

Year One of the Mineral Resources Development Fund

J. C. Bonaparte

Introduction

The Nova Scotia Mineral Resources Development Fund (MRDF) was established in 2018 as a replacement for the Nova Scotia Mineral Incentive Program, which operated from 2012 to 2017. The goal of the program is to promote and increase mineral exploration and development in Nova Scotia. The program is administered by the Geoscience and Mines Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Mines, and features funding streams for grass-roots mineral exploration, shared funding projects, innovation, education and outreach, marketing, post-secondary research, and major projects.

This report provides an overview of the inaugural year of the MRDF, with an emphasis on the value achieved through the grants provided for mineral exploration.

Program Funding

The MRDF was initially allotted a budget of \$700,000 for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Due to the amount of interest in the program, however, the department was able to request additional funds, to a total of \$818,750. The program was able to provide funds to 30 projects throughout the province, and across all funding streams.

One of the main objectives of the MRDF is to support prospectors and exploration companies in their efforts to find new discoveries, and advance existing projects closer to production. To this end, nineteen Prospecting and Exploration Grants supporting grass-roots exploration activities totaling \$287,300 were approved in 2018-2019. When combined with the three Shared Funding Grants worth \$158,650, a total of \$445,950 or approximately 54% of the program's total spending was allocated to assisting prospectors and exploration companies (Fig. 1).

Prospectors are also able to apply for Marketing Grants, which assist them to travel to industry

events such as the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention in Toronto or the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver. A number of prospectors took advantage of this opportunity and scheduled meetings at the events with exploration companies that have the potential to bring investment to Nova Scotia.

One Major Project Grant totaling \$62,000 was awarded in 2018-2019. The Mining Association of Nova Scotia (MANS) used this funding to conduct a province-wide assessment of the need for airborne geophysical data. MANS was also awarded two Education, Outreach, and Engagement Grants. The results of their projects will help support the mining industry in Nova Scotia and build public confidence in the industry.

There were four Research Grants issued in 2018-2019, amounting to \$105,600. The research performed in these studies has the potential to find new mineral deposits and to develop new or more efficient methods of processing minerals.

Finally, one Innovation Grant in the amount of \$142,000 was issued this year. The goal of this project is to develop an effective way of remediating contaminated mine tailing sites in Nova Scotia.

The Year Ahead

The Mineral Resources Development Fund has an approved budget of \$1.5 million in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, which will allow the department to fund even more projects. Expecting the increase in funding to attract more interest in the program, the department hosted an educational workshop on April 3, 2019, in advance of the fund being open to applications. The topics discussed at the workshop provided potential applicants with a greater understanding of how to prepare a high-quality proposal when the program launches on April 9, 2019.

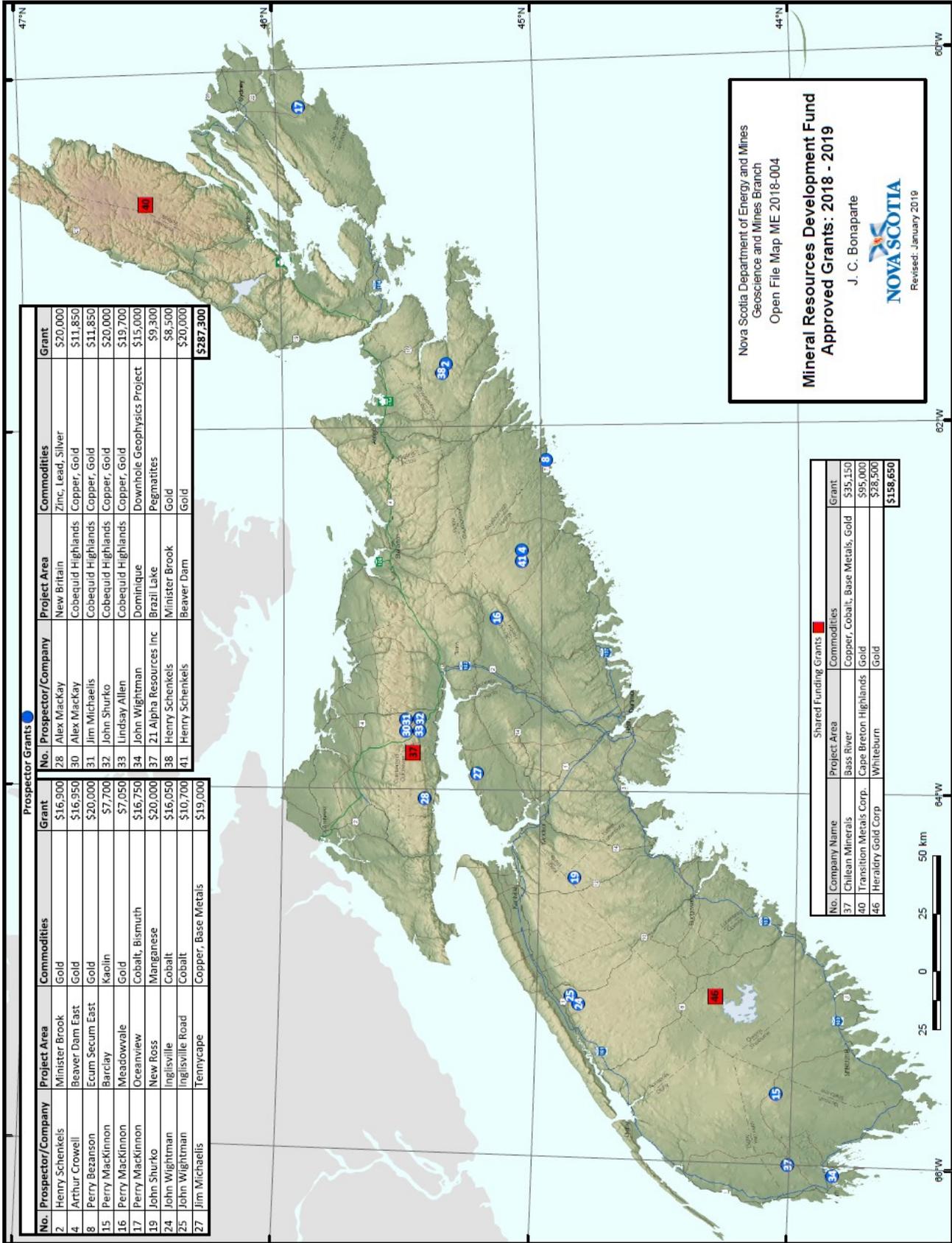


Figure 1. Approved Prospecting and Exploration, and Shared Funding Grants, 2018-2019.