

Protecting 12% by 2015

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The *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (2007) sets out the ambitious goal of protecting 12% of Nova Scotia's landmass by 2015. In June 2011 the province identified nearly 220 000 hectares of study areas, of which approximately 70% will be placed under protection in order to reach the 12% goal. Much of the land was identified by the 2009 Colin Stewart Forest Forum, non-governmental organizations and forestry industry representatives that made recommendations to government based on nearly five years of scientific research.

The government of Nova Scotia has put in place interdepartmental Technical and Steering committees with representatives from the departments of Natural Resources, Environment and Energy. These committees have been busy compiling the various land values for the study areas, including mineral resource potential. In addition to the input by staff, the government is looking for public comments that will be incorporated into a draft plan, which will be released for province-wide consultation next year before any final decisions are made on which lands will be protected.

Study area locations can be accessed through DNR's Internet Map Server (<http://gov.ns.ca/natr/meb/pubs/pubs3.asp>) or through the Department of Environment's web site (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/12percent/>) where a detailed explanation of the process is presented. It is important that government receives the input of the mineral industry on these study areas so that industry concerns can be addressed as part of the consultation and evaluation process. Written comments will be accepted until Dec. 1, 2011, at Department of Environment, Protected Areas Branch, Box 442, Halifax, NS, B3J 2P8. Bob Ryan represents the Geological Services Division on the 12% Technical Committee and has already met with members of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia Land Access Committee. Now is the time to get involved and help ensure that informed land-use decisions are made.

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