

Backgrounder

The St. Mary's River

- The St. Mary's River is one of the most important rivers in the province. It offers one of the last, best places to conserve some of Nova Scotia's most rare and endangered ecosystems and wildlife.
- These ecological gems include:
 - rare old growth forests
 - unique intact and healthy floodplain forest ecosystems
 - and critical habitat for rare and endangered species
- The river is home to some of the largest and least disturbed examples of mature, intact floodplain forests left in Nova Scotia. These forests, which once lined many Nova Scotian rivers before large-scale clearing for forestry and agriculture, are a critical part of river health. They help to keep rivers cool, clear and fast flowing. They harbour vernal pools, streams and brooks important for many amphibians and reptiles
- Its towering old-growth forests of hemlock and spruce are also some of the last in the province. Less than 0.1% of Nova Scotia's old growth forests remain intact. Many species depend on such forest, from moss and lichen to birds and mammals. Old forests provide unique and irreplaceable wildlife habitats and many important ecological functions
- The river provides critical habitat for rare plants and some of Canada's most endangered wildlife including wood turtles. Wood Turtles are listed as Threatened under Canada's *Species At Risk Act* and as Vulnerable under Nova Scotia's *Endangered Species Act*
- The river's diverse habitats are also home to endangered birds including Canada Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rusty Blackbird, Common Nighthawk, and swallows
- Centuries of shoreline alteration, clearing of the forests and agricultural clearing right to the shoreline have changed the St. Mary's river. It is becoming increasingly shallow, warm, slow moving with increased sedimentation, with major implications for the health of the entire watershed, and the species that depend on it

The St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign

- In 2006 the Nature Trust launched the St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign.
- The campaign's goal is to protect the rare ecological gems of the river through land conservation, and to create a ribbon of green—a corridor of intact riparian habitat along the river that will restore and ensure the ecological health of this very special place.
- Protecting the land adjacent to the river is essential in restoring and conserving the aquatic species, too, including the treasured Atlantic Salmon
- The project offers an exciting connection between typically "in-stream" conservation measures for salmon conservation, and typically "land-focused" conservation efforts.
- The long-term ecological health of the St. Mary's River depends greatly on both healthy land and water. This project focuses on this important interface between the two.
- The Nature Trust's expertise and resources in formal protection and management of private lands adds a unique new approach to conservation in the watershed.

- Protection of critical “riparian” or riverside habitats is essential in protecting the health of the river and its inhabitants. Intact floodplain forests control the water quality, temperature and depth—providing essential ecological services for the river’s fish and turtle populations.
- The Nature Trust’s work complements conservation efforts within the watershed, including projects of local and regional conservation groups, like the St. Mary’s River Association, Nova Scotia Salmon Association (and parent organization Atlantic Salmon Federation), St. Francis Xavier University, and government departments.

Overview of Campaign Milestones to Date

- **2006:** Announcement of a 5 year campaign to conserve land on the St. Mary’s River along with protection of *A.M. Sandy Cameron Conservation Lands* protecting two conservation sites on the river donated by the late Sandy and Shirley Cameron
- **2008:** Protection of *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands*, acquired through purchase
- **2009:** Protection of the *C.W. Anderson Conservation Lands* donated by three generations of the Anderson family: Murray, Jamie and Reid.
- **2010:** Nature Trust Protects “*Archibald Conservation Lands*” donated by Dale Archibald.
- **2014:** Acquisition of the *Hemlock Hill Conservation Lands* through purchase
- Nature Trust announces protection of *Waternish* a 160 acre riverfront property protected through a conservation easement with Dr. Hardy & Barbara Eshbaugh.
- **2015:** Securement of the *West River Conservation Lands* donated by Ron Archibald.
- **2017:** The Nature Trust celebrates the donation of the 50 acre Mitchell’s Pool Conservation Lands, generously donated David and Faye Sobey
- **2018:** Paul and Marsha Sobey pledge to donate a 230 parcel on the St. Mary’s River
- **2018:** Sobey family receives Nature Trust Conservation Award at their Annual Dinner and Auction on October 25th, 2018
- **2019:** Protected four new properties on the river thanks to the Lasting Landscapes Campaign. Together, these four new conservation lands total 537 acres.
- **Nature Trust has protected 12 properties along the river, totalling 1338 acres, and approximately 21km of river shoreline is protected, forever.**