

Stewardship Agreements

What is a Stewardship Agreement?

A stewardship agreement is a verbal, “hand-shake” agreement between the landowner of a natural area and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. This protection option allows landowners themselves to protect their property within their lifetime. It is also the simplest first step towards more formal land protection.

This option is best suited for landowners who would like to see their property protected but are not interested in the formal protection options available. As with some other conservation protection tools, you can continue to own and use your property, while protecting the natural values of the area. Keep in mind that because this option is not a legal protection tool it can be easily broken and does not influence the next landowners’ use of the land.

Why Enter Into a Stewardship Agreement?

A stewardship agreement is the first step to protecting your natural area. It enables you to ensure that your family’s natural legacy is kept intact. This option is also a way for you, as the landowner, to get to know more about the Nature Trust, and decide if you would like to protect your land more formally.

Your willingness to protect your natural area may have positive effects on your neighbours’ attitudes towards protecting their property. In fact, some natural areas have been protected by the landowners through a community-wide commitment. For example, if you are only one of several owners of a wetland or forest area and you decide to become a volunteer steward, your interest in seeing the area remain natural may be reflected by your fellow landowners protecting their property as well. Since your property is affected by the activities that occur outside your property lines, involving your neighbours in stewardship increases the likelihood that your area will remain intact as a natural area.

How Will a Stewardship Agreement Help Conservation in the Province?

By participating in a stewardship agreement program you are helping the Nature Trust keep track of the status of significant properties. Together, you and the Nature Trust can monitor environmental

problems that may negatively affect your natural area, keep records of the important natural features on your property (such as rare plants or old growth forest development), and the number and type of these natural areas remaining in the province.

What Are the Criteria for an Agreement?

To qualify for a stewardship agreement there are three criteria that a landowner must agree to:

- To protect the natural area of interest
- To notify the Nature Trust if you plan to sell the property
- To notify the Nature Trust if use of the property (or surrounding lands) changes, and may negatively affect the natural area

What Kind of Property is Eligible?

Any land with significant natural values can be considered for a stewardship agreement, from forests and wetlands to beaches and scenic areas. This option allows the protection of some natural areas that are not pristine, and/or would not qualify for a stronger level of protection like the conservation easement. Over time, a property under stewardship agreement may develop to a natural state that meets criteria for a more permanent type of protection.

How Restrictive is a Stewardship Agreement?

Restrictions placed on the property are at the discretion of the landowner. One of the Nature Trust’s responsibilities is to inform the landowner of possible threats to their natural area. The intent is to protect the natural, scenic, aesthetic and cultural features against intentional or inadvertent destruction. Therefore the restrictions needed to ensure damage does not occur to the natural area would depend on the type of habitat and how sensitive it is to disturbance. For example, an owner of a forest would still be able to use and enjoy the trail system that is present on the property with the knowledge that the areas on either side of the trail are to be left natural. You may continue to use and enjoy the land the same way you always have, while managing the property with its conservation value in mind. A stewardship agreement can apply to an entire

property, or a portion of it, such as the land along the shore of a lake or river.

What is Involved in Becoming a Volunteer Steward?

Once you decide that you are interested in becoming a volunteer steward, the first step is to contact the Nature Trust. The Nature Trust will visit with you to discuss your interests, and will look at the natural area you are wishing to protect. The Nature Trust will help you plan how best to protect the natural values on your land. The Trust may gather natural history information about the site, including examples of the wildlife, plants and habitats. They may take photographs and identify potential damaging activities. This information is then used to monitor the property over time, to be sure its natural values are protected.

What is a Stewardship Award?

You can receive a stewardship award in recognition of entering into a verbal stewardship agreement with the Nature Trust. This certificate recognizes your commitment to looking after your significant natural areas for conservation.

Do Stewardship Agreements Provide Income Tax Breaks?

Because stewardship agreements are not a permanent level of protection, they do not provide any income or property tax breaks. Protection tools like conservation easements, donations or a bargain sale to a registered conservation charity or the government are tax-deductible charitable gifts, so you receive a receipt for income tax purposes, and you may also receive a property tax break. Detailed federal regulations govern these appraisals (see the Nature Trust's [Land Conservation: Financial Facts](#)).



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