

Major Coastal Conservation Wins on the Bras d'Or

(HALIFAX, NS – July 4, 2023) We're pleased to introduce the Nature Trust's newest group of conservation lands: Pony's Point and Maskells Harbour Beach, spanning nearly 460 acres of spectacular forest, rolling hills, and over three kilometres of Bras d'Or Lake shoreline in Maskell's Harbour.

This impressive land assemblage adds to the adjacent Barra Forest and MacNeils Vale Provincial Park and lands at Gillis Point protected by conservation easement. With the critical gaps now secured, the entire shoreline of Maskell's Harbour is now protected, forever, encompassing a combined total of 7.4 kilometers of undeveloped coastline and 1200 acres of contiguous coastal protected area.

The opportunity to assemble such a large, intact coastal protected area is rare anywhere in Nova Scotia with almost 90% of the coast in private ownership, but especially rare on the Bras d'Or, where the shoreline is almost entirely privately owned and highly subdivided. With only 5% of the coast protected in the province, and even less protected on the Bras d'Or, and unprecedented development pressures, the benefit of securing this vast, contiguous coastal wilderness is significant. The area is recognized globally as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and nationally as a Priority Place for conservation due to its rich biodiversity and unique ecological, cultural, and historical features.

The conservation lands encompass a rich mosaic of habitats including mature forests of Yellow Birch, Maple, Spruce, Fir and Eastern Hemlock, wetlands and unique gypsum karst topography filled with fascinating sinkholes, ridges and ravines. The extensive shoreline is dominated by steep slopes and cliffs and punctuated by barachois ponds (coastal lagoons separated from the sea by a sand or rocky bar).

The small but treasured Maskells Harbour property is considered by many to be the crown jewel of the harbour, a special place for generations of locals and visitors alike, charmed by its red sandy shoreline, tranquil waters, and stunning vistas.

The properties protect important habitat for a diversity of plants and wildlife, including rare and at-risk species such as Eastern Wood-Pewee, American Redstarts, Bald Eagles, Blue-headed Vireos, Ring-necked Ducks, Spotted Sandpipers, numerous Warbler species, as well as rare plants such as Bulblet Bladder Fern and Bristle-leaved Sedge.

The news is not only good for nature, but for people too. The Bras d'Or is Canada's largest inland saltwater sea with over 1,000 kilometres of coastline to explore, and Maskells Harbour specifically is one of Nova Scotia's most prominent and beloved harbours, due to its strategic location, idyllic sheltered harbour and stunning scenery.

For over 200 years, it has been a vital destination and stopover for mariners. In the late 1800s, the harbour (then known as Boulaceet Harbour) was a hub for fishing schooners traveling to and from the Grand Banks. In 1919 the harbour was the birthplace of the Cruising Club of America and it remains a must-see stopover for sailors traveling to Newfoundland and Labrador and a destination for countless boaters, paddlers and sailors.

The funding to acquire and ensure the long-term protection of the Pony's Point properties was provided by the Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge and the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, and by many generous donations to our Twice the Wild Campaign.

For the Maskells Harbour Beach property, a passionate group of concerned local citizens and sailors joined together with the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, recognizing the urgency to save this treasured beach, and the last unprotected parcel of land in Maskell's Harbour. Together this group raised the funds needed to purchase this property, and the Nature Trust was then able to acquire the land from this group. Thanks to this collaborative effort, this beloved area will now be protected and cared for in perpetuity.

The conservation success of both Pony's Point and Maskells Harbour has been a catalyst for the Nature Trust's next big effort to save more of Nova Scotia's natural legacy through our Hope for the Coast campaign.

Donations to save and protect coastal lands can be made online at nsnt.ca or by contacting the Nature Trust at nature@nsnt.ca or (902) 425-5263.

Regular updates on Hope for the Coast are available at www.nsnt.ca/hopeforthe coast

To ensure the long-term conservation of Pony's Point and Maskell's Harbour and the protection of other treasured coastal gems please support Twice the Wild today.

-30-

Media Contact:

Candice Ellis
Marketing and Communications Lead, Nova Scotia Nature Trust
(902) 877-1166
bonnie@nsnt.ca

Interviews available upon request.

Backgrounder, photos, and videos may be found at www.nsnt.ca/media

Further information and updates about the campaign can be found at <https://nsnt.ca/campaigns/coastal-now>

Hope for the Coast

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust's Hope for the Coast is an urgent and targeted effort to save 5000 acres of Nova Scotia's most ecologically significant coastal lands. Donations help to secure priority coastal lands through donation, conservation agreements or purchase, and to ensure they are protected, forever. Hope for the Coast is part of the organization's Twice the Wild campaign, which aims to double the land protected by the Nature Trust by 2025.

Twice the Wild

Twice the Wild is an ambitious campaign to double the Nature Trust's protected areas – from 15,000 to 30,000 acres – by 2025. These achievements contribute directly to the federal government's commitment to protect 30 percent of Canada's lands by 2030 and answers the global call for urgent action to address the biodiversity and climate change crises.