

Medway River Conservation Lands Project



Long's Bulrush

**Final Report to the Department of Natural Resources Habitat
Conservation Fund**

October 2008



INTRODUCTION



The Medway River in southwest Nova Scotia is an ecologically diverse haven for rare and endangered species, which exist within the wetlands and barrier bogs along this beautiful river. The Medway River and its associated floodplains are some of the last places in the country that provide a home for a unique group of plants, called Atlantic coastal plain flora. Eleven of the plants in this 90-member group are listed as species-at-risk in Canada, and Southwest Nova Scotia is home to some of the last remaining and least disturbed habitat for

these plants in the world, which face ongoing threats from habitat loss and development.

The Nature Trust's *Medway River Conservation Lands* project has succeeded in the protection and stewardship of critical habitat for a nationally and globally imperiled species of Atlantic coastal plain flora. The securement of the Medway River Conservation Lands has resulted in the protection of three separate colonies of the Long's Bulrush, a unique sedge species which faces a global, national and provincial risk of extinction. This plant is found in less than a dozen sites in Nova Scotia, and the protection of its remaining in-tact habitat is critical to the long term recovery for this species.

The project has also been instrumental in addressing and reducing human-caused threats to coastal plain species and their fragile wetland habitats, through public education, landowner and community outreach, and communications surrounding the formal securement of privately-owned high priority habitat on the Medway River. The project has also recruited and trained volunteer plant monitors and property guardians to aid in the long-term stewardship of this beautiful and ecologically significant site.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The focal goal of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's Medway River Conservation Lands Project was to increase the area of protected habitat for COSEWIC-listed species of Atlantic coastal plain flora, through permanent protection of irreplaceable wetland habitat, and long-term stewardship.

The project objectives included the following:

- 1) To secure the ~60 acre property, with over 2 km of shoreline habitat on the Medway River, thereby increasing the area of protected coastal plain habitat in southwest Nova Scotia.
- 2) To ensure the long-term stewardship of this property through the development of a stewardship plan, and the recruitment and training of volunteer Property Guardians for long-term monitoring, and the installation of signage on the property.
- 3) To increase community awareness regarding the importance of habitat protection for the species at risk, and the Atlantic coastal plain flora, through a public celebration event, information circulation and the installation of signage on site.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

The Medway River Conservation Lands project has resulted in an increase in the area of protected habitat for COSEWIC listed species of Atlantic coastal plain flora through the securement of wetland habitat for the Long's Bulrush, which is listed nationally and provincially as a species at risk. The formal protection of this property has resulted in the long-term protection of 65 acres, and over 2 km of rivers shoreline, which provide habitat for three colonies of the Long's Bulrush.

Long-term stewardship of the property is ensured, with stewardship and endowment planning components in place. Volunteer property guardians have been recruited and trained to monitor for changes or alterations in the habitat at this location, and to act as the Nature Trusts' 'eyes and ears' on the ground. Interpretive signage for the site is in its final stages of design and will be installed on site this fall. The interpretive signage identifies the property as Nature Trust lands, and also outlines the conservation focus and ecological importance of the wetlands for their species-at-risk habitat. These stewardship activities ensure that the natural values of the property will be protected in perpetuity, and that the conservation focus of the site is shared and respected by a collective community. Informational mailings and invitations were sent within the targeted communities of Mill Village, Charleston, and Riversdale, to further increase awareness for the importance of conservation of Atlantic coastal plain flora, and to generate support for habitat protection, and attendance at the celebration event. This technique proved especially effective in increasing inquiries about land conservation within the surrounding area.

The Nature Trust hosted a property closing celebration to acknowledge the conservation success of the securement of the Medway River Conservation Lands, in July 2008. The event was well attended by over 50 people, including community members, landowners, government and non-government partners, as well as Nature Trust members and volunteers. The event included a presentation on the Nature Trust, and our coastal plain project work,



as well as a background on the Medway River property. Long's Bulrush expert, Ron MacKay, hosted a guided walk of the property and pointed out the unique characteristics of the species. The event, and the media exposure the project also garnered, increased awareness among landowners and the public in the community, about Atlantic coastal plain flora, and the work that the Nature Trust undertakes to facilitate their protection. The event received recognition in three local papers, and on the radio.

FUTURE PLANS

The activities launched through the Medway River Conservation Lands Project will provide for the long-term stewardship of this site, as well as the future potential securement of additional sites that provide habitat for at-risk species of Atlantic coastal plain flora. Through the course of the project, the Nature Trust has identified additional properties of high conservation value, and landowners who wish to protect their lands within Southwest Nova Scotia. The Nature Trust will continue its land securement activities, as well as our community and landowner outreach activities, and volunteer Property Guardian program. It is our long-term goal to continue to work with private landowners to increase the protected areas network within Nova Scotia.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Please see the attached expense ledger and invoices.