

As an owner of land in Nova Scotia, you can play a critical role in conserving our natural heritage for future generations. This brochure outlines options for private land conservation and gives examples of how private landowners are helping to protect some of Nova Scotia's most important natural areas.



PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS

Gaff Point, acquired by Kingsbury Coastal Conservancy, NS Nature Trust, and Nature Conservancy of Canada

Read the brochure, ask questions, and consider the role you could play. If you are interested in protecting your land, you should get independent legal and financial advice from professionals familiar with private land conservation. Conservation groups, government departments with a conservation mandate, or lawyers' or accountants' professional societies can identify people with the qualifications and experience to provide good advice on these matters.

Why is private land conservation important?

Nova Scotia is a special place. Almost an island, it has a 10,000-kilometre coastline that juts into the North Atlantic. Noted worldwide for its range of geological types and landforms, the province supports at least 6,000 species of plants and animals and hundreds of distinct habitat types.

Nova Scotians have always had a strong relationship with the land. It has sustained us, challenged us, and inspired us. And, of course, our scenery is world renowned.

Currently 8.2 percent of the province is protected from resource extraction and industrial and residential development. However, less than 0.1 percent of the province has been formally protected on private land.

Ensuring that there are natural areas for plants and animals to inhabit and for future generations to enjoy depends on the interest and commitment of landowners and others to private land conservation. Since over 70 percent of Nova Scotia



Protecting Nature on Your Property

An introduction to nature conservation on private land in Nova Scotia



is privately owned, government agencies and conservation organisations are encouraging private land stewardship. We are starting to see results. By building on these achievements and

by increasing understanding of the options available to private landowners, we can continue to work together to improve the protection of land in Nova Scotia.



PHOTO: NS NATURE TRUST

Meander River, conservation easement with NS Nature Trust

Why should I consider conservation on my land?

Many landowners gain peace of mind from the tranquility and beautiful scenery provided by their land, enjoying activities such as walking, hunting, fishing, or birding. They may wish to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same benefits.

Landowners who protect their land help to protect natural ecosystems. Intact natural areas moderate our climate, provide the oxygen we breathe, and absorb the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that we produce. Natural lands also control floods, purify water, absorb pollution, and provide spiritual refreshment and opportunities for outdoor recreation.



PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS

Property at Terence Bay Wilderness Area acquired by the province

What land protection options are available to landowners?

If you are interested in conserving your land, you have several options. Consider the benefits and limitations of each option described below, and choose one that best meets your needs.

Designation

You can permanently protect your land by having it designated under provincial legislation, such as the *Special Places Protection Act* or the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. Private land designation requires a written agreement between the landowner and the province. As the landowner, you can maintain land ownership, and the agreement can be flexible to meet your needs within the spirit of the legislation. This agreement is legally binding on subsequent owners.

Designation is the strongest form of protection available to private landowners and has the advantage that the government of Nova Scotia is responsible for enforcing the legislation.

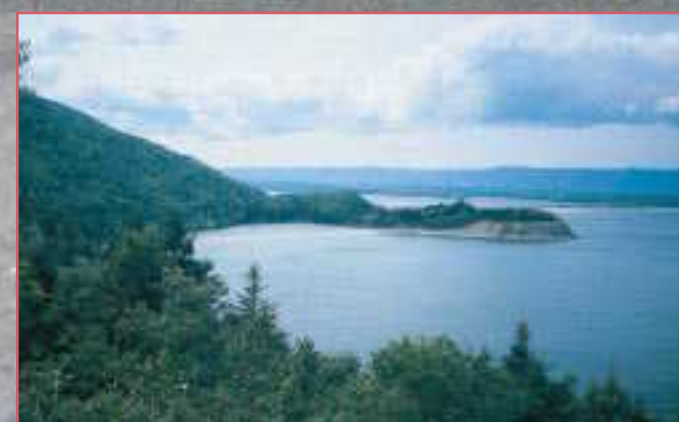


PHOTO: NS NATURE TRUST

Yellow Head, donated to NS Nature Trust

Partial Donation/ Split-Receipting

If you cannot afford to donate your land, but are willing to sell it to a conservation organisation for less than market value, the remaining value may qualify as a tax-deductible gift. For example, if you sell your \$25,000 property to a conservation organisation for \$15,000, you could receive \$15,000 in cash and a charitable donation receipt for \$10,000.

Conservation Easement

If you want to restrict future development of your land, but do not want to sell or donate it, your best option could be a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between a landowner and a conservation organisation that attaches to the title to the land. Development restrictions in the agreement are registered with the property deed and apply to both current and future landowners.

To be considered for a conservation easement, a property must provide habitat for species at risk; contain unique, rare, or exceptional features; be a haven for large populations of animals; or have intact natural areas.

Placing a conservation easement on your property and restricting land-altering activities will likely reduce the market value of the land, depending on the types of restrictions placed on it. For example, conservation easements that prohibit all development will result in the greatest reduction in market value, while conservation easements that protect most of your land but allow for the construction of a residence will likely result in a smaller reduction in market value.

If you put a conservation easement on your land, you are entitled to a charitable donation receipt equal to the reduction in market value.



PHOTO: NS NATURE TRUST

Rines Creek saltmarsh, donated to NS Nature Trust

Ecogifts Program

Under the federal government's Ecogifts Program, if you protect your land, you can apply to have it certified as "ecologically sensitive." Qualifying land must significantly contribute to the conservation of Canada's biodiversity and natural heritage and be donated to a pre-approved registered charity or government agency.



PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS

Shelter Cove, acquired by Friends of Nature

The primary financial reward for having the land certified as ecologically sensitive is that only 25 percent (instead of the usual 50 percent) of the capital gain on a donated property is included in taxable income.

Acquisition

The cost of purchasing critical areas in the province for protection from development far exceeds the limited financial resources of both governments and non-government conservation organisations. In some cases, however, conservation groups or governments may be able to purchase significant natural areas. For example, the Nature Conservancy of Canada's "Campaign for Conservation," funded in part by the government of Nova Scotia, aims to protect the highest-priority conservation lands in the province.

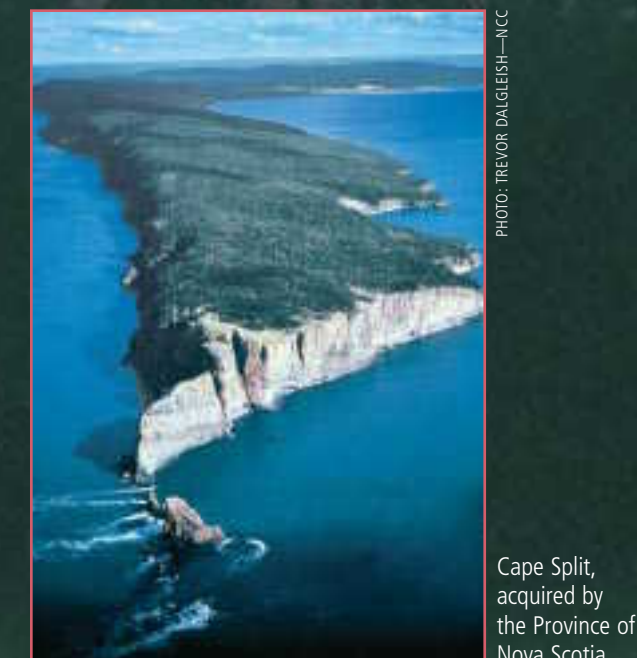


PHOTO: TREVOR BAGGESH—NCC

Cape Split, acquired by the Province of Nova Scotia

Nature conservation on private land in Nova Scotia

Protecting Private Land



NOVA SCOTIA
Environment and Labour
Environmental and Natural Areas Management Division
Protected Areas Branch

Additional Information



Landowners interested in pursuing any of the options mentioned in this brochure should contact the following:

Protected Areas Branch
Nova Scotia Environment and Labour
Tel: (902) 424-2117
E-mail: protectedareas@gov.ns.ca
Website: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas

Nova Scotia Nature Trust
Tel: (902) 425-5263
E-mail: nature@nsnt.ca
Website: www.nsnt.ca

Nature Conservancy of Canada—Nova Scotia office
Tel: 1-877-231-4400
E-mail: atlantic@natureconservancy.ca
Website: www.natureconservancy.ca

Environment Canada—Ecological Gifts Program
Tel: (506) 364-5044
E-mail: nature@ec.gc.ca
Website: www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/ecogifts

NOVA SCOTIA
Environment and Labour
Environmental and Natural Areas Management Division
Protected Areas Branch



PHOTO: FRED JOYCE



Ship Rock Island, conservation easement with NS Nature Trust

Protected Areas Program

Nova Scotia Environment and Labour's Protected Areas Branch is responsible for planning and managing Nova Scotia's protected wilderness areas and nature reserves, as well as heritage rivers. The Protected Areas Branch is also responsible for supporting and encouraging the protection of natural areas through private stewardship. This is done in various ways, such as

- conducting studies of selected sites and sharing inventory information with private landowners and other interested parties
- developing legislation and programs to facilitate private land protection
- providing advice and assistance to landowners and land conservation organisations
- working directly with landowners to protect their significant natural areas through designation under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* or the *Special Places Protection Act*, or through purchase, donation, or conservation easement
- identifying barriers to private land conservation and improving the climate for private land conservation initiatives
- working with organisations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Nova Scotia Nature Trust on a variety of conservation projects aimed at preserving natural areas in the province
- working in close partnership with the NS Department of Natural Resources and other government agencies.

Private Land Conservation in Action



The Brothers Islands: Donation of Coastal Islands

Two steep-sided basalt islands sit about a kilometre offshore from Parrsboro in the Bay of Fundy. By foot, they are accessible at low tide only. At other times, strong currents isolate them from the mainland. Having largely escaped human influence, the larger of the two islands harbours a very rare phenomenon: five hectares of old-growth hardwood forest situated right next to the ocean. The rich soils also support a number of unusual plants, including Purple Trillium and Canada Yew.

The smaller island, about one hectare in size, is covered by trees atop 10-metre high cliffs. This island hosts nesting Bald Eagles, Common Eiders, Red-breasted Mergansers, Black Guillemots, and Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls.

These two islands, known as "The Brothers," had been in Jack Herbin's family for almost a century. His grandfather, John Herbin, was a jeweller by trade as well as a keen naturalist and rock collector. In 1898, he bought these two gems from the province for \$25. Every summer, he and his wife would take a ferry from Wolfville to Parrsboro and spend several weeks exploring the islands, collecting rocks, and observing the plants and animals. At night, they would camp on the mainland.

In 1995, Jack Herbin permanently protected the Brothers Islands by donating them to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

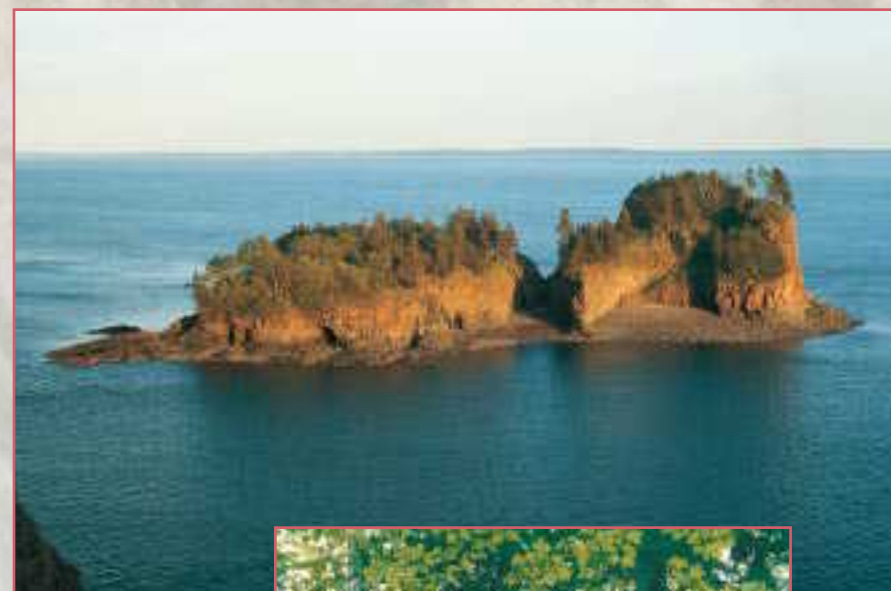


PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS



Brothers Islands



Barrier beach, Brier Island

Brier Island: Partners in Conservation

In 1987, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Province of Nova Scotia, and other partners purchased most of the southeastern end of Brier Island, off Digby Neck.

Totalling 485 hectares (1,200 acres), this critical natural area is the most western point of land in Nova Scotia and an important rest stop and feeding area for many migratory birds. Thousands of land birds, including numerous warbler species, can be seen during peak migration. In the fall, vast numbers of migrating hawks pass over the island, and in recent years increasing numbers of the threatened Peregrine Falcon have been observed. In addition, numerous seabirds frequent the shores and surrounding waters of Brier Island, including phalaropes, shearwaters, petrels, murres and puffins.

Brier Island has many habitats—brackish ponds, barrier beaches, dune systems, sea cliffs, raised bogs, forests, and coastal meadows. They support a diverse array of plants. Several bogs are home to rarities like the Dwarf Birch, the endangered Eastern Mountain Avens, and the tiny Curly-grass Fern.



Whale off Brier Island

PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS



Harebells, Brier Island

Conservation Easements (Northeast Bay and Tidney River): Innovation in Conservation

In 2003, Bowater Mersey Paper Company struck an agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and placed conservation easements on two large parcels of land located within the boundaries of Lake Rossignol and Tidney River Wilderness Areas. The company still owns the land, while the agreement ensures that no commercial or recreational development will take place.

The 213-hectare Northeast Bay parcel within Lake Rossignol Wilderness Area is dominated by exceptional old-growth hemlock forests, with many trees over 200 years old. The deep shade created by the hemlocks provides a lush, humid forest rich in mosses. The provincially rare Wood Turtle (listed as vulnerable under the Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act) is known to the area, as are some rare plants, including Yellow Screwstem, Common Buttonbush, and the provincially threatened Carolina Redroot.

The Tidney River parcel is a large 955-hectare block of land in the north-central portion of Tidney River Wilderness Area. This property is embedded in an extensive area of roadless, undisturbed old forests and wetlands. Securing this property consolidates protection of the Tidney River watershed and improves habitat protection for several rare plants known to the area, including Brook-side Alder, Long's Bulrush (provincially vulnerable), and Golden-crest (provincially threatened).



Old hemlock forest, Northeast Bay

PHOTO: JAMES STEEVES



Tidney River

PHOTO: JAMES STEEVES



PHOTO: MARK PULSIFER

PHOTO: OLIVER MAASS

Keep It Wild
Nova Scotia's Protected Areas

Photography: Province of Nova Scotia, unless noted. Background images by Oliver Maass. Cover image: Gold River Lake, a conservation easement held by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, is visited by George Alliston, a volunteer with the Trust.