

Chignecto Crown Lands Evaluation

Newsletter #2 - Fall, 2010

Update

This Newsletter

This second newsletter provides an update on the Chignecto Crown lands evaluation. It includes a summary of what we have heard so far, and describes our next steps. We have also tried to answer many of the common questions that we have heard.

Broad public consultation on a candidate wilderness area will start after a proposed boundary is released. This will include open house meetings in local communities.

Background

In October 2009, Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began evaluating options for establishing a large wilderness area within Crown lands in the vicinity of Chignecto Game Sanctuary, Cumberland County.

Our first newsletter, released in December 2009, explained why these Crown lands are being evaluated. It also detailed how we will work and consult with others to achieve conservation objectives, while minimizing impacts on other land uses.

Good information is essential to designing a candidate wilderness area boundary. Over the past eight months, we have been gathering information and meeting with interested parties and individuals.



Kelly River

Photo: Irwin Barrett

Why a wilderness area?

Q: What is the purpose of a wilderness area?

Wilderness area designation helps to protect some of our best wild spaces. Designation helps conserve biodiversity and habitat by prohibiting development and industrial uses. Camping, hunting, sport fishing, hiking and other wilderness recreation activities are permitted.

Q: Why is this area being considered for wilderness area protection?

The Crown land study area offers a unique opportunity to protect a large and relatively natural area of land within Cumberland County. The natural landscape there is not currently included in Nova Scotia's parks and protected area system.

The study area includes important ecological features, such as old forest stands, undeveloped rivers, wetlands, and Bay of Fundy coast. It provides habitat for species at risk, including mainland moose, wood turtle, and inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon.

A new wilderness area can ensure long-term opportunities for wilderness recreation, hunting, sport fishing, education, research, tourism, and community stewardship. Some vehicle use can be accommodated.



How much will be protected?

Q: What area is being considered and how much will be protected?

The Crown land study area is 35,000 hectares (86,000 acres) and includes Chignecto Game Sanctuary, plus Crown land extending northeast to Harrison Lake and west to Chignecto Bay. All of these Crown lands are being evaluated, but not all lands will be protected. Private lands are not part of the Crown land study area.

Q: Why not protect the entire Chignecto Crown land study area?

Nova Scotia is facing many changes in land use. The province has commitments to supply wood to various sawmills, and a legal obligation to provide annual allotments of wood fiber to Northern Pulp.

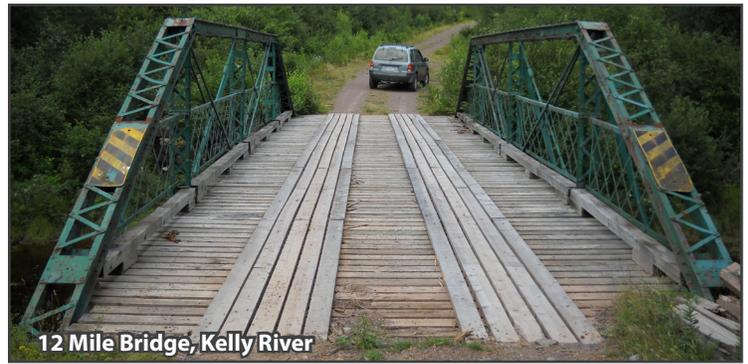
At the same time, we are continuing to find ways to meet our 12% land protection goal by 2015. Some of the study area will remain outside a wilderness area to help meet these forestry commitments and provide flexibility for other land uses.

Q: What about the land at Apple Head?

In February 2010, the province purchased 3,400 hectares (8,500 acres) and 22 kilometers of undeveloped coastline on the Bay of Fundy, at Apple Head, from Wagner Forest Management Ltd.

This was the largest piece of privately owned ocean frontage in Nova Scotia. The land was part of a provincial large land purchase program to support wilderness protection, heritage conservation, tourism, recreation, community use, fishing, hunting, Mi'kmaw interests, and other uses.

The Apple Head property has a long history of forestry activities, including road-building, harvesting, and silviculture. Many people have noticed recent harvesting in part of the area.



As a condition of selling this land to the province at an affordable price, Wagner wished to harvest a certain amount of wood to meet the company's current wood-supply obligations. An agreement was made to allow the company to harvest on 25% of the property (2,000 acres) over a two-year period, while staying at least 200 meters away from the coast and major ravines, where remnant patches of older forest still exist. Special wildlife areas are also being protected from harvest.

The province's view of this is long-term. The property is expected to recover to a more natural condition over time. Without this arrangement, there was a risk the land could be sold to private developers, subdivided, and lost to public access forever.

The Apple Head property is not being considered as part of the Chignecto Crown Lands Evaluation area. However, Apple Head will be considered for future protection as we work to protect 12% of Nova Scotia's land base by 2015.

What has been happening?

In the first newsletter, we encouraged interested people and organizations to share ideas and information.

This early input will help develop boundary options that will be presented to the Ministers of Environment and Natural Resources. With their approval, a candidate wilderness area boundary will then be released for broad public review.

So far, we have met with the following:

- Nova Scotia Association of Crossbow Hunters (NSACH)
- Bow Hunters Association of Nova Scotia (BANS)

- Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters (NSFAH)
- Cumberland Wilderness (CW)
- Ecology Action Centre (EAC)
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)
- Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia (SANS)
- Cumberland Snowmobile Club
- Cumberland Trails (Cumberland County Riders Association)
- Chignecto Glooscap Snowmobile Club
- All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS)
- Chignecto and Area All-Terrain Vehicle Club
- Cumberland Regional Economic Development Agency (CREDA)
- a campsite leaseholder
- Private landowners
- Planning staff from the Municipality of the County of Cumberland
- Councillors from the Municipality of the County of Cumberland
- Town of Springhill
- Murray Scott, then MLA for Cumberland South.

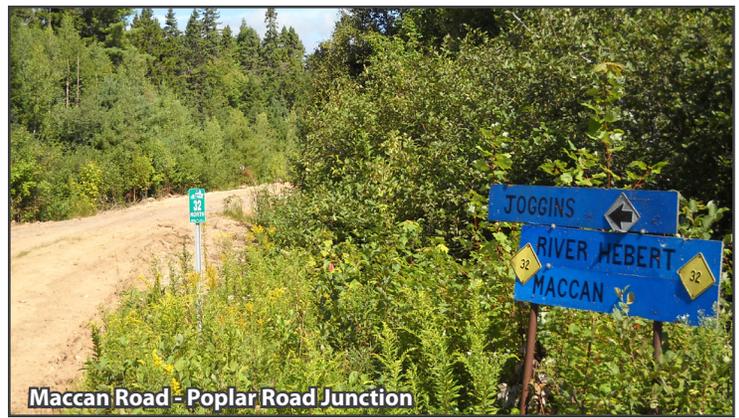
We have also heard from numerous individuals and organizations, including:

- Two Countries, One Forest (2C1Forest)
- Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS)
- Mining Association of Nova Scotia (MANS)
- Hoeg Brothers Lumber
- Glooscap Restaurant and Lounge
- Wheaton's Irving

There will be many opportunities for the public to comment on a candidate wilderness area boundary during the public consultation process. We have also started formal consultation with the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq.



Barred Owl, Chignecto Game Sanctuary



Maccan Road - Poplar Road Junction

Q: What about industrial resource interests?

The Crown land study area includes forests with significant wood fibre. The area also has potential for development of oil and gas, mineral resources, and wind energy.

We have been gathering information and are meeting with commercial and industrial groups so we can understand and consider their priorities. So far, we have met with staff from Cumberland Regional Economic Development Agency (CREDA) and the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, primarily to discuss wind energy potential along the Chignecto Bay coast.

Eastrock Resources Ltd. holds conventional onshore oil and gas exploration agreements that apply to a large area within Cumberland and Colchester Counties, including the entire Crown land study area. Stealth Ventures Ltd. holds rights to explore for coal bed methane, including within the northern 40% of the Crown land study area. We are working to arrange discussions with these companies about their interests.

What have we heard so far?

1 - The Chignecto Sanctuary area is highly valued

Individuals and organizations are telling us that this area is special for its relatively intact forests, rivers, coastline, and associated wildlife habitat. We are also hearing that people enjoy the area for a wide variety of outdoor activities, including hunting, sportfishing, canoeing, hiking, sight-seeing, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. Finally, we are hearing that the area provides or can provide economic benefits through forestry, tourism, and other uses.



- Boars Back Ridge Road along River Hebert
- the coastal highway between Shulie and Sand River
- Goodwin Road, connecting the above roads

The Boars Back Ridge Road along River Hebert and the coastal highway between Shulie and Sand River will continue to be operated by the Nova Scotia department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

2- Concern about future vehicle access

We are hearing concern from individuals and organizations about continued vehicle use in the area.

Many existing users of the area, including ATV and snowmobile riders do not wish to lose access to existing roads and routes. Snowmobilers say the existing trail network is important for winter tourism in the area. Automobile users have also expressed concern, especially hunters and those wishing to access Welton Lake and Kelly River.

Others worry that too many OHV routes will jeopardize the area's wilderness values, such as habitat protection, biological diversity, and a quiet wilderness experience.

We are hearing a wide range of views on how many and which roads and routes should remain open for vehicle use. Some say all existing routes should be kept open, while others suggest decommissioning certain routes.

No one has proposed that all routes and roads should be closed to motorized access.

Q: What is government's position?

Government is committed to maintaining essential OHV connections between communities. The following roads were excluded from the study area and therefore are not being considered for wilderness area designation:



The Goodwin Road will continue to be maintained by the province as resources permit, as this road will be unaffected by a wilderness area designation. However, existing resources for forestry road maintenance could change as a result of a new wilderness area, as well as other factors. This issue is being fully considered as part of the evaluation process by NSE and DNR.



Q: Can existing OHV-routes remain open for use?

Yes – Government will consider permitting continued vehicle use on a limited number of additional routes that meet local needs. Not all routes will remain open because roads degrade natural ecosystems, biodiversity and wilderness character.

We have been meeting with OHV user groups to discuss the regional route network. Route use can continue by excluding roads from a new wilderness area or through use of trail management agreements.

Roads were excluded from Eigg Mountain-James River Wilderness Area and Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area. Trail management agreements can be signed with OHV groups or other organizations, as we have done at Gully Lake Wilderness Area with both the Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia (SANS) and All-terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS).



Buck, Chignecto Game Sanctuary

Photo: Gary Davis

3- Maintain existing hunting rules and regulations

We are hearing that hunters wish to maintain the existing hunting regulations within Chignecto Game Sanctuary: bow-hunt only and the opportunity to wear full camouflage.

Q: What will happen to Chignecto Game Sanctuary hunting regulations if part or all of the Sanctuary becomes a wilderness area?

Establishing a new wilderness area does not affect or change existing hunting regulations and licensing requirements. We are not considering any changes to the sanctuary designation and hunting regulations.

Hunting regulations for Chignecto Game Sanctuary are under the *Wildlife Act*, which is administered by DNR.

Only long-bow hunting is allowed within Chignecto Game Sanctuary; long-gun and cross-bow hunting, and trapping are prohibited. The *Wildlife Act* hunting regulations will continue to apply on any portion of a wilderness area that overlaps with the sanctuary. Overlapping areas would have dual-designation as wilderness area and game sanctuary, resulting in a special hunting zone within the wilderness area where sanctuary regulations would continue to apply.

Dual wilderness area – game sanctuary designation already exists in several places in the province. For example, portions of Tobetic Wilderness Area are also part of Tobetic Wildlife Management Area.

Sport fishing is permitted in all wilderness areas in accordance with provincial sportfishing regulations.

Q: What about bear baiting?

Chignecto Game Sanctuary hunting regulations allow bear baiting. However, bear baiting is prohibited in wilderness areas. Therefore, bear baiting will be prohibited in all areas designated as wilderness area, including areas of dual wilderness area-game sanctuary designation.

4- Respect owners of private land in-holdings and honour existing campsite leases

We are hearing questions and some concern from owners of private land in-holdings and campsite leaseholders.

Q: How will private land in-holdings be affected?

The Chignecto Crown land study area includes only Crown lands. Impacts to accessing private lands will be avoided where possible. If needed, access to private lands that may be surrounded by a wilderness area will be provided by licence, but may be subject to conditions. We will work with private landowners on a case-by-case basis to resolve any access issues.

Q: Will existing campsite leases be honored if they become part of a wilderness area?

Yes – campsite leaseholders will have the opportunity to renew their leases as wilderness area camp licences under the *Wilderness Area Protection Act* if their leases are included in a wilderness area. Vehicle access to campsite leases in a wilderness area can be licensed to support structure maintenance or removal. A vehicle licensing program is being developed for wilderness areas. Interim policy allows for continued vehicle access to campsite leases and other legal interests on existing and direct routes.

5- Protect moose and other species at risk

We are hearing concern about mainland moose. Some people have called for a large wilderness area and road closures to ensure moose will thrive. Others believe that ending logging in a new wilderness area could result in insufficient browse for moose.



Sand River

Photo: Irwin Barrett



The moose population on mainland Nova Scotia has been decreasing for several decades. As a result, the province listed the mainland moose as “endangered” under Nova Scotia’s *Endangered Species Act* in 2003.

According to DNR’s Recovery Plan for Moose in mainland Nova Scotia, moose require a variety of habitats including: wetlands, streams, ponds, and lake shorelines to access aquatic vegetation and escape heat and insects in the summer months. During the winter months, moose require mature conifer or mixed-wood forest for shelter and protection, and mixed-wood forest habitats for browse (i.e. food) that is achieved through natural disturbances (e.g. wind) and human disturbances (e.g. tree harvest).

The Chignecto Crown land study area contains a mosaic of habitats that are used by moose. Wilderness areas can help mainland moose survival because they provide a variety of food sources, and seasonal shelter and protection.

An important goal of wilderness areas is to maintain and restore natural forests and natural processes, and to provide the same habitat which existed when moose did thrive. If needed, the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* allows activities to achieve responsible management, preservation or restoration of a wilderness area (e.g. creating browse for moose). It is also best if the range of mainland moose does not overlap with that of white tailed deer, which carry a parasite that can be lethal for moose.

Some land in the Chignecto Crown land evaluation area will continue to be used for forest harvesting. Forest harvesting also occurs on most of the surrounding private lands. As a result, we expect that there will

continue to be plenty of browse created by forest harvesting in the region.

Browse also occurs naturally in older forests where trees of varied ages, heights, and types exist. In these forests, openings are created naturally by processes such as wind and old age, which provide space for new growth. Other examples of natural disturbances which provide browse for moose are fire, insect defoliation, beaver activity, moose browse itself, ice storms, and tree ageing.

In mainland Nova Scotia, the healthiest moose populations occur in areas with few or no roads.

We also heard that people want habitat protection for other species at risk in the study area including wood turtle, Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic Salmon, native Trout, and the Quebec Emerald Dragon Fly.

6-Protect Chignecto’s Forests

A variety of conservation-minded organizations and individuals have been telling us that the study area provides a unique opportunity to ensure a permanent home and refuge for a diversity of wildlife, while offering a wilderness experience for future generations of people.

Many of these groups and individuals are concerned that the current game sanctuary permits industrial activities which can threaten wildlife habitat. Wilderness areas provide comprehensive habitat protection and do not permit industrial activities.





Some noted the study area is home to some impressive examples of Acadian forest – particularly a mix of sugar maple – yellow birch, and softwood forests. The area also boasts pockets of old growth forest, provincially uncommon jack pine, upland hardwoods, and flood plain flora.

Conservationists and scientists have pointed out that the Chignecto Crown study area contains some of the most intact remaining forests in Cumberland County and represents the best remaining opportunity to create a wilderness area in Cumberland County.



7-Consider tourism

The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) has told us that establishing a significant wilderness area within the Chignecto Crown land study area could provide an important boost to tourism in northern Nova Scotia. TIANS believes a new wilderness area would strengthen the so-called 'golden triangle,' which now includes Fundy Geological Museum in Parrsboro, Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, and the Joggins Fossil Cliffs UNESCO World Heritage site.

Both the Cumberland Snowmobile Club and the Chignecto Glooscap Snowmobile Club say the trail network in the Chignecto Game Sanctuary is important for winter tourism.

What happens next?

We are working to identify and release a candidate wilderness area boundary for public and stakeholder review in the coming months. NSE and DNR are working together to design a boundary that reflects the results of their joint technical review, and fairly considers all interest and concerns.

Formal consultation with the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq has started.

Once a candidate boundary is released, there will be many opportunities for public comment. We will have regional and local information displays, open-houses in local communities, write-in opportunities, and occasions to meet with staff. Additional boundary changes can be made as a result of this public comment and review.

A socio-economic study will be prepared which outlines the costs and benefits of designation. This study will be released for public comment and will be considered when final decisions are made on boundaries and designation of a new wilderness area.

Our goal is to satisfy many interests while achieving protection and conservation objectives. We thank everyone who has participated and helped us so far and look forward to hearing more from those who use, enjoy, or value these special Crown lands.



For more information on the Chignecto Crown Lands Evaluation please contact:

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Chignecto Crown Land Study Area For Evaluating Options for Wilderness Area Protection

Legend

-  Roadways Excluded from Study Area
-  Crown Land Study Area (35,000 Ha)
-  Chignecto Game Sanctuary Boundary
-  Indian Reserve

PLEASE NOTE
This map shows Crown lands being evaluated. It does not represent a proposed Wilderness Area.

5 Kilometers

Map produced by the Protected Areas Branch of NS Environment, November 2009.
The information shown here was obtained courtesy of the NS Geomatics Centre (SNSMR) and the NS Department of Natural Resources.
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