

Province Okays coastal wetlands destruction

Ecology Action Centre exposes "Poster child for Inappropriate Coastal Development" in Nova Scotia

Queens County - The Ecology Action Centre is extremely concerned that a non-resident developer has been issued a permit to destroy a fragile coastal wetland system in East Berlin, Queens County in order to ensure road access to three new housing lots 'This is a clear test of Nova Scotia's commitment to wetlands protection' says Jennifer Graham, Coastal Coordinator of the Ecology Action Centre. "The province has just made a commitment to no-net-loss of wetlands in its recently proclaimed Sustainable Prosperity Act, and yet is unwilling to take a firm stand to protect ecologically significant wetlands from development."

Jonathan Schwartz, the American-based developer wants to construct a road across a large wetland system in a low lying area next to the sea to create access to three lots at the very edges of, the wetland. 'This is the poster child for inappropriate coastal development. This is exactly the type of low-lying, ecologically sensitive coastal habitat that is extremely vulnerable to impacts of sea-level rise. If this property is already regularly flooded throughout the year, what do think will happen in the very near future when sea level rise is accelerated as a result of climate change?' says Graham. The Honorable Mark Parent, Minister of the Environment recently stated that he is extremely concerned about the risk of increased flooding along Nova Scotia's coasts as a result of sea level rise.

The fact a wetlands alteration permit was granted shows the urgent need for a provincial coastal management policy. Nova Scotia is one of the few jurisdictions without any kind coastal policy, and as a result coastal protection keep falling between the cracks The Ecology Action Centre feels the provincial Department of Environment and Labour has dropped the ball and needs to take a leadership role in protecting coastal wetlands from development by refusing to grant a wetlands alteration permit at this site. "This proposal should be scrapped" says Graham "It sets a dangerous and foolhardy precedent."

Wetlands are tremendously productive and important ecosystems and provide habitat for many species. Coastal wetlands also serve an extremely valuable role in improving water quality, minimizing coastal erosion, and protecting inland areas from flooding and storm surges.