



Final Report to NS Habitat Conservation Fund (NSHCF)

August 2015

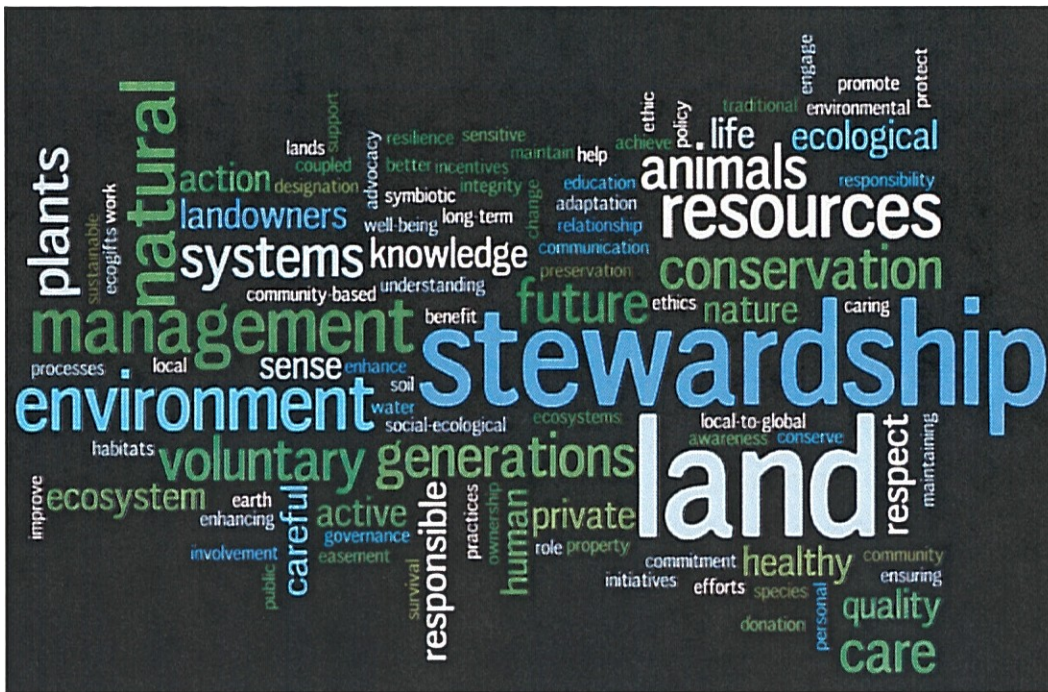
Project Title: The Science of Stewardship: Achieving Behaviour Change for Species at Risk Recovery

Project Overview: This research addresses the human dimensions that interact to determine how recovery science becomes landowner knowledge, how knowledge is used to make decisions, and how decision-making translates into a measurable behaviour change (in terms of property management) that meets Species at Risk Recovery planning objectives. In essence, it is the science of stewardship, and how it can be specifically applied to species at risk recovery in Southwest Nova Scotia, and to Canada in general. The research aims to contribute to the emerging body of work within the conservation sciences to meet biological and ecological goals through the application of social science methodologies to objectives identified by biological science. It is anticipated that this approach will increase the efficacy of both Recovery Strategies and Action Plans by addressing fundamental gaps that exist between science and recovery, essentially taking species recovery out of 'the lab', and placing its science squarely in the backyards shared by landowners and species.

Project Objectives:

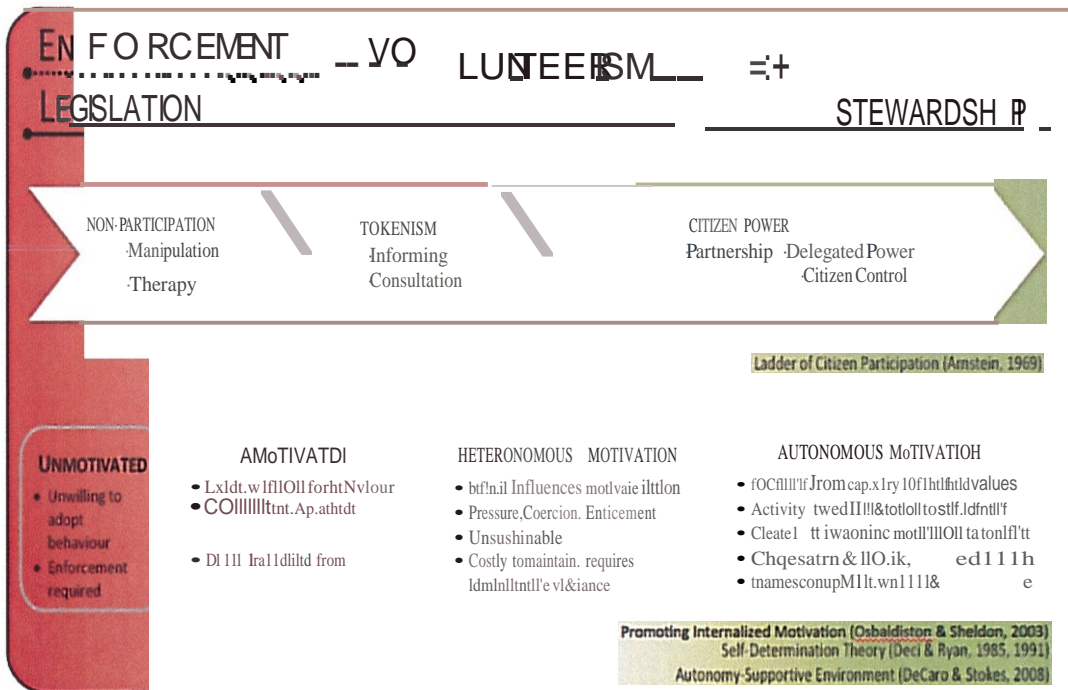
Objective 1. An extensive trans-disciplinary literature review using Grounded Theory approach – which codes concepts identified in the literature into categories that are used to create theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This enabled the identification and categorization of relevant fields of research into a theory of the conservation stewardship process.

Understanding conservation stewardship in use and practice requires definition the concepts it incorporates. Unfortunately, the literature provides little consensus as to what this is.



Conservation Stewardship word cloud incorporating descriptions & definitions collected from various sources of literature, and communication and engagement materials produced for public consumption in Nova Scotia. Their scale in the image represents frequency of word usage.

The Grounded Theory approach enabled the creation of a practical definition to inform and clarify the concept as part of the spectrum of conservation behaviours.



From this perspective ,conservation stewardship is:

- a spectrum of behaviours
- personal responsibility
- voluntary and internal motivation
- process engaging individuals & communities
- knowledgeable and informed participants empowered in decision-making
- delivers outcomes with longevity

Objective 2. Individuals and organizations who develop and deliver conservation stewardship initiatives in Nova Scotia were interviewed to gain a fine scale measure of how they address the key elements identified in the stewardship process through their organizational structure, and program development and delivery.

Inclusion criteria for an organization was not whether they self identified as being a stewardship organization, but rather whether they are involved in conservation and reaching out to the public. Individuals from 15 organisations were interviewed, with representation from federal, provincial, non-profit, environmental non-government, and ad hoc community groups.

Some Conclusions:

Stewardship is complex and is influenced by multiple feedback-loops .Its use and implementation requires an adaptive management approach, the engagement of multiple stakeholder groups , and works best at local scales where community influence can be utilized .

Defining conservation stewardship as a concept is key to successfully communicating the role that public and private landowners play in achieving recovery and conservation goals . Understanding stewardship as a process enables targeted effort and prioritized investment by the agencies and organizations tasked with designing and delivering programs that achieve species recovery and conservation goals .

Acknowledgment:

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Literature Cited

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