



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nature Trust Launches a Campaign to Protect an Ecological Gem in Wolfville

Wolfville (August 1, 2007) The Nova Scotia Nature Trust publicly launched a ground-breaking conservation campaign, at a Celebration and Reception held yesterday in Wolfville.

The Nature Trust has an exciting opportunity to work with the Town of Wolfville to preserve, forever, one of the ecological gems of the Annapolis Valley—the *Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve*. Through a unique conservation agreement, the Nature Trust will become responsible for the long-term preservation of a spectacular, 600 acre woodland paradise, in the heart of the Annapolis Valley. The site is home to many exceptional natural features, including stands of old growth hemlock forest, which are rare in Nova Scotia—a province with less than .01% of its old growth forests left.

Thanks to the leadership and vision of the Town of Wolfville and Mayor Robert Stead, three years of ground-breaking conservation strategy and effort, and funding support by Environment Canada’s EcoAction Community Funding Program, the permanent designation of the site as conservation lands is imminent.

As with all of its 24 conservation lands across the province, the Nature Trust commits to permanent protection of the natural values of all conservation lands entrusted under its care. To provide the long-term funding for its stewardship efforts, the Nature Trust launched a campaign to raise \$150,000 to steward and safeguard the site’s ecological integrity for years to come, ensuring that it remains a natural treasure and a valued community resource. The income earned on the endowment fund provides for a long-term program of monitoring, enforcement, management and community outreach and volunteer stewardship.

The Nature Trust held its public launch of the *Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve Stewardship Endowment Fund* yesterday in Wolfville at a gathering of enthusiastic project supporters. Ninety thousand dollars has been raised to date. The Nature Trust aims to raise the remaining \$60,000 over the next three months.

Five generous lead campaign donations have been made by internationally renowned artist and Nature Trust Honourary Director, Dr. Alex Colville, long-time Nature Trust members Curtis Chipman, Fred and Elizabeth Fountain, as well as Marjorie Fountain and Jean Marsh.

The Honourable David Morse, Minister of Natural Resources, and the Honourable Mark Parent, Minister of Environment, both highlighted the critical role the Nature Trust plays in helping the province attain its conservation goals and commitments. Both also indicated their strong support for the Nature Trust and the *Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve* campaign, encouraging the public to support this important conservation initiative.

Grateful for the incredible community support for its conservation campaign to protect one of the last properties of its kind in the Valley, Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director of the Nature Trust said, “This campaign has reached a pivotal stage as we’re close to making this precedent-setting conservation agreement a reality. We are now reaching out to Nova Scotians for help in raising the funds necessary to ensure that this special place will be preserved for generations to come.”

Please note: photos are available on request

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Background

Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve

Within the Gaspereau River Watershed on Wolfville's South Mountain lies a beautiful 600 acre woodland. The property features spectacular views of the Gaspereau Valley, the Minas Basin and Cape Blomidon, and is home to exceptional natural features, including:

- Old-growth hemlock forest towering above large, steep sided ravines
- Hardwood Acadian forests similar to those that once covered much of the Annapolis Valley
- Undisturbed wetlands and brooks
- Interesting plant life including pitcher plants, cranberry bushes, Rose Pogonia and Spotted Coral-root orchids
- Excellent nature study opportunities along a series of meandering woodland pathways

Old-growth forests like those found on this site are now exceptionally rare in Nova Scotia. Many such forests have been logged or converted to agricultural or residential use. In fact, less than 0.01% of Nova Scotia's current forests are old-growth. The property is one of the very last of its kind in the Valley. Beyond its unique ecological importance for Nova Scotia, this woodland oasis provides exceptional educational and ecological research opportunities and an irreplaceable natural resource for the local community.

The existence today of such a large intact natural area is a result of the site's historical use as the town's water supply, and continued status as the back-up water supply. However, natural areas throughout our province face increasing development pressures. It is essential to protect the best of our natural areas now, while the outstanding natural features remain intact.

A Unique Partnership with the Town of Wolfville

A unique partnership has been forged to make possible the site's protection as conservation lands. The Town of Wolfville is placing the site under a "conservation easement" with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust to create the *Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve*. The agreement will permanently restrict any subdivision or development on the site, and ensure all activities are in keeping with preserving its natural values. Under the agreement, the Nature Trust will be authorized to enforce the conservation restrictions, thereby ensuring its permanent protection.

This landmark agreement between the Nature Trust and the Town of Wolfville sets an exciting precedent for government and community partnerships in land conservation. It represents the first time in Canada that municipally-owned lands will be entrusted with a community land trust through a permanent legal conservation agreement. The project provides an excellent model for other municipalities to work together with land trusts to permanently protect important municipally-owned natural areas.

This is not the first time the Town of Wolfville has shown exceptional environmental leadership. Wolfville recently became the first Fair Trade Town in Canada. The Town has also passed important legislation regarding smoke-free places and is working to eliminate non-essential pesticide use.

Nova Scotia Nature Trust

The Nature Trust is Nova Scotia's leading private land conservation charity, the only land trust focused exclusively, now and always, on protecting the province's outstanding natural areas. Since 1994, we have worked together with landowners to protect the places Nova Scotians love. More than 2,800 acres of conservation lands from unspoiled lakeshores and forests to important wildlife habitat for endangered species have been protected, forever.

With over 70% of Nova Scotia, including 95% of our coast, under private ownership, the Nature Trust's community-based land trust model is our best hope to preserve Nova Scotia's natural legacy.

Nova Scotia Nature Trust's Stewardship Endowment Fund

The Nature Trust takes seriously its commitment to protect conservation lands forever. The Nature Trust's Property Stewardship Endowment Fund enables future property monitoring, management and enforcement, and a community based volunteer "Property Guardian" program for conservation lands, and supports the Nature Trust's land stewardship program. The \$150,000 goal for the Preserve is the minimal endowment fund target. Additional contributions ensure funding for a higher level of care and stewardship for the Preserve.