

Landowner biodiversity program

Mariya Tsehtik¹, **Noah Hardy**¹, Megan MacKenzie¹, Olivia Bennett¹, Taylor Wilson¹, Jordan Veinot¹.

¹ *Coastal Action, Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia*

Abstract: This program focuses on engagement and education strategies to raise awareness and promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Kespukwitek, Southwest Nova Scotia. Its primary objective is to provide Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) to private landowners with freshwater ecosystems present on their property, helping them identify, conserve, and enhance habitats for Species-at-Risk (SAR). Property assessments are conducted to identify habitat types and key features, while monitoring equipment is deployed to collect data on species presence. Technicians use visual surveys, imagery, audio recordings, and water quality probes to gather data. The data is then analyzed to produce individualized BMP reports, which are shared with landowners to communicate findings. In addition to providing these reports, site assessments may identify opportunities for biodiversity-enhancing activities on eligible properties. Now in its third year, eight freshwater properties have been assessed in the region. Each assessment has resulted in an individualized report delivered to landowners, with three biodiversity-enhancing activities implemented. Efforts are underway to expand the project, with the intention of strengthening follow-up and effectiveness monitoring. Reaching private landowners poses difficulties, and often there is limited willingness to engage; however, integrating private landowners is crucial for conservation on private lands. Working together, we can protect critical habitat, improve connectivity across fragmented ecosystems, and implement specific restoration actions. Giving landowners the information and tools they need to conserve habitats and species on their land can also help participants become community champions and advocates for environmental stewardship with their neighbours, friends, and family, inspiring more people to take action

Keywords: Landowner engagement, freshwater SAR, assessments, BMPs

Poster presentation