



## **Final Report to the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund**

### **Nature Conservancy of Canada**

#### *Johnstons Pond Land Acquisition Project*

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## **1. GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

The primary goal of this project was to initiate a conservation land assembly at Johnstons Pond, an undeveloped coastal estuarine system with tremendous value to wildlife located approximately equidistant between Liverpool and Shelburne on Nova Scotia's south shore.

The specific objectives were to: 1) acquire fee simple title to 3 properties totalling 330 acres on either side of the estuary; 2) work with partners to ensure that surrounding lands were being managed for wildlife and that threats to wildlife were being mitigated or addressed; 3) work with local volunteers to initiate monitoring activity at the site; 4) complete a baseline inventory and property management plan for the conserved properties.

## **2. DESCRIPTION of WORK COMPLETED**

NCC has worked through the typical land-securement process involving a valuation of the properties, a legal survey, appropriate title searching, migration and other legal work to acquire fee simple interest to the properties.

NCC has been working actively with Bird Studies Canada on piping plover monitoring and threat mitigation at the site and hopes to work with other partners, including the Department of Natural Resources on future initiatives.

NCC has also been developing relationships with local landowners, and recruiting local volunteers. To date, 3 local residents have volunteered to serve as Property Stewards for NCC, helping to keep an eye on important species and report on inappropriate usage of NCC property.

Informational and interpretive panels have been developed for the site and will be installed in summer 2012.

In 2010, a baseline inventory of the sites was completed. Data collection was completed by NCC staff, and yielded much improved understanding of the vegetation communities present upon the properties as well as the state of any anthropogenic use and disturbance.

In 2011, a Property Management Plan was written for the sites, compiling NCC's knowledge and understanding of the sites and setting forth a set of management actions and a guiding vision for ongoing stewardship of the site.

## **3. RESULTS**

Title to the 330 acres targeted for this project was successfully acquired, and all three parcels are now under NCC ownership and management. Approximately 4.5 kilometres of shoreline along both Johnstons Pond itself, as well as the adjacent oceanfront, have been protected through this project.

NCC outreach and partnership work in the area since the acquisition of the properties has yielded positive results. An introductory mailing led to the recruitment of three volunteers to serve as local



Property Stewards as well as several other informative conversations with nearby residents. In 2010 a volunteer event was held at the beach to remove garbage from potential piping plover nesting area. The event was a success, with 12 people helping to remove several truckloads worth of trash. Volunteers were treated to an early aerial courtship display by plovers as well as sightings of Harlequin Ducks along the rocky shores of the ocean.

Field work undertaken in 2010 by NCC interns resulted in the completion of a baseline inventory documenting ecosystem types on the property, species occurrences and anthropogenic impacts and issues. Notably, the work revealed occurrences of two rare lichens - Vole Ear's Lichen (*Erioderma mollisiumum*), ranked 'Endangered' by COSEWIC and Blue Felt Lichen (*Degelia plumbea*), ranked a 'Species of Special Concern' by COSEWIC. Baseline work also documented known populations of Harlequin Duck on the adjacent shoreline, as well as piping plover nesting on the adjacent crown-owned (and protected) beach.

A Property Management Plan has been drafted for the sites. The plan includes a documentation of important conservation targets and an assessment of their viability as well as an assessment of threats to those targets. From these assessments are derived a set of 'conservation actions' that NCC will undertake within a 5 year timeframe. The management plan will serve as a touchstone and guiding direction for NCC's stewardship of the sites.

A copy of the Management Plan have been provided in electronic format as supplements to this report.

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources has been recognized for their support in the following NCC communications - website, 2010-11 annual report and in 2010-11 versions of the Ark, NCC's newsletter. The Department's support of this work was recognized at a public announcement of the successful protection of the properties.



*Former Minister of Natural Resources, John MacDonnell with colleagues Karen Beazley of the Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, Gerald Keddy, Member of Parliament and Dr. Bill Freedman – NCC at the announcement of the protection of 330 acres at Johnstons Pond.*

#### **4. ACHIEVEMENTS and LESSONS LEARNED**

The achievements here are as noted already – successful protection of 330 acres of important habitat in an area of largely undeveloped, pristine ecosystems. Furthermore, NCC has established a strong start at building a solid stewardship program that incorporates local people and knowledge, and is guided by strategic long term objectives. Measured against the goals and objectives of the project, NCC's efforts here are very strong, with no significant room for improvement.

#### **5. FOLLOW-UP and FUTURE EFFORTS**

NCC's approach to land stewardship is continual and ongoing. We will continue to build our relationships and community involvement in the region, and look forward to long and productive partnerships with partner organizations and individuals.

Further land securement at Johnstons Pond makes a great deal of sense, and NCC will continue to bring up the possibility of protection of the Crown Lands in the area under the 12% process. In addition, NCC will likely return to actively seeking additional opportunities for securement of important habitat here itself. Indeed, some initial discussions have already been had with other landowners.



1. NCC intern at Johnstons Pond while conducting baseline inventory work.



2. Johnstons Pond in winter.



## Johnstons Pond Scotian South Shore Natural Area

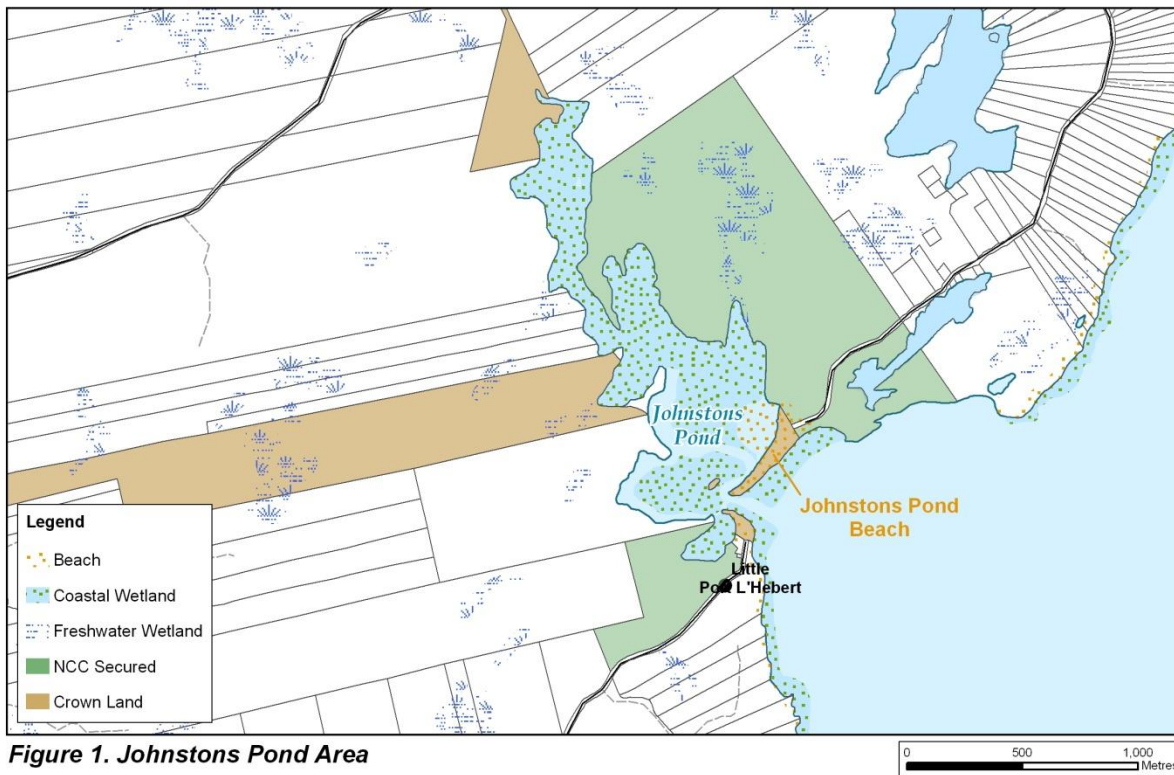


Figure 1. Johnstons Pond Area

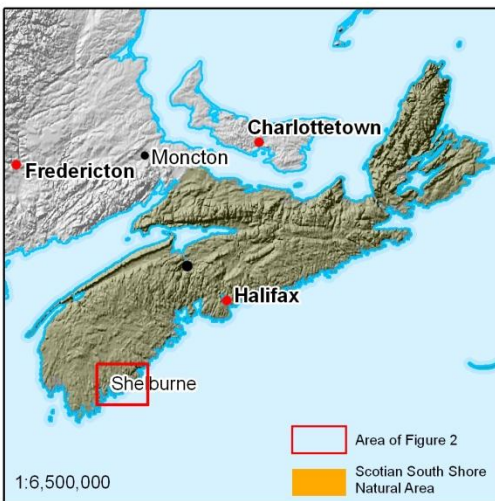


Figure 3. Scotian South Shore Natural Area

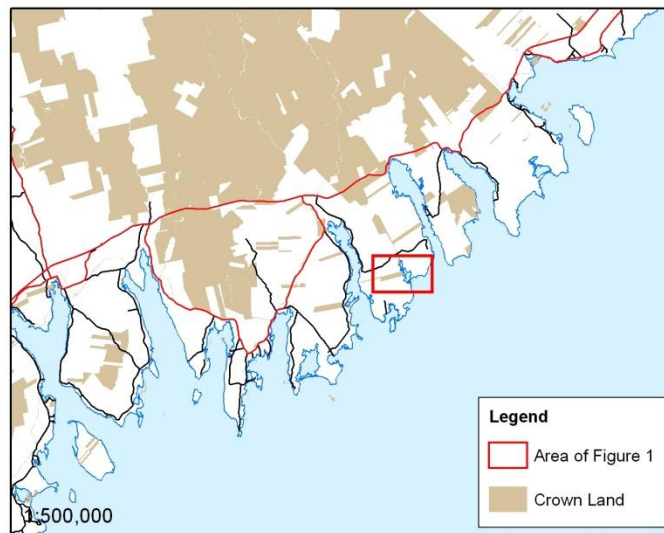


Figure 2. Shelburne County area showing location of the Johnstons Pond property.

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Projection: UTM, Zone 20, meter (North American Datum 1983)  
For further information contact Nature Conservancy of Canada at 1-877-231-4400.

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