

Incentivizing species at risk conservation strategies for private woodlands in Kespukwitk

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In Nova Scotia, nearly 70% of forested lands are privately owned, approximately 50% of which are classified as small (<2000ha). Many small private woodlands in Kespukwitk are managed for supplemental income for landowners and cumulatively contribute to a significant portion of the rural economy. Many also provide habitat for species at risk. Developing strategies that both involve and reward private woodland owners in species at risk conservation efforts has been identified as a priority for species recovery in Kespukwitk. The Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute is working to develop a pilot Species at Risk Incentives Program for private woodland owners that utilizes incentives (both monetary and through recognition) to encourage the implementation of beneficial management practices (BMPs) for a targeted group of at-risk landbirds, turtles, lichens, and tree species. An extensive literature review was carried out and approximately 650 beneficial management practices were considered. One overarching method to balance the objectives of conserving habitat for multiple species at risk is through the establishment of adequate buffers around wetlands and watercourses. Along with buffer protection, specific seasonal limitations on some management activities and additional BMPs will be recommended and implemented on a case by case basis depending on the species present and landowner commitment. These modified management actions will be used to determine compensation rates and an annual financial incentive payment for conservation actions. Techniques utilizing species at risk occurrence data and woodland owner outreach will inform the prioritization of participants in the pilot project as it enters its first active year.

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