

Protecting Nova Scotia: Various Options for a Variety of Places

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Why do Nova Scotians protect land? Most of the reasons centre on an aspect of uniqueness or a special quality of an area, such as rare plants and animals, rock formations, or stunning scenery. Currently, several different groups have designated a number of sites with varying degrees of protection. Looking at those sites which exclude resource extraction and industrial or residential development, 8.2 per cent of the province is protected. However, of that only 0.07 per cent of the province has been designated for formal protection on private lands.

Since over 70 per cent of Nova Scotia is privately owned, government agencies and conservation organizations have been directing efforts at private land stewardship. These efforts have resulted in significant achievements. By looking at some of the recently protected sites, one can see the range of land agreement options and how various organizations and individuals are working together to conserve unique natural areas.

Cape Split, Kings County

In the summer of 2002, the provincial government purchased 280 hectares (700 acres) at Cape Split, which is located at the end of the Blomidon peninsula. This property is recognized provincially and nationally for its cliff formations, colonies of sea birds, rare vegetation, scenic views and dramatic tides. It offers spectacular hiking opportunities with panoramic views. This land transaction is a relatively simple type, but rare, as the Province does not have funds for large acquisitions.

Dunns Beach, Antigonish County

A smaller acquisition of 16 hectares (41 acres) occurred in December 2002 when the Province purchased Dunns Beach. This transaction added

property to a string of protected beaches that includes Pomquet, Monks Head and Mahoneys Beach, providing nesting habitat for the endangered piping plover, as well as increasing public ownership of coastal property.

Musquodoboit Harbour Islands, Halifax Regional Municipality

In March 2003, the Province acquired islands near Martinique Beach in cooperation with its Eastern Habitat Joint Venture partners. A 30 hectare (74 acre) parcel, including two islands of international importance for waterfowl habitat, high scenic value and recreational opportunities, was added to provincial coastal lands.

Wilson Hill, Annapolis County

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust purchased 74 hectares (183 acres) at Wilson Hill from Bowater Mersey Paper Company in July 2001. Surrounded by the Cloud Lake Wilderness Area, the site contributes to the area's biodiversity with a relatively uncommon ecosystem type. The well-drained hill system includes red spruce, red maple, sugar maple, red oak, and 150 year old white pine. The larger Cloud Lake Wilderness Area protects a significant headwater portion of the LaHave River watershed, and includes forested landscapes, glacial deposits, large scattered lakes, steep-sided streams and wetlands. Large, interconnected lakes with numerous sheltered inlets and scenic islands offer excellent wilderness recreation opportunities.

Coastal lands, such as these private lands along the Eastern Shore, are highly valued for protection.





Hiram and Kathleen Nelson at the unveiling of a cairn for donated lands, August 2001.

Purchase of the Wilson Hill property involved cooperation between the non-government Nature Trust, private woodland owner Bowater Mersey Paper Company Limited, and the provincial government.

Cole Harbour, Halifax Regional Municipality

The Nelson Conservation Area and the Peter McNab Kuhn Conservation Area are two properties that were donated to the Province in recent years. Both contribute to the Cole Harbour-West Lawrencetown Coastal Heritage Park.

Encouraged by Ducks Unlimited Canada, Hiram and Kathleen Nelson donated 186 hectares (465 acres) of wetlands and young forest. In an area of increasing urbanization, these properties provide critical wildlife habitat.

The Peter McNab Kuhn Conservation Area was donated to the Province by Mary Osborne and her brother David Kuhn on behalf of the descendants of Peter McNab Kuhn. The donation was done with the assistance of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The donation is comprised of approximately 930 hectares (2300 acres) of submerged lands, coastal wetlands and salt marsh.

Prospect High Head, Halifax Regional Municipality

In February 2001, the Province announced the transfer of 112 hectares (276 acres) of land to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Located in the Prospect High Head area of the Halifax Regional Municipality, this ecologically sensitive area provides important wildlife habitat. This relatively undisturbed coastal landscape represents one of only two areas in Nova Scotia defined as Granite Barrens (the other is in Canso). The donated property has a complex of small bogs and crowberry barrens, glacial erratics, and granite outcrops which are highly sensitive to disturbance. This barrens ecosystem plays a vital environmental role by purifying vast amounts of groundwater. Under a stewardship plan for the area, the Prospect Peninsula Residents Association and the Friends of High Head will act as stewards of the land.



Trail head sign at the donated conservation area in Cole Harbour.

Murphy Cove, Halifax Regional Municipality

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust holds a conservation easement on 15 hectares (37 acres) of a group of Eastern Shore islands. A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement that establishes conditions on use and development of the land, and accompanies the title to the land. It binds future owners to respect the conditions of the easement. The islands in the Murphy Cove area feature coastal forests, diverse and rich wildlife habitat, and dramatic views. The property recently underwent a change of ownership, yet the new owner/easement holder is obligated, and willing, to honour the conservation easement conditions that will keep this property as a natural area in perpetuity.

Tobeatic Wilderness Area, Shelburne and Annapolis Counties

Two parcels of Bowater Mersey Paper Company Limited land comprising 347 hectares (868 acres) within the Tobeatic Wilderness Area were purchased by the Nature Conservancy of Canada in February 2003. Two other land parcels, also owned by Bowater Mersey, will be placed under conservation easements with the Nature Conservancy. Those parcels will add 1175 hectares (2900 acres) to the Tidney River and Lake Rossignol Wilderness Areas.

Gaff Point, Lunenburg County

Gaff Point is representative of Nova Scotia's fast-disappearing Atlantic Coastal Headland, and comprises 50 hectares (124 acres) of mixed woods, heath, grassland, and beach. The area offers dramatic views of the Atlantic Ocean and links a series of beaches and dune systems that are home to shorebirds and other species. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, in partnership with the Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, and the Government of Canada's Millennium Partnership Program, launched a fund-raising campaign in 2000 to preserve Gaff Point. The financial target is \$1.2 million to protect this coastal habitat. The complex campaign involves fund raising, acquisitions, donations and conservation easements for at least 15 properties.

Nova Scotians are making progress in protecting natural areas. Sites rich in natural history may be designated by one of three levels of government and/or a private conservation organization. Land agreements may involve acquisitions, donations, easements, or other options, depending on landowner requirements and site characteristics.

Anyone can play a role by donating time, money or land to conservation organizations. For more information contact one of these organizations.

Nova Scotia Nature Trust

PO Box 2202, Halifax, NS, B3J 3C4

Tel: (902) 425-5263

Web: www.nsnt.ca

Nature Conservancy of Canada, Halifax Bureau

757 Bedford Highway, Bedford, NS, B4A 3Z7

Tel: (902) 457-5902

Web: www.natureconservancy.ca

Eastern Habitat Joint Venture

Glen Parsons, DNR—Wildlife Division

Kentville, NS

(902) 679-6223

You'll also find other conservation organizations specializing in specific regions or certain types of land holdings.