

Conservation Can't Wait

- I want to begin with a warning.
- Tonight I'm going to break one of my own rules.
- I firmly believe that no one should talk for more than 15-20 minutes after dinner.
- That's based on being here at the front of the room many times where I am now, but also out of mercy for where you are right now – out there in the audience.
- However, I've actually been asked to speak for longer than that this evening, so I've tried to prepare a rather substantive message for you.
- This message is about conservation opportunities in Nova Scotia, on land and sea, and my overall theme is "Conservation can't wait."
- This message comes to you not from Toronto, but from 10 years of intensive investment in the 90s by our organization right here in your province.
- My message also comes from our Halifax office, headed up by Bob Rangeley who is here tonight.
- And my message comes from considerable correspondence with federal and provincial governments, including a couple of lengthy letters from your Premier, and from advice and technical information I have sought from Nova Scotia-based conservation groups.
- So, you asked for it folks, I hope you've all got a coffee. Sit back, relax, and here goes...
- First, as a courtesy for those of you who may not know much about us, a few sentences about World Wildlife Fund. Founded internationally in 1961, WWF is now the largest conservation organization in the world, with 5 million members globally, and 4500 staff who manage over 2000 projects every year in over 100 countries. Worldwide, we raise about \$500 million Canadian per year.
- This may sound impressive, but WWF is a drop in the bucket compared to our global task which is nothing less than to save life on Earth.
- We do this by conserving biological diversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, by ensuring that human use of natural resources is sustainable, and by reducing pollution and the wasteful consumption of natural resources, especially energy.
- In Canada, WWF has 60,000 members, we employ almost 100 people, based on a budget of about \$16 million per year, and our single largest source of support continues to be individual Canadian citizens like the people in this room.
- Although WWF-Canada is headquartered in Toronto, we strongly believe that conservation will not be effective unless it is championed and led by the people who live there. So we at headquarters take direction from regional offices in Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Yellowknife, Iqaluit, Montreal and yes, Halifax.
- The Chair of our Atlantic Council is Don Sobey who is also a member of our Board.
- The fact that WWF has one of its largest regional offices here in Halifax signals that your part of the world, including the larger North Atlantic Marine Ecoregion, is of both national and international significance to World Wildlife Fund.
- In fact, this region is one of only three geographic focal areas for WWF-Canada, the other two being the Pacific Northwest Ecoregion, both terrestrial and marine, and the

Mackenzie Valley as part of the Canadian boreal forest and western Arctic sedimentary basin.

- So now let's talk about those nationally and globally significant conservation opportunities in Nova Scotia.
- First, on land...
- On July 1, 2000, at the end of WWF's 10-year Endangered Spaces campaign, this province finished sixth in terms of percentage of your total area protected.
- Sixth, behind B.C. who was highest at 11.4%, then Yukon, then Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, then Nova Scotia at 8.3%.
- At first blush, this may not sound very impressive.
- However, you were first in the class when it came to the real ecological goal of the campaign, which was to increase the number of natural regions represented by protected areas in Canada.
- In this regard, Nova Scotia moved the yardsticks from only four of your 77 natural regions judged to be adequately or moderately represented by protected areas in 1989, to 34 natural regions being adequately or moderately represented by July 1, 2000.
- That's a 44% gain.
- The best in the country.
- Most of this, of course, was achieved through the now famous 31 new sites, the most famous of which, I suppose, was Jim Campbell's Barrens.
- Incidentally, my personal memento of the entire national Endangered Spaces campaign is Alice Reed's lush, green original painting of one these 31 sites, namely the Meadow and Drumlins of Boggy Lake, which now hangs right over my desk and inspires me everyday to save more of Canada as whole.
- The point is, in some important respects, Nova Scotia has been a national leader, the result of hard work by a number of people here tonight.
- And that gives me a chance, really for the first time publicly here on his home turf, to recognize and thank the person who spent as much time as anyone traipsing the bogs, barrens and backrooms to help make this happen as WWF's Endangered Spaces Coordinator here in Nova Scotia – Colin Stewart.
- On behalf of all of us, thank you Colin.
- Now, based on our walk together this morning, I know that Colin agrees it's long past time for Nova Scotia to rest on past accomplishments.
- Instead, it's time to carve out a new conservation future for this province, because it's leadership role is in real danger of slipping.
- And guess what? I believe this sentiment is shared by someone no less than your Premier.
- Let me quote directly from his letter to me earlier this year:

“Even with this success, it is recognized more needs to be done...protected areas are important as Nova Scotia is recognized internationally as a clean, green and safe place to live, work and invest. Our system of protected areas ensures our province can compete in the global marketplace with other jurisdictions who have established protected areas as cornerstones to sustainable development. We are committed to ensure that natural areas and

wilderness experiences, which are part of our heritage and identity, are protected for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.”

- Incidentally, I think it’s a good rather than a bad thing that Premier Hamm is equating conservation gains with the economic prospects of Nova Scotia.
- The Premier’s letter was followed by another from Minister Morash, indicating his commitments to designate five new nature reserves, to designate two new candidate wilderness areas, and to continue to work towards completing a comprehensive system of protected areas for Nova Scotia.
- I’m certainly here to support these political commitments on Crown land.
- But conservation can’t wait, so I’m also here to urge your government to get on with it.
- Because, although some small areas have been added to Nova Scotia’s protected areas network since the original 31 sites in 1998, not enough progress on the ground has been made since then. And that’s five years now, so I think a little impatience is justified.
- The fact is that Nova Scotia is lagging behind its commitment to complete a representative network of protected areas, more needs to be done, and time is of the essence.
- WWF’s Nature Audit, released in May of this year, indicated clearly that Nova Scotia has very little intact wilderness to choose from, so you have to save the best of what’s left quickly before it’s gone.
- There are many important areas on Crown land that could and should be protected, for example the Nova Scotia Public Land Coalition’s list of 18 hot spots which would go a long way towards meeting outstanding provincial commitments.
- I’m aware of encouraging recent announcements in June to put forward two new areas – Gully Lake and Egg Mountain-James River – as candidate areas. But now action is needed to actually designate these areas, as proposed.
- As a helpful step, WWF’s technical staff have just mapped the contribution which could be made to ecological representation if the Coalition’s hot spots were brought on-stream.
- The results would be remarkable, and would help Nova Scotia regain its lead in conservation in Canada.
- I can’t go through the details tonight, so I’ve left our maps and assessment with Colin, Raymond Plourde, Bonnie Sutherland, and I’ll certainly make sure the province receives them as well.
- For now, just let me say that if the Minister’s promises were acted upon, if the Tobeatic additions were made, and if the Coalition’s candidates were delivered, you would reach adequate or moderate ecological representation for about two-thirds of Nova Scotia’s landscape features. That’s more than double what you have now, and it would put Nova Scotia 15% ahead of B.C.
- This would be a tremendous accomplishment for nature on land, one that could and should be made in cooperation with your resource industries, especially forestry.

- I encourage leaders of this sector in particular to step forward as others have in B.C., Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, to cooperatively engage in conservation planning.
 - WWF now has landmark agreements with large companies like Tembec, Domtar, Abitibi and Alpac, which have already delivered literally hundreds of new protected areas.
 - These agreements will also deliver up to 30 million hectares of working forest managed to Forest Stewardship Council standards, plus another 20 million hectares being mapped for high conservation value forest.
 - These companies have come to equate environmental performance with long-term economic benefits and competitiveness in the international marketplace. So they are now keen to work collaboratively with the conservation community. And the feelings are mutual.
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- Now, let me turn briefly to both the Premier's and the Minister's comments on private land conservation, which I know interests this group in particular.
 - In April, the Premier attached a list of eight properties totaling 580 hectares acquired by the province, six properties totaling 1600 hectares secured under conservation partnerships, and three contributing properties totaling 109 hectares being acquired by the province. Bonnie has this list.
 - The Minister, in September, indicated his intention to review barriers to private land conservation and to identify options to increase private land contributions.
 - He promised "to expand partnerships with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust to encourage stewardship and purchase of critical lands."
 - And he said he will work with landowners adjacent to protected areas to incorporate conservation values onto the landscape.
 - All good stuff, and absolutely critical for a province whose land base is approximately 70% privately owned.
 - But again, conservation can't wait, and time is of the essence.
 - Here in Nova Scotia, a much larger proportion of ecologically important land is privately owned compared to other jurisdictions, including endangered species habitat, old growth forests, coastal habitats, lakeshores and floodplains – all under pressure from residential and recreational development, logging, road building and escalating land costs.
 - In this regard, I'm aware of the upcoming release of the PLACES (Private Land Conservation Enhancements) Committee report chaired by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, which is picking up on the Minister's commitment to identify barriers and make recommendations regarding effective private land conservation.
 - This multi-party report will no doubt address such critical issues as lack of conservation funding, significant income and property tax barriers for landowners and non-government organizations, and the need for legislative changes to foster private land conservation.
 - WWF strongly urges Nova Scotians to act on this report.
 - Remember, I said earlier that conservation cannot succeed unless it is championed and led by the people who live there.

- Finally, on behalf of WWF's own Halifax office, I want to say a couple of words about WWF's biggest priority for this region which is marine conservation.
- Some of you may remember that in 1997, Prince Philip breezed through town in his then-capacity as our very active International President, supporting new protected areas on Crown land, recognizing private land accomplishments, but also saying let's get on with protecting The Gully off Sable Island.
- Well it's six years later. Over that time there has certainly been an extensive Sable offshore oil and gas play, and speedy leasing of the ocean floor for industrial purposes.
- But there has still been no formal designation of the Gully as a marine protected area.
- This situation reflects what is happening elsewhere in Canada and the world over, as decision-makers commit our lands and waters to industrial use in advance of protection, thereby foreclosing conservation options.
- In hindsight, it's a good thing we flew the flag on The Gully when we did, because virtually everything else has been leased on the Scotian Shelf.
- This seriously complicates and compromises our ability to establish a representative system of marine protected areas for this region.
- Well, conservation can't wait, so it's time to change the sequencing to put conservation first.
- In fact, we at WWF are now advocating that reserving a network of protected areas, on land or water, must become a prerequisite - a regulatory requirement if necessary - for any further large-scale development anywhere in Canada.
- Hence our involvement in the Mackenzie Valley, where I think we still have a decent chance of success in applying the conservation first principle.
- Similarly, we have chosen the North Atlantic Marine Ecoregion as a test case for getting it right out in the water.
- First, we started in the Bay of Fundy, where WWF persuaded the International Maritime Organization to change the shipping lanes to protect endangered right whales – the first time this has ever been done.
- Second, on the Scotian Shelf, we are still determined to see the Gully protected, with its deep-water corals and endangered population of resident bottle-nosed whales.
- I believe the current federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is in fact keen to sign off on The Gully, and WWF really hopes this can be done soon, while he still is Minister.
- And since Minister Thibeault is a native son, anything you folks can do to hasten him along would be deeply appreciated.
- Incidentally, Prince Philip actually knows and cares about this one, as does Mr. Sobey, so WWF's impatience is felt in high places.
- Prince Philip has often said that he doubts future generations will blame anyone for having protected too much of Canada. Yet, just look at the inordinate amount of time and effort it takes to protect one outstanding site like The Gully, versus fast-tracking vast areas for development.

- Finally, at the invitation of the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, WWF is working with the full spectrum of local, national and international players to establish the first High Seas Marine Protected Area in the world, to protect and help recover the most famous Canadian marine habitat of all – the Grand Banks.
- You'll be hearing much more about this in the future.
- So we at WWF have a bold conservation vision for the North Atlantic Ecoregion including the Bay of Fundy, the Scotian Shelf, the Grand Banks, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Our specific goal is to have at least 15 new marine protected areas established in this ecoregion by 2009, with the remaining sites identified to complete a representative system by 2012.
- This would be consistent with the commitment Canada signed at Johannesburg last year, to complete a representative system of marine protected areas for all of Canada's waters by 2012, which we reckon will mean establishing at least 100 new MPAs in Canadian waters.
- Canada, I remind you, has the longest coast of any country in the world, therefore we have a special responsibility for marine conservation.
- If all this sounds rather pie-in-the-sky, I also remind you that in the ten years of the Endangered Spaces campaign we helped establish over 1000 new protected areas on land, more than doubling the amount of protected area in Canada.
- I don't know about you, but these kinds of accomplishments cause me to scale up my confidence level and our conservation goals.
- We'll never accomplish great things for nature if we don't believe we can.
- There are days now when I believe we may do even better than our best; we might actually do what's necessary!
- What I've outlined tonight indicates to me that you here in Nova Scotia have got a lot more going for you than against.
- You've got conservation commitments in writing from your Premier and the lead Minister.
- You've got a reinvigorated, capable non-government community with a plan of action.
- You've got a forest industry, among others, which I believe is interested in coming to the table to work something out.
- So take advantage of this moment, move while you have a congruence of interests, invest some goodwill in each other, and make a difference together.
- Ladies and gentlemen, I will now close by thanking you for hanging in there far beyond my usual 15-20 minutes.
- My only excuse is that you asked for it, and besides the natural beauty of Nova Scotia deserves at least this much attention from me, from the organization I represent, and from all of us.
- You folks, you Nova Scotians, are embedded in a nationally and internationally significant part of the world.
- And let's face it, sometimes it takes someone from outside the region to remind you of that fact.
- Please cherish and conserve your natural birthright.

- By doing so, you will be doing your part to leave our children a living planet.