

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS WILDERNESS AREA, NOVA SCOTIA

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY WHILE SAFEGUARDING DRINKING WATER

Photo: Government of Nova Scotia

OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA BASED CONSERVATION MEASURE (OECM)

An 'isthmus' is a narrow strip of land with sea on either side that forms a link between two larger land areas. In Canada's Maritimes, the Chignecto Isthmus is the narrow strip of land connecting Nova Scotia to New Brunswick. It is also the only land bridge that connects Nova Scotia to the rest of North America.

The Chignecto Isthmus is an important place for biodiversity. Only 21 kilometres wide at its narrowest point, the area contains tidal marshes, tidal rivers, mud flats, inland freshwater marshes, coastal saltwater marshes, and mixed forest. It includes many rare plant species, more than 220 bird species, and provides an important stopover site for migratory birds. It also allows for the movement of land mammals between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, including the endangered mainland moose and Canada lynx, making it a vitally important corridor for the genetic health of these populations.

The Isthmus is also an important place for people. On top of being a critical land route for trade and tourism, the Town of Amherst Nova Scotia is located near the west end of the Isthmus and uses the area's groundwater as its sole source of drinking water. In the early 1990s,

the Town of Amherst and the municipality it resides in created the first formalized protection on the Isthmus to safeguard their water resource. They created the North Tyndal Protected Water Area, which included developing an intermunicipal planning strategy and land-use by-law to oversee these lands. In 2008 the town asked the province to further protect the area through its Parks and Protected Areas plan. Updates since then have added corridors between the protected wilderness areas to allow wildlife to move more freely between them. The area has now expanded from less than 1,000 hectares to over 3,750 hectares and growing, and includes lands owned by the town, lands owned by the province, and several properties secured by the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Many of the conservation areas within the Chignecto Isthmus are Protected Areas as conservation is their primary purpose. However, the main purpose of the 964-hectare Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area, which includes the North Tyndal Protected Water Area, is water supply protection. This supports the area being recognized as an Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measure or OECM.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS WILDERNESS AREA IS AN OECM?



Does the property have a defined geographical space?

Yes! The boundaries of the Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area are well identified and can be accurately placed on a map.



Is there an effective way of ensuring that biodiversity will continue to be conserved into the future?

Yes! The lands conserved within the Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area are protected under Nova Scotia's *Wilderness Protection Act*. The area is managed collaboratively by the government of Nova Scotia and the Town of Amherst.



Is there an expectation that the biodiversity on the site will be conserved for the long term?

Yes! Due to its critical purpose of protecting the water supply for the Town of Amherst, and with the backing of the Government of Nova Scotia, this area is expected to conserve biodiversity for the long term.



Is biodiversity conservation the primary objective of the area?

No – and that's okay! The Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area's purpose is to safeguard the water supply for the Town of Amherst. While conservation of biodiversity isn't the primary purpose, the management standards for the area still ensure that biodiversity is conserved.

Quick tip

Lands in the Isthmus that have a "yes" answer for this question would likely be assessed as Protected Areas. Both types of areas are important, and both achieve biodiversity conservation.



Is biodiversity on the site conserved?

Yes! The Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area contributes to the network of areas helping to conserve the biodiversity of the Isthmus.