



## Bluff Trail Stewardship Program (BTSP) Year in Review 2019

WRWEO respectfully acknowledges that we are located in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded and unsundered ancestral land of the Mi'kmaq (L'nu). We are all treaty people.

### Background

Completed in 2005, **The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail** was constructed by the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (WRWEO) under a letter of authority from the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry (DLF). The trail runs through ecologically sensitive barrens, reaches into the dwindling habitat of the endangered mainland moose and broom crowberry, a coastal plain species threatened elsewhere. The purpose of the trail was to allow the public to become aware of the extraordinary natural assets of this area, in the belief that awareness was the first step in protection. In 2011, the Province designated Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area under the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. However, by 2015, the trail and the wilderness area were showing signs of distress. As a result of the significant increase in the volume of visitors, there was an alarming increase in harmful human impacts. Visitors expressed concern and disappointment about the damage caused by the ever widening trail, the increased amount of garbage, toilet paper, and human waste in the area, harm caused by inappropriate camping, the cutting of trees, and the damage to soil surface and tree canopy caused by campfires. These observations were reiterated in the annual trail inspections performed by Department of Lands and Forestry staff.

**The Bluff Trail Stewardship Program** is a joint project of the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (WRWEO) and the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association (SMBSA). With support from the Nova Scotia Environment – Protected Areas and Ecosystems Branch, and contributions from individuals, the program seeks to decrease the number and severity of harmful human impacts and to ensure the careful and responsible management of The Bluff Trail and the surrounding area.

The following **Year in Review (YIR) Report** offers an overview of the **Bluff Trail Stewardship Program** from January to December 2019.

### 2019 BTSP Paid Labour

In 2019, BTSP received support from the Province of Nova Scotia and individual donors. BTSP funds were used to employ the BTSP Stewardship Coordinator, Mike Lancaster, for approximately 197.5 hours from January to December. Additionally, BTSP funding was used to leverage funding from Canada Summer Jobs program and to supplement the wages of four Summer Stewardship Assistants: Michael Booth; Reilly King; Keltie O'Brien; and, Adam Orr for a total of approximately 1,440 hours from June to August.

### 2019 NSCC Internships

In addition to the five paid workers, BTSP supported two students from the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Natural Resources Environmental Technology (NRET) program: Ian Longley and Adam Orr. These students completed part of their on-the-job (OTJ) internship through BTSP. During their internship Adam and Ian contributed to many of our ongoing impact reduction and remediation strategies.

### 2019 BTSP Data Collection & Research Support

During their OTJ training, the NRET Interns collected trail barricade data along the Pot Lake Loop. This data included measurements of the dimensions of each individual trail barricade as well as an inventory of their number and location on the trail.

Approximately one dozen students from NSCC collected data related to the channelling effect occurring along the side of the long boardwalk. The baseline study was conducted in September and October 2017 and data continued to be collected in both 2018 and 2019. This ongoing research helps us to understand the extent of soil and vegetation compaction and causes of the channelling. The baseline data indicated that within one metre of the boardwalk, approximately one quarter of the vegetation was trampled and the damage was worse on the west side, closest to the lake. Observations in 2018 indicated that dogs were the cause of the damage.

2019 Approximate Contributions & Program Valuation

<b>Initial Program Funding</b>		<b>\$15,000.00</b>
Province of Nova Scotia	10,000.00	
Private Contributions from supporters of BTSP, WRWEO, and SMBSA	5,000.00	
<b>Additional Funding</b>		<b>\$18,572.00</b>
Canada Summer Jobs Program	18,572.00	
<b>In-Kind Contributions</b>		<b>\$17,354.00</b>
On-Trail Labour	14,161.00	
Off-Trail Labour	3,073.00	
Materials & Equipment	120.00	
<b>2019 BTSP Approximate Total Program Value</b>		<b>\$50,926.00</b>

2017-2019 BTSP Approximate Total Program Value

\$200,049.00



Photo by Mike Lancaster, Summer Stewardship Assistants at work

## BTSP by the Numbers: 2019

During its third year of operation, the Bluff Trail Stewardship Program:

### Trained

**14 BTSP Stewards** – an average of 1 BTSP Stewards trained per month

### Collected

**223 Reports** from BTSP Stewards and other trail users – an average of 18 per month documenting:

**158 Days** of BTSP Stewardship Presence on the trail – an average of 13 days per month

38 Days with presence in the wider Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area (FBLWA)

19 Days with presence on Hay Marsh Loop

27 Days with presence on Bluff Loop

71 Days with presence on Mi'kmaw Hill Loop

149 Days with presence on Pot Lake Loop

**1853 Hours** of BTSP Stewardship Presence on the trail – an average of 154.5 hours/month

1148.5 hours (62%) were paid and 704.5 hours (38%) were volunteer hours

### Observed

**3,702 People Observed & 2,013 People Engaged** – 54% of visitors observed on the trail

**662 Dogs Observed** on the trail – approximately 46% of the dogs observed were off leash

Approximately 54% of the dogs observed were on leash

Approximately 15% of the dogs observed were disturbing other users and/or the environment

**1 Cat Observed** on the trail

### Monitored

The four Leave No Trace (LNT) Educational Camping Sites were regularly checked on:

Coyote/U'lukwej was checked on **58** times – on average, more four times per month

Crow/Ka'qaquj was checked on **58** times – on average, more than four times per month

Squirrel/Atutu'wej was checked on **12** times – on average, once per month

Moose/Tia'm was checked on **14** times – on average, approximately once per month

### Remediated

**37<sup>+</sup> trail spur barriers** constructed/refurbished, **21<sup>+</sup> trail braiding barriers** constructed/refurbished, **20<sup>+</sup> fire pits** remediated, **3<sup>+</sup> fallen trees** removed, **2<sup>+</sup> areas of disturbed soil** remediated, **2<sup>+</sup> trail widening barriers** constructed/refurbished, **6** areas of boardwalk repaired, **1** way marker repaired

### Facilitated

**1 NSCC Field Study Day** to examine channeling along the boardwalk  
**2 Group Presentations** (19 Jan. & 9 March - Trips by Transit)  
**5 NSCC Intern On-The-Job (OTJ) Training Days**  
**7 BTSP Training & Volunteer Days** (Jan. 27; May 5; June 1; July 14; Aug. 24; Sept. 14; Nov. 17)

### Generated

More than **\$17,354.00** in donated volunteer labour<sup>1</sup>, materials, and equipment: \$14,160.45 of on-trail labour + \$3,073.00 Off-trail Labour + \$120.00 M&E = \$17,354.00  
 On average, the program generated more than \$3,100.00 per month of on-trail labour (paid and unpaid), \$80.00 per month of off-trail labour and \$10.00 per month of donated materials and equipment.

SMBSA and WRWEO wish to express their sincere appreciation for the support of the Nova Scotia Environment – Protected Areas and Ecosystems Branch, Canada Summer Jobs Program, and the many individual donors who have made the BTSP possible. We are especially grateful to the volunteers who have given so generously of their time to help ensure the continued careful and responsible management of The Bluff Trail and the surrounding area.

<sup>1</sup> WRWEO calculates the value of volunteer labour according to the 2015 study, *Working for a Living, Not Living for Work*, released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Nova Scotia in partnership with United Way – Halifax. The report used the Canadian Living Wage Framework to calculate the living wage for Halifax at \$20.10/hr.

### BTSP Comparison 2017, 2018, and 2019

	2017	2018	2019	Improvement
Number of Stewards Trained	40	52	14	
Number of Reports Collected	180	198	223	✓
Days of Presence on trail and/or in FBLWA	130	151	158	✓
Days of Presence on Pot Lake Loop	121	137	149	✓
Days of Presence on Mi'kmaw Hill Loop	70	58	71	✓
Days of Presence on Bluff Loop	34	39	27	
Days of Presence on Hay Marsh Loop	25	30	19	
Hours of Presence on trail and/or in FBLWA	1757	2443	1853	
Check-Ins at Coyote/U'lukwej	38	49	58	✓
Check-Ins at Crow/Ka'qaqj	36	54	58	✓
Check-Ins at Squirrel/Atutu'wej	14	14	12	
Check-Ins at Moose/Tia'm	11	8	14	✓
People Observed	3045	2773	3702	
People Engaged	1181	1024	2013	✓
Percentage of Observed People Engaged	39%	37%	54%	✓
Dogs Observed	562	414	662	
Percentage of dogs off-leash	63%	48%	46%	✓
Approximate total In-Kind Contributions	\$38,000.00	\$36,000.00	\$17,354.00	
Approximate In-Kind Labour On Trail	\$23,744.00	\$30,652.00	\$14,160.00	
Approximate In-Kind Labour Off Trail	\$13,453.00	\$5,162.00	\$3,073.00	
Approximate In-Kind Materials & Equipment	\$1,170.00	\$342.00	\$120.00	
Approximate Total Program Value	\$70,000.00	\$81,000.00	\$50,925.00	