

*Plants on the Edge: Securement and Stewardship of  
Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora in Southwest Nova Scotia 2004 to 2006*

*Final Report for the NS Habitat Conservation Fund 2004-2005*

## **Project Goal and Objectives**

**Project Goal:** to conserve in perpetuity critical lakeshore, wetland and riparian habitats in southwest Nova Scotia that support nationally significant Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora (ACPF), and to mitigate threats to ACPF through stewardship and education.

### **Project Objectives**

- ❖ To conserve in perpetuity the critical and unique lakeshore, wetland and riparian habitats where nationally significant Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora (ACPF) occur in southwest Nova Scotia through acquisition, donation and conservation easements
- ❖ To maintain the diversity of native species by conserving the important “edge” habitats at the interface of freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems
- ❖ To reduce human impacts to critical ACPF habitats through landowner education and voluntary stewardship
- ❖ To educate users of these lake systems and local communities on habitat conservation
- ❖ To reduce human impacts and threats to critical ACPF habitats
- ❖ To engage local citizens in a coordinated program to monitor the abundance and health of ACPF habitats

## **Work Completed, Results and Achievements**

### **Habitat Conservation**

Conservation of critical wetland habitats in perpetuity through acquisition, donation and conservation easements has taken longer to complete than anticipated due to the lengthy process of landowner negotiation and associated legal, appraisal and survey work. As a result no properties were formally secured during the project period. Ongoing negotiations and securement work will be completed in the 2005-2006 project period (see list of properties under active negotiations for securement below).

The following habitat conservation activities were completed during the project reporting period:

- Phase 1 surveys completed = 19 properties on 8 priority lakes
- Critical wetland habitats identified for formal securement during project period= 8
- All key landowners identified and contacted
- Negotiations for permanent securement ongoing with 7 landowners
- Land appraisals completed on 4 properties

- Legal title work completed on 3 properties

### **Specific Properties under Active Negotiation for Permanent Securement**

#### **Wilson's and Bennett's Lakes, Yarmouth County**

COSEWIC Species: Pink Coreopsis *Coreopsis rosea* and Plymouth Gentian *Sabatia kennedyana*; provincial species include Brookside Alder *Alnus serrulata* and Dwarf Chain Fern *Woodwardia areolata*.

Habitat: 90 acres including ~4,000m of shoreline lake and river shoreline; small areas of associated wetlands; disturbed mixed forest with early climax hardwood forest.

Securement stage: owner has agreed in principal to a conservation easement; awaiting financial assessment by owner's accountant.

#### **Gillfillan Lake, Yarmouth County**

COSEWIC Species: Pink Coreopsis *Coreopsis rosea* and Plymouth Gentian *Sabatia kennedyana*; provincial species include Fringed Orchid *Platanthera flava* var. *flava*

Habitat: 36 acres with 300m of shoreline; mid-phase disturbed mixed forest.

Securement stage: owner has agreed in principal to sell to NSNT at fair market value or bargain sale price; awaiting initial property appraisal.

#### **Molega Lake, Queens County**

COSEWIC Species: Redroot *Lacnathes caroliana* and Eastern Ribbon Snake *Thamnophis sauritus*; provincial species include Brookside Alder *Alnus serrulata* and Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis*.

Habitat: ~30 acres with extensive wetlands and ~800m of shoreline; also climax Hemlock forest.

Securement stage: owner has stated willingness to place a conservation easement but awaits accountant's financial advice.

#### **Molega Lake, Queens County**

COSEWIC Species: Redroot *Lacnathes caroliana* and Eastern Ribbon Snake *Thamnophis sauritus*; provincial species include Brookside Alder *Alnus serrulata*, Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, Meadow Beauty *Rhexia virginica* and Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*.

Habitat: 41 acres; ~3,828m of shoreline; early climax Hemlock and mixed forest.

Securement stage: owner has agreed to place a conservation easement.

#### **Pleasant River, Queens County**

COSEWIC Species: Long's Bulrush *Scirpus longii*; and Blanding's Turtle *Emydoidea blandingii*. Habitat: ~60 acres; extensive fen system with stream habitat.

Securement stage: early

## **Outreach**

Key landowners identified = 53

Landowners and community members contacted

Landowner visits to negotiate stewardship agreements = 15

Stewardship Agreements secured = 1 (with 1 postponed to 2005 at request of landowner)

Area protected by stewardship agreements = 68h

Guided public walks hosted = 3

Presentations = 3 including the Voluntary Planning Off-Highway Vehicle Task Force

Interpretative materials:

- Newspaper ads
- Land Stewards newsletter produced and sent to all ACPF stewardship agreement holders and ACPF rare plant monitors
- NSNT webpage on Atlantic coastal plain flora completely updated and presented in French and English
- Number of general public people reached outreach = 1,100
- Number of people reached through specific audience targeted events = 120

All 50 past ACPF rare plant monitors contacted.

New rare plant monitors recruited = 2

Plant monitoring program coordinated, data sheets received from monitors and information summarized.

Plant monitoring data for the past 6 years reviewed and summarized.

## **Lessons Learned**

### **Timescale for conservation of properties in perpetuity**

Conservation in perpetuity of critical habitat is a lengthy and complex process from initial landowner contact and subsequent negotiations through legal, appraisal, legal survey and EcoGift application procedures to final securement. A realistic timescale for completion is likely 2-3 years except in unusual circumstances where 1-1.5 years might be possible.

## **Recommendations for Follow Up**

### **Habitat Conservation**

Continue development and delivery of habitat conservation program by:

- Identifying and prioritizing properties for permanent conservation in perpetuity
- Identifying, contacting and negotiating formal conservation with landowners of priority habitats
- Completing ongoing negotiations initiated in previous year of the project
- Completing habitat assessments and formal securement procedures
- Obtaining appraisals, legal work and legal surveys for properties targeted for

securement

- Continuing support to volunteer Rare Plant Monitors (for properties with ACPF present) and Protected Area Guardians (for secured properties)

### **Outreach**

Continue development and delivery of landowner outreach program by:

- identifying new key landowners
- maintaining contact with key landowners and stewardship agreement holders
- identifying new candidates for stewardship agreements

Continue development of Atlantic coastal plain local resident outreach program by:

- hosting guided walks
- delivering public presentations
- targeted distribution of interpretative material
- development of new targeted interpretative materials
- public celebrations to mark project achievements
- supporting existing volunteer Rare Plant Monitors and training new monitors