

Kespukwik / Southwest Nova Scotia Priority Place—Lakeshore Restoration for Coastal Plain Species At Risk: 2024 to 2026

SNBRA second project funded by ECCC 2024-2026

Environment Climate Change Canada (ECCC) working with the provinces and territories launched a new conservation campaign in 2018 which aimed at focusing on high biodiversity areas in Canada that have many Species At Risk. Each of these areas are termed “Priority Places” and the southwest of Nova Scotia was selected: “Kesputwitk” to the Mi’kmaw. ECCC working with many partners identified many ecosystems to study and protect and noted that the rivers and lake shores had a group of At Risk plants and animals (Blanding’s Turtle and Ribbon Snakes) found nowhere else in the province or in Canada. Southwest Nova Scotia Biosphere Reserve Association has been given two years of funding to restore lakeshore habitats that have been damaged and have lost the ecological services they provided. Lake shores are hot spots of biodiversity and they prevent erosion and keep nutrients from entering lake waters. The shorelines of large watershed area lakes and spring-fed lakes in Nova Scotia are the only habitats in Canada that support a suite of globally and nationally rare Atlantic Coastal Plain plants.



Plymouth Gentian, Endangered coastal plain plant on Bennetts Lake, Tusket River

These rare plants are indicators of lake health and they thrive on shores that have large changes in levels from high water in winter to lows of summertime. The shores that are wind-blown and ice-scoured have amazing diversities of rare coastal plain plants but human disturbances can lead to the loss of natural ecological services: shoreline stabilization, water quality, fish nurseries, and plant and insect communities as well as all the recreation values we get from healthy lakes.

This two year project will promote the ideal of healthy lakes through the local communities that live beside, fish, swim and make use of these lakes. This will be done through diverse programs launched in community halls that will be of most interest to landowners. We are looking to work with the Nova Scotia Salmon Association and with provincial government departments (NSDNRR Wildlife and NSECC Wetland division). Throughout this process, we hope to build a community that is interested in and open to maintaining lakeshore integrity and restoring damaged shorelines. In the first year, we will reach out to landowners and identify areas needing restoration. We are working with several groups who are growing native shrubs and grasses that will be used in reestablishing a structural plant community that will protect the lakes and create the habitat that supports the rare coastal plain plants. These groups include Wildcat Reserve, the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre and private growers, Mike Zifkin and Rupert Jannasch. In the second year, shorelines will be restored using the plants grown and involving the above groups as well as Helping Nature Heal.

Apart from the benefits to water quality, flood control, fish and recreation, this project will help restore habitat used by species at risk plants (Pink Coreopsis, Plymouth Gentian, Goldencrest, Water Pennywort, Redroot, Tubercled Spike-rush, Long's Bulrush, Tall Beakrush and Canada Frostweed. Species at Risk animals (Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Ribbonsnake, Snapping Turtle and Eastern Painted Turtle) will also benefit from the project



High biodiversity lakeshore habitat at Maplesue Point, Ponhook Lake