

March 30, 2007

Dear Friends of the Nature Trust,

I write to tell you a true land conservation story—my story—which I hope will inspire you to create your own. We all benefit from the land around us, whether it is to make a living, to get away from it all on the weekend, or for creative inspiration. It is essential that we ensure the best of our natural areas will be there to inspire, recharge, and sustain us, forever. For me and my family, the opportunity to leave an irreplaceable natural legacy through our land proved to be a completely unexpected, eye-opening and deeply rewarding experience. At the centre of it all is the Nova Scotia Nature Trust—without them this conservation story would not be possible.

Like most Nova Scotians, I have enjoyed the wilds of our great province my whole life. As a child, I played in and around the expansive woods and unspoiled lakes and rivers of Lunenburg and Queens County. As I grew up, I followed in the footsteps of my father and grandfather, becoming a forester. I am certainly not what I would call “an environmentalist;” the woods were simply the place where I made a living.

A few years ago, the Nature Trust visited my wife Brenda and I, keen to talk about some very special wildlife living on our land. It turned out that our property is home to endangered plants and animals found on just a few lakes in Nova Scotia, and nowhere else in Canada. The Nature Trust helped us understand the importance of these species, and the role our little piece of Nova Scotia plays in habitat conservation globally. *That tweaked our imagination a bit!*

We discovered that by partnering with the Nature Trust, we could protect habitat for these unique species. From there, the Knox Conservation Lands were created, named in memory of my father. Working with the Nature Trust became a very special way for our family to give something back to the land, after making our living from the forest for three generations. It is heart-warming to know that our family, our neighbours, and other Nova Scotians will forever benefit from the conservation lands we created. Our great-great grandchildren can learn first-hand about the amazing plants and animals unique to this one part of the whole country. The site will also be a tremendous resource for biologists, helping to build the science needed to help protect these and other endangered species.

The Nature Trust provides a unique opportunity for landowners like us to make a difference in the Nova Scotia of tomorrow. This past year alone they saved five other equally important conservation sites across the province, protecting the kinds of places we all treasure, like unspoiled lakeshores and coastlines free from development. The Nature Trust has reached out to hundreds of landowners, helping us to understand the conservation values of our lands and the options for protecting these values. They’ve also reached out to thousands of other Nova Scotians, helping them to find ways to engage in the race to save the best of Nova Scotia’s natural areas, before it is too late.

Like many of you, I've seen unbelievable development on the lands around us. Places we always took for granted as being there for us to enjoy, and for us to take our own children to enjoy, are gone. In my experience, the Nature Trust is our best bet for making sure the most important of these areas are protected.

Private landowners own almost three-quarters of our province. It is our collective actions that will shape the future of our landscape. Nova Scotia is unlike the rest of the country where typically over 90% of the land is owned by the government. If we want to set aside the best of our natural areas, we need to find our own solutions - solutions based on protecting nature on private lands. The Nature Trust is the only organization in the province focused on this unique challenge. They are working with local communities and helping landowners like us to learn how we can do "the right thing" with the lands in our care.

The ability of the Nature Trust to save special places is limited by funding and "people power." A stronger membership base provides both the critical funds and a broader base of support and involvement. ***Please give generously to the Nature Trust's 2007 membership drive.*** Join, renew, or if you've already done so for 2007, sign up a friend. Please join me in taking action to help save our special places, while we still can. Help to ensure that many, many landowners will have stories to tell, just like mine and like those of countless Nature Trust members, volunteers and land donors. Stories about people acting to save the places we all love.

Sincerely,



Randall Knox  
Forester and Nature Trust Conservation Lands Donor