

## Record Year Ends on High Note for Nova Scotia's Natural Areas



Halifax, Nova Scotia (Dec 29, 2015)—This year will be remembered as one of the most significant and prolific in Nova Scotia's history of protecting our unique natural legacy. Both the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the Province made spectacular conservation gains in 2015, capped off by an announcement today of 100 more new protected areas. With recent achievements on both private and Crown-owned lands the goal of protecting at least 12% of Nova Scotia by the end of 2015 has been reached.

The Nature Trust had a truly remarkable year of conservation accomplishments. Its history-making *100 Wild Islands Campaign* is well on its way to protecting a globally-significant archipelago of wild islands off Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. Over 70% of the islands have already been protected, through a combination of conservation agreements with island owners, donations of land, and purchases by the Nature Trust. The campaign has garnered wide-spread excitement and support from near and far, with a transformational \$3.5 million gift from Cole Harbour entrepreneur Paul Gauthier, broad support from across the province and the country, and the endorsement of international environmental icon, Yvon Choinard. The conservation feat has drawn attention from across the world with coverage in the national news, *Canadian Geographic*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist* and even the Italian *La Repubblica*.

The Nature Trust's Wilson's Lake Conservation Lands and new protected areas on the St. Mary's River safeguard critical habitat for several of Canada's most endangered plants and animals, as well as spectacular old growth forests. Private lands at the heart of Rogues Roost, a world-renowned sailing and paddling mecca, are now protected forever, as are additional ecologically rich wetlands and river frontage on the Herbert River. On the Eastern Shore, the Nature Trust's Tangier River Conservation Lands provide an irreplaceable natural corridor linking the 100 wild islands to the interior freshwater wilderness of Tangier Grand Lakes. In all three cases, the Nature Trust secured highly strategic parcels of private land threatened with development that would significantly impact the wilderness value of vast areas around them, areas which the Nature Trust hoped would be protected by the Province. And

today came the welcome news that the Crown lands surrounding all three sites are now officially designated as Wilderness Areas.

In total, the Province announced more than 100 new protected areas, including Rogues Roost Wilderness Area; the Devils Jaw Wilderness Area; and additions to the Tangier River Grand Lakes Wilderness Area. The newly announced sites bring Nova Scotia's protected areas to 12.26%, meeting the goal of

protecting at least 12% of the province's landmass by 2015, as mandated under the Environmental Goals and Sustainability Prosperity Act.



Photo: Len Wagg

The Nature Trust applauds the Province's progress to date, noting that Nova Scotia is now recognized as a protected areas leader in Canada.

"What an exciting day for Nova Scotia and for all Nova Scotians" commented Nature Trust Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland. The new protected areas announced by Minister Delorey today represent both a major conservation achievement and an incredible legacy for the people of Nova Scotia."

But the work is not yet complete. There remain many important natural areas awaiting protection to fulfill the publically-endorsed *Protected Areas Plan*.

"We were delighted to hear Minister Delorey speak to the need to continue looking at other areas for protection" Sutherland added. "We look forward to more Government announcements in 2016, and also to working together to fill critical gaps that can only be filled through private land conservation."

With over 85% of the coast in private ownership, for example, protection of many treasured beaches and islands can only be achieved through private land conservation. The unique strengths of non-government conservation groups like the Nature Trust will be critical for continued success in protecting the full suite of Nova Scotia's rich biodiversity.

The new protected areas encompass hundreds of kilometers of treasured coastline, forest, lakes, rivers and wetlands. They represent a significant advancement in biodiversity conservation and also an exciting range of places for Nova Scotians to experience and enjoy nature at its finest.

Sutherland added, "As we head out in the woods to enjoy the snowy wonderland out there today, we should take a moment to appreciate our incredible protected areas. And to celebrate the important work being done by the Province, conservation groups and many individuals across Nova Scotia to protect this wonderful natural legacy."