



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nature Trust Announces Major New Coastal Wilderness in Cape Breton *Big Win for Canada's Biodiversity*

July 29, 2019 (Mabou, NS)—The Nova Scotia Nature Trust announced an exciting new protected area for Nova Scotia today, encompassing 2000 acres of coastal wilderness in Cape Breton. The spectacular Mabou Highlands Conservation Lands were protected thanks to the conservation vision and generosity of a group of American families and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

The Nature Trust shared news of this nationally significant conservation achievement at a community event in Mabou on Saturday. Locals and visitors alike welcomed the news that this cherished coastal gem is now protected for generations to come.

The new protected area is the largest coastal conservation win in the Nature Trust's 25 year history. It encompasses a vast area of coastline between Mabou and Inverness, in western Cape Breton, stretching four kilometers along a wild coastline, leading from the sea and two and a half kilometers inland to the top of the mountains between Sight Point and south of Mackinnons brook. They protect some of the last, unroaded, undeveloped coastal lands in Cape Breton, and with 85% of Nova Scotia's coast in private ownership and facing increasing development pressure, this is significant for coastal conservation, and for sustaining public access to the coast.

The lands feature rich old growth hardwood forests, brooks and steep-sided ravines, coastal cliffs, meadows, and a diversity of wildlife included endangered species such as Canada Warbler and Eastern Wood-Pewee.

They are part of the Mabou Hills Natural Landscape, one of 80 unique natural landscapes in Nova Scotia. The new protected lands provide the only opportunity to protect many ecological features for this landscape in the province, so their protection makes an irreplaceable contribution to our protected areas system.

The Nature Trust credits this incredible conservation win for Nova Scotia to four generations of American landowners who long ago recognized these lands as truly special, and irreplaceable.

"We are celebrating a spectacular new 2000 acre coastal wilderness today, thanks to a group of landowners who had the foresight and vision to keep this very special place intact, for the benefit of nature and for all Nova Scotians," noted Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director of the Nature Trust.

The story began with the late Carmelita Hinton, founder and head of the Putney School, a progressive, independent high school in Vermont. She first started bringing her family and students to Cape Breton in the 1920s. Carmelita fell in love with the landscape, and recognized the irreplaceable opportunity to preserve such a vast, intact, naturally, culturally and historically rich coastal landscape. She and her daughter, the late Jean Rosner, encouraged colleagues and friends to help acquire and protect neighbouring lands.

Then, about 20 years ago, Jean discovered that Nova Scotia now had a land trust, and she reached out to

the Nature Trust for help. Together, Jean, along with fellow landowner David Rumsey, began planning with the Nature Trust how to bring a large-scale, multi-landowner conservation vision to fruition. They encouraged neighbours to join them in protecting their land with the Nature Trust.

The late Bob and Mary Lou Treat and their children, as well as the late Wilbur and Vivian Walworth, their children and property co-owners, the Learnard family, took a leadership role early on. They protected their lands at Sight Point through conservation easements with the Nature Trust in the early 2002 and 2011 respectively. In 2013, Bob and Lee-Ann Kinzer protected over 200 acres south of Mackinnon's Brook through a conservation easement.

And then, in the last year, the stars aligned. The momentum grew significantly, and big things began to happen. First, David Rumsey and his wife Abby renewed their interest in placing a conservation easement on their MacKinnon's Brook lands. The agreement had met with unexpected technical challenges and hurdles over several years, but their conservation vision was finally realized earlier this year.

Not only did they protect their spectacular 280 acre property overlooking Mackinnon's brook, but David kindly offered to reach out to his fellow landowners to try to reignite their interest in a collaborative, large scale land conservation effort. David became a volunteer extraordinaire, persevering with landowner outreach, and inspiring many landowners to sell their lands to the Nature Trust.

A retired developer, he also actually led the significant land negotiation and acquisition efforts as well, doing an incredible amount of work completing the land securement process. As if all that wasn't generous enough, he and Abby donated over \$600,000, to make this conservation effort possible.

Thanks to David's determination and energy, Jean Rosner's children and grandchildren stepped up to fulfill their late mother's dream of entrusting their lands to the Nature Trust, a legacy for future generations. They agreed to sell over 600 acres of the family land.

The Putney School, the Hall and Crafton families, as well as a local family, the MacNeils, also sold their lands for inclusion in the protected area. In all, David helped the Nature Trust piece together 11 new properties this year, encompassing 1500 acres of land, consolidating much of what is now a 2000 acre coastal preserve.

"Like Paul Gauthier's transformational investment and inspiration that made the 100 Wild Islands possible, David Rumsey helped the Nature Trust to be bold, to dream big and to achieve even bigger in the Mabou Highlands. We owe so much of this incredible conservation achievement to David," Sutherland said.

"Abby and I are honoured to be part of this multigenerational effort to secure the Mabou Highlands for present and future generations", says Rumsey. "We are inspired by and grateful to the Mabou community who steward these lands and the history of their people—historian Jim St. Clair, trailblazer Ian Sherman, and Cape Mabou Trail Club leader Nadine Hunt, among many others. We are thrilled that the Nova Scotia Nature Trust will now ensure that the Mabou Highlands are protected forever."

Beyond the significant conservation win, the protected area is welcome news for many of the landowners, local residents and visitors too, who treasure the scenic and cultural heritage of the area. A network of hiking trails meander along historic cart tracks and among historic foundations, giving visitors a unique opportunity to experience the exceptional scenic, natural, as well as cultural heritage of the area.

According to Nadine Hunt of the Cape Mabou Trail Club, the Nature Trust's protection of this area and its hiking trails is significant for the local community and its future. "The preservation of these properties is a real gift to not only the local community but to all folks who get to experience the beauty and peace of this special area."

The conservation success was part the Nature Trust's historic "Lasting Landscapes" campaign, an ambitious land conservation effort launched last year to help stem the alarming and increasing loss in biodiversity across the planet. The campaign was supported by the Government of Canada's Nature Fund, part of a national commitment to protect 17% of Canada's lands for biodiversity by 2020.

Sean Fraser, Member of Parliament for Central Nova Scotia and Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Climate Change Canada helped launch the Nature Trust's campaign in February. He applauded the group's conservation leadership and contribution to national conservation targets.

"The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is a critical partner in protecting Canada's unique natural legacy. With many of our most ecologically rich and threatened natural areas in private ownership, like the Mabou Highlands, non-government land trusts are uniquely positioned to help us protect Canada's nature," he said. "We applaud the Nature Trust's tremendous conservation achievement announced today."

Significant funding also came from the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust and generous individuals and families who donated to help the Nature Trust meet the ambitious Lasting Landscapes targets. In all 17 new protected areas were secured across Nova Scotia, including the Mabou Highlands.

And according to the Nature Trust, there's more good news for the Mabou Highlands to come. The coastal lands adjoin a large block of Crown land on the mountain plateau, lands pending designation as the Cape Mabou Wilderness Area. Together, the combined provincial and Nature Trust protected areas will encompass over 5800 acres of contiguous habitat, from the sea to the top of the mountain plateau.

Also three more families have approached the Nature Trust to add their privately owned lands to the Mabou Highlands legacy, and others are exploring options too.

"We invite Nova Scotians to be a part of this and other good news stories for nature, by donating to save to save even more of the wild spaces we all love, before it's too late," Sutherland noted.

Charitable donations will protect additional land in the Mabou Highlands and across the province, and ensure their long-term stewardship. The Nature Trust is also seeking volunteers to help with the long-term monitoring and care of the Mabou Highlands and over 100 other Nature Trust protected areas across the province.

To donate, to volunteer, or to find out more, visit nsnt.ca or call the Nature Trust at (902) 425-LAND.

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Backgrounder, photos, video and map available—www.nsnt.ca/media

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