

# MEDWAY HARBOUR ISLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECT



FINAL REPORT TO HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND  
*DECEMBER 2010*



## INTRODUCTION

There is an urgent need for conservation of coastal habitats in Nova Scotia. The tremendous diversity of ecosystems found along our extensive and stunning coasts provide critical wildlife habitat for migratory birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as near shore marine and terrestrial life. With limited opportunities for protection of public lands, the conservation of ecologically intact and significant private lands is critically important to habitat conservation in Nova Scotia's coastal regions.

Great and Selig Islands, at the mouth of Medway Harbour, are home to an assemblage of coastal habitats with tremendous and recognized value to wildlife. Tidal marshes, pocket beaches, rocky shoreline, tidal flats and coastal bogs and forest are all found in this intact, almost completely undeveloped coastal habitat complex. The region is a known congregating area for shorebirds during fall migration. The islands lay only metres from Cherry Hill beach, one of the most critical breeding sites for the endangered Piping plover in Nova Scotia.



## PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the Medway Harbour Islands project is to address the need to conserve ecologically intact coastline in Nova Scotia through the permanent protection of 350 acres of diverse and significant coastal habitats. The Medway Harbour Islands project also aims to raise awareness amongst landowners and local community members of the need for land conservation along coastal parts of Nova Scotia.

The objectives of the Medway Harbour Islands project were:

### SECUREMENT

- 1) To acquire 50 acre Selig Island using split receipting (partial purchase, partial donation).
- 2) To establish a *Forever Wild* conservation easement over 300 acres Great Island.

### OUTREACH

- 3) To engage the communities of Port Medway, Vogler's Cove and other residents of the region in our land conservation work as supporters, members and volunteers, and to establish a credible and trustworthy profile in the region.
- 4) To educate south shore residents about the need for conservation of coastal habitats, and the mechanisms by which private landowners can contribute to the cause.

### STEWARDSHIP

- 5) To establish a baseline report of the condition and ecological character of Great and Selig Islands.
- 6) To conduct annual monitoring of Great and Selig Islands.
- 7) To recruit and train 2-3 volunteer property guardians to assist in monitoring and stewarding of Great and Selig Islands.
- 8) To establish a Stewardship endowment fund to enable the long term management and stewardship of Great and Selig Islands.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

### SECUREMENT

- Selig Island was acquired through a split-receipt sale, and will be managed as *Forever Wild*. Measuring some 47 acres in size, undeveloped Selig Island supports a diverse coastal habitat, including salt marsh, tidal flats and a mixed forest dominated by red spruce, red maple and birch.
- Great Island has been protected in perpetuity through a *Forever Wild* conservation easement, and is the second-largest island ever protected in Nova Scotia. Measuring some 300 acres in size, the island supports an intertidal complex of mudflats and salt marshes important for migrating birds and shorebirds. The shoreline of Great Island is indented with various coves, beaches, dunes and rocky outcrops. Great Island also features a significant forest stand throughout the island, dominated by red spruce, red maple and birch.
- The project has received significant media coverage, both provincially and locally, including articles in the Chronicle Herald, Nova News, CKBW, News Now, etc. As well, coverage of the Medway Islands Conservation Project was published in the Nature Trust's print and online newsletters, as well as on our website.

### OUTREACH

- A number of public events were held in celebration of the islands' newly protected status. These events contributed to the Nature Trust's capacity building by engaging the local community in land conservation. Events included:
  1. Two separate community events, one held in Wolfville (22 July 2010) and the other in Vogler's Cove (06 July 2010) were held to formally announce the protection of the Great and Selig Islands. These events included lunch and a presentation about Great and Selig Islands, and the Nature Trust. The Vogler's Cove community event also included a guided walk to the property, as well as offering Property Guardian information sessions to interested individuals during.
  2. A guided trip to Great and Selig Island for Nature Trust members and donors was held on 13 August 2010.



### STEWARDSHIP

- Completed baseline ecological assessments for Great and Selig Islands, and prepared formal stewardship/management plans for both.
- Interpretive signage for both Great and Selig Island Conservation Lands is in production, and will be installed during next year's field season. The signage will highlight the protected status of the islands,

including details about their unique natural features, as well as background information about the landowners and their donations. The Habitat Conservation Fund will receive recognition on the signage for its contribution towards the project

- Contribution to the Stewardship Endowment fund will enable ongoing monitoring, stewardship and volunteer Property Guardians recruitment and training.
- The final design for the Nature Trust's Coastal Brochure has been completed, and will be printed and distributed in the new year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

The Nature Trust will continue its land securement and public outreach activities as part of the Coastal Conservation Campaign. We will continue to:

- 1) Identify and prioritize additional sites for permanent protection.
- 2) Work with landowners to protect priority coastal habitat.
- 3) Work with the Province of Nova Scotia to encourage the protection of strategic Crown lands along Nova Scotia's coast.
- 4) Increase support for private land conservation and stewardship of habitat with key landowners.
- 5) Continue to raise awareness of Nova Scotia's coast and its rare habitats and wildlife through community events, distribution of interpretive materials, public celebrations to mark project achievements, and training and supporting new and existing volunteer Property Guardians.