

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

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Project Title: Nova Scotia Beach Landowners' Stewardship Guide

Project Goal:

Educate private landowners, property managers and developers about the importance of beaches and coastal biodiversity and to promote best practices for habitat protection for endangered Piping Plovers, other wildlife, and plants on privately-owned beaches in Nova Scotia.

Project Objectives:

1. Work with conservation partners to produce a high-quality, educational resource for landowners, property managers and developers that shares science-based information on beach ecosystems and best practices for beach habitat protection in Nova Scotia.
2. Increase awareness among beach landowners, property managers and developers about specific steps that can be taken to improve present and future habitat quality for endangered Piping Plovers through a Beach Stewardship Guide.
3. Use one-on-one outreach to engage landowners, property managers and developers in the protection of proposed critical habitat towards the recovery of endangered Piping Plovers during the 2007 and 2008 Piping Plover breeding season.
4. a) Implement Piping Plover recovery strategy objectives by informing and engaging key coastal stakeholders using conservation tools and outreach; and
b) Assist the Atlantic Coast Piping Plover Recovery Team and Working Group implement recovery strategy objectives by informing and engaging key stakeholders using conservation tools and outreach.
5. Improve public access, across the Atlantic Region and beyond, to information on best practices for beach habitat and biodiversity protection using printed and online media.

Work Completed:

1. **Engaged partners and landowners in development of stewardship guide.**
Over 34 individuals representing coastal interests and partnerships (including a variety of private landowners, government agencies, NGOs and academics) provided valuable input that directly informed the content of the guide: *Healthy Beaches and Dunes for Tomorrow: A Stewardship Guide for Landowners in Nova Scotia*.
2. **Developed science-based best practices for beach and dune stewardship tailored to private landowners.**
Based on scientific input from wildlife, plant and geomorphology specialists (including several members of the Eastern Canada Piping Plover Recovery Team), we developed more than twenty best practices for beaches and dunes that are tailored for private landowners and other coastal stakeholders. These have been clearly outlined in the printed Guide that will be distributed through one-on-one outreach and via the web (see www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/nspllover).
3. **Implementing federal recovery actions.**
Conducted targeted outreach and a developed valuable conservation tool that promote coastal stewardship among coastal stakeholders, as recommended in federal recovery documents for Piping Plovers (proposed Recovery Strategy and draft Action Plan).
4. **Stakeholder Outreach**
During 2007 and 2008, the Project Coordinator and stewardship staff reached over 50 landowners, municipal councilors, developers, and real estate agents and shared best practices information about habitat management and endangered Piping Plovers. In fall 2008, 21 participants, including landowners, real estate agents, municipal councilors and economic developers, attended a 'Beaches Think Tank' to discuss the conservation challenges facing Piping Plovers and managing for healthy beaches in southwest NS. We estimate that we reached well over 1000 beach goers in both years.
5. **Increased access to best practices information on beaches and dunes in NS.**
By producing 1,000 copies of the guide and making the guide available on-line, we increased access to important information about habitat stewardship for beaches and dunes by Nova Scotia landowners and other coastal stakeholders. We will rely on our partners to help distribute the Guide throughout NS.

Achievements and Lessons Learned:

Though the funds that we received from NS DNR Habitat Conservation Fund and Species at Risk Conservation Fund were less than requested, we were still able to create an attractive conservation tool for landowners and to conduct targeted outreach in Nova Scotia. We worked closely with Parks Canada Agency during the development of their stewardship guide for wetlands and lakeshores to ensure that both guides had a common look and feel.

Printed products take a great deal of time. An important lesson learned was that content development for the Guide should have started one year before we hoped to receive the final printed guide.

Next Steps:

- Dissemination of 1,000 printed guides to landowners, habitat managers, property developers and other coastal stakeholders across NS during spring/summer 2008 and 2009.
- Work with Environment Canada to produce a French translation of the Guide that will be available on-line; raise funds for a small print run of the French translation.
- Compile comments from landowners and partners and work toward a revised second version in the near future.