE CONTACTED?

Baddeck: (902) 295-2159 • Sydney: (902) 563-2100 SEPTIC TANK MAINTENANCE N.S. Department of Environment

/illage Commission: (902) 295-3666 Municipal Council: (902) 295-3231 SEWAGE TREATMENT

Department of Fisheries & Oceans Baddeck: (902) 295-2557 • Sydney: (902) 564-7708

ENFORCEMENT & MONITORING OF SHELLFISH CLOSURES

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society; (902) 756-3264 • Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Association: (902) 379-2024

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Individual Membership: \$15.00 • Family Membership: \$25.00 BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY MEMBER FEES **TO JOIN THE BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY:**

Vewardship Society Bras d

CLEAN WATER IN THE BRAS D'OR LAKES...OUR COMMON GOAL, OUR COMMON FUTURE! eck, Nova Scotia BDE 180 • PHONE 756-3264 vw.capebretonet.com/Baddeck/BSS OR VISIT WEBSITE: WWW.Ca **NRITE: P.O. BOX 158, BAI**

www.baddeck.com/bss

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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

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MEMBER		\$15.00		Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the
FAMILY		\$25.00		Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through responsible stewardship.
CONTRIBUTOR		\$50.00		
SUPPORTER		\$100.00	Name	
LIFETIME MEMBER		\$500.00	4 7 7	
Address Mail check or money order along with your name and address to:				
Bras d'Or Stewardship Society			Phone	e-mail
P.O. Box 158 Baddeck, Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0			Fax	