

PRESS RELEASE

First Audit of Municipal Wetlands Stewardship in Newfoundland and Labrador

September 2003 - Intervale Associates was contracted in July 2003 to conduct the first audit of the Municipal Wetlands Stewardship program in Newfoundland and Labrador. The program, now running for over ten years, is a core initiative of the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) in Newfoundland and Labrador. The audit team conducted an analysis of 11 communities with Municipal Stewardship Agreements in Newfoundland. They concluded that the program has made substantial progress towards its goals and recommended several actions to help build the capacity of municipalities and the EHJV staff as the program expands and matures.

Through a Municipal Stewardship Agreement with the Province, municipalities agree to protect and manage specific wetland habitats located within their municipal boundaries. The provincial office of the EHJV, in turn, provides towns with technical advice, resource inventories, and a management plan for the protected areas under the Stewardship Agreement. The Municipal Stewardship Agreement is a signature management tool of the EHJV for conducting stewardship in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a unique form of stewardship and quite different than the more conventional form of land securement.

The EHJV is one of many joint ventures under the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) between Canada and the United States (more recently including Mexico), aimed at conserving waterfowl populations and wetland habitat. During the period 1989-2004, EHJV programs aim to conserve approximately 4.4 million acres of critical wetlands in eastern Canada through a combination of land acquisition and land stewardship agreements.

Under a Municipal Stewardship Agreement, the primary focus is to protect vulnerable wetlands within municipal boundaries, which often exist on Crown Land. These wetlands are in critical danger of being destroyed by residential, commercial, and industrial activities. Through a voluntary Municipal Stewardship Agreement and accompanying management plan, citizens become active players in habitat conservation for waterfowl. Since these habitats support a variety of bird species, the program directly contributes not only to the goals of NAWMP but also to the broader bird conservation goals of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

A modified version of the Municipal Wetlands Stewardship Audit 2003 has been prepared for general audiences and will soon be available on the web site of Wildlife Habitat Canada. <http://www.whc.org>.

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