



NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST

Nature Trust Lands a Big One for Earth Day

Halifax (April 21, 2008)

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is celebrating Earth Day with the announcement today in Halifax of a major catch—a new protected area for Nova Scotia. In partnership with the Province, the Nature Trust acquired a spectacular 90 hectare property on the St. Mary's River, in Guysborough County. The *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands* protects pristine shoreline and outstanding old forest on one of Nova Scotia's most treasured and renowned salmon rivers.

“What better way to celebrate Earth Day than landing a big one— another piece of Nova Scotia's natural legacy, protected, forever by the Nature Trust?” ponders Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director of the Nature Trust. She adds, “The 90 hectare *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands* is a true natural gem. It protects over three kilometers of pristine shoreline on the St. Mary's, ecologically important and increasingly rare old-growth forest, and irreplaceable habitat for endangered plants and animals.” Hemlock Falls provides refuge for Atlantic salmon, a species imperiled throughout its Atlantic range, wood turtles, a species-at-risk in Canada, and numerous rare floodplain plants.

On the new protected area, massive hemlock and spruce trees tower above waterfalls cascading through rich green moss into the much-loved and renowned St. Mary's River. Protection of such shoreline forests is critical to the long-term health of the river and the species that depend on the river for their survival.

The news was welcomed by Nature Trust members, campaign supporters, local residents and anglers, and the government today at a celebration event in Halifax.

The property is the third protected through the Nature Trust's *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign*, adding to lands donated by the late Sandy Cameron and his family as a legacy to the province he loved. Launched in 2006, the Campaign is aimed at protecting, as forever wild, the river's most outstanding natural areas.

The property will be transferred to the Province under the *Lands and Legacies Conservation Partnership* between the Nature Trust and the Province. It will be preserved as a Nature Reserve, the strongest protected areas designation for provincially-owned lands. Minister of Environment Mark Parent applauded the Nature Trust's conservation success on the St. Mary's and its contribution to provincial conservation commitments. He noted, "One of the government's five priorities is protection of the environment and we are committed to legally protecting 12 per cent of our land mass." He added, "We greatly value the role of private land protection and the Nature Trust in helping the province meet that goal."

Major campaign support by the David and Faye Sobey Foundation, ExxonMobil Canada, the Donner Canadian Foundation, Environment Canada, and many community members, made the acquisition possible. At today's announcement, EnCana Corporation stepped forward with a three-year campaign commitment of \$45,000 to carry the Campaign forward and to ensure continued success in preserving the river's unique natural areas.

The St. Mary's River watershed is one of the largest and most scenic in the province. It supports diverse ecosystems and has been renowned for salmon and trout fishing, canoeing and bird-watching for decades. The Nature Trust's land protection efforts, combined with the efforts of local conservation groups and the provincial government will ensure that the beauty and natural values of the St. Mary's River are preserved for future generations of anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and residents to enjoy.

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is the only organization dedicated exclusively to working with landowners to protect the places that Nova Scotians love. With over 70% of the land in the province privately owned, the Nature Trust's land trust approach is essential to protecting the province's natural legacy. Since 1994, the Nature Trust has succeeded in protecting over 1600 hectares of outstanding conservation lands across the province, from pristine coastal islands and lake shores, to critical habitat for endangered species.

For Broadcast Use:

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust announced a beautiful new protected area for Nova Scotia today, on one of the province's most treasured and renowned salmon rivers, the St. Mary's River.

According to Nature Trust Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland, "The 90 hectare *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands* is a true ecological gem. It protects over three kilometers of pristine shoreline on the St. Mary's, ecologically important and increasingly rare old-growth forest, and irreplaceable habitat for endangered plants and animals."

In addition to harbouring old growth hemlock and spruce forest, the property provides refuge for Atlantic salmon, a species imperiled throughout its Atlantic range, and wood turtles, a species-at-risk in Canada.

The news was welcomed by Nature Trust members, local residents, anglers, and the government at a celebration event today in Halifax. The property is the third protected through the Nature Trust's *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign*, adding to two conservation lands donated by the late Sandy Cameron and his family.

Sutherland noted, "What better way to celebrate Earth Day than landing a big one—another piece of Nova Scotia's natural legacy, protected, forever by the Nature Trust?"

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Background

Nova Scotia Nature Trust

The Nature Trust is Nova Scotia's leading private land conservation charity, and the only land trust focused exclusively, now and always, on protecting the province's outstanding natural areas. Since 1994, the Nature Trust has worked together with landowners to protect the places Nova Scotians love. More than 1,600 hectares of conservation lands from unspoiled lakeshores and forests to important wildlife habitat for endangered species have been protected, forever.

Unlike most of Canada where government owns and controls over 90% of the land and can lead land conservation efforts, over 70% of the land in Nova Scotia is privately owned. Many of the most outstanding natural areas – from old growth forests to coastal islands and wetlands – occur on these lands. Our private lands face unprecedented and increasing development pressure. To protect the best of our natural areas, and to achieve national and provincial conservation commitments in Nova Scotia, *private land conservation is essential*. The Nova Scotia Nature Trust was created in 1994 to address this critical need. The Nature Trust's community-based land trust model is Nova Scotia's best hope to preserve the province's natural legacy.

The Nature Trust protects private land through voluntary stewardship agreements, legal agreements with landowners (conservation easements) and through donation and purchase of land. The Nature Trust "stewards" these protected lands in partnership with local volunteers to ensure the natural values are preserved in perpetuity. This is accomplished through regular monitoring, management activities, community outreach and legal enforcement. The Nature Trust also provides unique and high profile public education events and programs to build public awareness and support for land conservation and to expand its strong grass-roots support and extensive volunteer network. Finally, as the province's pre-eminent private land conservation organization, the Nature Trust provides leadership and liaison with other conservation partners in the region. The Nature Trust is accomplishing something vital: preserving Nova Scotia's unique and precious natural legacy for future generations.

The St. Mary's River

The St. Mary's River is one of the most scenic rivers in the province, and has long been popular among salmon-fishermen, even attracting baseball great Babe Ruth to fish its waters. Aside from its recreational and scenic value, it is also highly significant ecologically, supporting four "ecological gems":

- 1) The river provides important habitat for wood turtles, a national species-at-risk
- 2) The river provides habitat for Atlantic salmon, a species that is known to be declining all along the eastern seaboard of North America
- 3) Some of the last remnants of old-growth hemlock forest in the province are found along the banks of the St. Mary's River

- 4) The shores of the river support some of the most extensive and intact remnants of Acadian floodplain forest in the province. These forest provide a variety of important ecological functions, while providing habitat for rare floodplain plants.

The St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign

Begun in 2006, the St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy campaign is focused on protecting the most outstanding natural areas on the river, through private land conservation, landowner outreach, and community education. Since 2006, over 100 landowners of priority properties have been personally contacted to share information about options for land conservation and shoreline stewardship. The Nature Trust has also launched a successful community outreach initiative, including a variety of activities, from guided nature walks, to public presentations and community celebrations. The first major land conservation success of the campaign was the donation of two ecologically significant properties on the river by the late Sandy Cameron, his wife, Shirley, and their family.

The vision for the campaign is to protect, as permanently protected conservation lands, the irreplaceable natural gems on the river, with a natural corridor of intact riparian habitat, a "ribbon of green," connecting these core protected areas. Intact natural habitats on the shore are essential to the long-term health of the river and viability of the species that depend on the river for their survival, including wood turtles and Atlantic salmon.

Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands

This property was acquired by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, and transferred to the Province of Nova Scotia to be protected as a Nature Reserve – the province's highest level of protection for Crown lands. This 220-acre property, known as the *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands*, supports a significant stand of old-growth hemlock forest, and over 3km of pristine river frontage. It also supports important habitat for the imperiled wood turtle and Atlantic salmon.

EnCana Corporation

EnCana is a leading North American unconventional natural gas and integrated oil company. By partnering with employees, community organizations and other businesses, EnCana contributes to the strength and sustainability of the communities where it operates.

In Nova Scotia, EnCana is developing the Deep Panuke offshore natural gas project. Natural gas from Deep Panuke will be shipped via a 175-kilometre subsea pipeline to landfall at Goldboro in Guysborough County. From landfall, the gas will be transported to markets in the Maritimes and the Northeast U.S. by Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline. First gas from Deep Panuke is expected in 2010.

Lori MacLean of Encana states, "EnCana is pleased to support the important work of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust by participating in the St. Mary's River Campaign. The Campaign will create and sustain a true legacy for future generations along the banks of this beautiful, wild river."

For more information on EnCana, go to www.encana.com.

Partnership between the Nature Trust and the Province

The Nature Trust has long been an important conservation partner to the Province of Nova Scotia. With over 70% of land, including 95% of the coast in private ownership, the community-based private land trust model is an essential complement to government's efforts to protect natural areas predominantly on Crown lands. Through the Lands and Legacies Conservation Partnership, the Province and the Nature Trust are working together to protect the province's most outstanding natural areas. Through this five-year \$900,000 partnership, the Nature Trust will leverage \$1.8 million worth of conservation lands. With the government's commitment last year to set aside 12% of Nova Scotia as protected areas by 2015, and the recent announcement of a land conservation Legacy Fund for Nova Scotia, cooperative conservation between the Nature Trust and the Province will no doubt continue to build.