Lessons learned: Unsuccessful riparian buffers for Mikjikj-Wood Turtles on private land in Unama'ki-Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

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Mikjikj-Wood Turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*), a culturally significant species to the Mi'kmaq and Nova Scotia's most terrestrial turtle species, are currently listed as Threatened in both Nova Scotia and Canada. Wood Turtles use a wide range of habitats including various forest types, streams, rivers, wetlands, peatlands, and riparian zones. Riparian zones, in particular, are often adjacent or directly used for agricultural purposes, typically hay fields in Unama'ki-Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. When selecting a riparian zone to use, Wood Turtles may encounter the threat of mowers which can lead to permanent injuries or mortality. To counter this threat, financial incentives have been successful in creating buffer zones while compensating agricultural landowners for loss of production. UINR's Maliamu'kik Msit Ko'kqmanaq (Species at Risk) Program set out to further develop riparian zone buffers to protect Wood Turtles and their habitat through the use of financial incentives. Based on Environment and Climate Change Canada's Wood Turtle Strides project, UINR looked to compensate landowners at a rate of $300/acre. Despite the financial incentive, zero landowners participated in the project to create safer habitats for Wood Turtles. However, despite the unsuccessful installation of riparian buffers, lessons were learned about how to better develop buffer zone approaches and relationships with landowners in Unama'ki-Cape Breton.

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