

# SUMMARY OF PHASE 2 OF THE MUSQUODOBOIT HARBOUR – SHERBROOKE STEP PROJECT

(March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016)

## **PHASE 1 BACKGROUND: March 2014 –January 2016**

On Saturday, March 29, 2014, following months of behind-the scenes community collaboration and organization, a well attended, facilitated, community economic development engagement session was held in Oyster Pond, with representation from Lake Echo to Ecum Secum and the Musquodoboit Valley. The outcome of this daylong meeting, and the subsequent follow-up work, resulted in the creation of a comprehensive and prioritized strategic plan with three immediate priorities: better local transportation services, the extension and expansion of internet and cellphone coverage, and the development of the Eastern Shore as a “Bay of Islands” sustainable tourism destination via ACOA’s Strategic Tourism Expansion Program.

On January 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, following intensive collaboration, consultation and lobbying, spearheaded by the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society, the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs, and Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores, funding in the amount of \$50,000 was secured to initiate a Strategic Tourism Expansion Program (STEP) for the Bay of Islands. The bulk of the funding for the STEP program came from ACOA, but \$5,525 in cash, from seventeen local businesses and organizations, together with two municipal contributions, was raised before the application was made to ACOA. This up-front community contribution was a significant factor in securing the STEP program, the first on mainland Nova Scotia.

Phase 1 of the Musquodoboit Harbour – Sherbrooke STEP project, the Implementable Action Plan, is essentially complete and will be formally unveiled to the funding partners on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2016.

Outlined below are a series of sequential actions, directly derived from the Phase 1 STEP Implementable Action Plan, that have been formalized as a STEP Phase 2 proposal, which needs to be undertaken as soon as possible to maintain the positive community collaboration, momentum and focused results achieved to date.

## **PHASE 2 STRATEGY: Focus on the “Wild Islands” and adopt the Travel Demand Generator Model**

The key outcomes of the Phase 1 work was a recognition that the Unique Selling Proposition for the area is the unique-to-Nova Scotia pristine wild islands archipelago; an archipelago that is easily accessible from the coastal highway and its side roads, as well as directly from the Atlantic Ocean; an area where ocean, islands and land meet to create an enduring natural and cultural heritage. While the area does have other attributes, such as inland wilderness areas and a series of rivers, the focus of the development of the area as a sustainable tourism destination that will provide increased economic benefits to the area’s residents, must focus on the area’s unique asset – it’s wild island archipelago. The validity of this focus as the area’s unique selling proposition is the success of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust’s “100 Wild Islands” campaign and the unprecedented national coverage the area has received because of the recognition of the ecological value of the “wild islands archipelago” that has remained essentially for 10,000 years.

A key component in Tourism Atlantic's (ACOA) STEP process, as clearly outlined in the program's comprehensive guidelines, is the adoption of the Travel Demand Generator Model, which identifies the tasks and the order in which development activities should be undertaken to meet the key goal of increased demand, which leads to increased economic activity.

The Travel Demand Generator Model is essentially a series of sequential steps starting with **Research**, which drives the **Product**, which drives the **Brand**, which drives the **Marketing**, which drives **Demand**.

Outlined below are a series of actions that need to be undertaken, based on the STEP process Travel Demand Generator Model, together with a projected cost and preliminary schedule.

**PHASE 2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT: STEP Working Group and DEANS continue to project manage**

The overall management of Phase 1 of the Musquodoboit Harbour – Sherbrooke STEP project was undertaken through the joint efforts of the STEP Working Group and Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores (DEANS). Ideally, this overall project management structure will continue with a minor change for Phase 2, whereby the *Cultural Heritage Documentation of the Coastal Islands* and the *Archaeological Survey of the Coastal Islands* would be carried out under the direction of the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society Research Committee, reporting to the STEP Working Group and DEANS.

However, a commitment to the same project management structure does not mean the community representatives who comprised the first STEP Working Group should necessarily remain the same. The community representatives who serve on the Phase 2 Working Group should be determined after creating community awareness of the project and seeking new representatives through a community engagement process, to serve alongside those members of the first group who wish to continue on an active and participatory basis. Additionally, given the potential participation of Millbrook Economic Development Corporation, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and HRM, these groups should be represented on the Working Group.

**TRAVEL DEMAND GENERATOR MODEL: Phase 2 Actions Summary**

**Research Actions**

1. Cultural heritage documentation and interpretation outline for the coastal islands
2. Archaeological survey of the coastal islands with the highest probability of heritage-usage sites
3. Ecological and recreational assets/usage inventory of the coastal islands and key headlands

**Product Actions**

4. Deliver local experiential tourism-product workshops & market readiness assessments
5. Prepare island-viewing look offs and water/land route-guide concept plan
6. Develop an essential visitor services strategy utilizing the private sector

**Brand Actions**

7. Establish target-market profiles, branding and visual identity
8. Design branded website and social media strategy

**TRAVEL DEMAND GENERATOR MODEL: Phase 2 Research Action Details**

## 1. Cultural heritage documentation and interpretation outline of the coastal islands

- Goal:

To prepare a comprehensive and authoritative cultural history of the islands between Jeddore Rock and Liscomb Island through the services of a professional historian who will conduct a research-intensive study to identify and consolidate historical sources into a general written history of the region together with a database heritage inventory of all of the roughly 400 islands within the area. These research findings will subsequently serve to guide an archeological investigation of the islands most likely to have cultural resources showcasing Pre-Contact, Contact and/or historic period use. The historical and archaeological knowledge of such resources will, in conjunction with natural heritage considerations, inform any future development and management of the islands to accommodate visitors through an integrated management plan for the islands in accordance with all applicable guidelines and regulations.

- Workplan:

- i) In collaboration with other project partners develop a unified comprehensive baseline searchable database that includes all islands between and including Jeddore Rock and Liscomb Island, together with their GPS coordinates, name, size and both cultural and natural attributes.
- ii) Prepare baseline maps from existing sources (e.g. HRM Green Network planning) for vehicular accessible headlands, together with the headlands' surrounding waters and islands, as a baseline document for the siting of island-viewing sites.
- iii) Commence comprehensive research on the social and cultural history of the area in relevant archives, libraries, museums, government holdings, and private collections in Nova Scotia.
- iv) Prepare a preliminary general history of the area between Musquodoboit Harbour and Sherbrooke from pre-Contact times to c.1950, with an emphasis on the coastal fringe.
- v) Enter island-specific research findings into the database in the form of descriptive histories, documentation of relevant published and unpublished sources, and scans of archival and graphic materials.
- vi) Maintain an inventory of archival and graphic materials (manuscripts, photographs, illustrations, artworks, maps, artifacts etc.) uncovered during research that may be valuable for future use at heritage interpretation sites, on interpretive panels, websites, etc.
- vii) Prepare a library of scanned historical maps for the area, together with tested techniques for overlaying such maps at the same scale to help document usage and changes over time.
- viii) Establish a working relationship with the Archaeology Research Division at the Kwi'mukw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office together with other recognized heritage authorities for the area, to seek their input, suggestions and advice, as more detailed heritage research is undertaken. Liaise with Peter Labor re the existing Mi'kmaw protocols DNR and DOE are using.
- ix) On the basis of the historical research, prepare an inventory of known and probable cultural heritage sites on the islands (including legends, census and archival documents).
- x) Hold five well-advertised community meetings to share with local residents the information gathered to date, and to solicit any community knowledge, documents and images relating to the usage of the islands and the headlands that might be available, and add these to the database.
- xi) Provide the Heritage Society with periodic updates in a format suitable for posting on the Society's Eastern Shore Archives Facebook site.
- xii) Consolidate all information obtained into a comprehensive report with a prioritized listing of the islands, or areas of islands, that are most likely to contain physical, and possibly intangible, evidence of occupation/usage.

- xiii) Meet with the archaeology team, assist them in their decision-making regarding which islands should have ground-based cultural screening, and then accompany them on their field trips.
- xiv) Working under the supervision of the Project Archaeologist, enter the information obtained into the islands database so that the final database contains all cultural heritage documentation and archaeological survey documentation that can be used, subject to all relevant Provincial and Federal guidelines, to inform any future development and management of the islands to accommodate visitors.
- xv) Complete research as necessary by the findings of the archaeological survey and complete the database and general history of the area.
- xvi) Based on all completed cultural research, prepare an interpretive outline and visual resources index for each of the fifteen island-viewing sites identified by others.

- Project Management:

Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society Research Committee

- Timing:

June 15 2016 – March 30 2017

## 2. Archaeological survey of the coastal islands with the highest probability of heritage-usage sites

- Goal:

To conduct a professional archeological survey of as many as twenty islands, addressing specific locations ascribed high archaeological potential on the basis of the compiled cultural history. Consisting of reconnaissance conducted by boat and on-foot, this survey would be implemented under the terms of a Nova Scotia Heritage Research Permit. Encountered cultural resources would be left undisturbed, but documented in detail in a report submitted to the Special Places Program of Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, in accordance with the Special Places Protection Act.

- Workplan:

- i) Liaise with the Archaeology Research Division at the Kwiilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office to review the proposed Workplan.
- ii) Apply for and obtain a *Category B: Archaeological Research* permit from the Coordinator of Special Places, Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.
- iii) Plan and execute the archaeological survey under the hands-on direction of the Project Archaeologist with the assistance of one trained assistant and five volunteer field workers.
- iiiv) Analyse and report the results of the fieldwork. In its interpretation of finds, the report would include information obtained during the historical research.
- v) Enter information obtained into the islands database so that the final database contains all cultural heritage documentation and archaeological survey documentation that can be used, subject to all relevant Provincial and Federal guidelines to inform any future development and management of the islands to accommodate visitors.

- Project Management:

Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society Research Committee

- Timing:

August 15 2016 – November 15 2016

## 3. Ecological and recreational assets/usage inventory and of the coastal islands and key headlands

- Goal:

To conduct a comprehensive inventory of the ecological, natural heritage and recreation assets and usage of the islands and the key headlands that, in conjunction with information gathered through the heritage documentation and archaeological survey, will provide the necessary information for the preparation of a comprehensive integrated management plan that will support the sustainable economic development of the area, with a focus on an iterative approach whereby the actions with the most potential for success are implemented quickly on a small scale and then modified as needed after insitu testing.

- Workplan:

The Workplan for this component of the project is currently under development as a collaborative initiative between the Nova Scotia Environment, the Nova Scotia Department and Natural Resources and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. This work is expected to include an inventory of the ecological, natural heritage and recreation assets that can be used during Phase 3 for the preparation of an integrated routes/facilities guide for visiting the islands by kayak, sailboat and powerboat, that has is fully in accordance with a comprehensive development/management plan for public access to the islands. In addition, it is expected that the work carried out will identify island areas that can be developed quickly as pilot tourism products without having to wait for the full completion of the asset inventory.

- Project Management: NSE/DNR/NSNT working in parallel and collaboration with the STEP Working Group

- Timing: Late April 2016

<b>TRAVEL DEMAND GENERATOR MODEL: Phase 2 Product Action Details</b>
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#### **4. Deliver local experiential tourism-product workshops & market readiness assessments**

- Goal: To create private-sector awareness of experiential tourism products, their potential for creating additional income for established businesses, the opportunities for new businesses, the fundamentals of developing such products through a series of training workshops, and to then conduct a market readiness assessment amongst those interested in the pursuing such opportunities.

- Workplan:

i) Initiate a reverse trade mission with the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland to have a knowledgeable individual from there tour the “Wild Islands” in order to be able to compare the two destinations and provide relevant observations and suggestions about how best to develop the “Wild Islands” as a successful and sustainable tourism destination. This individual would then present an illustrated presentation about the Wild Atlantic Way destination with respect to best practices, success, failures and their potential application to the “Wild Islands”. This presentation would be promoted widely to maximize attendance from existing and potential local product suppliers, while simultaneously attracting and creating awareness of the “Wild Islands” amongst elected officials, senior staff members from all departments and agencies with an interest in the project, as well as members of the public at large. Following the meeting a flyer would be sent to all households from Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke informing them about the “Wild Islands” business opportunity and asking all interested in learning more to register and attend an information meeting.

ii) Hold three day-long information meetings with existing and potential businesses outlining the need to develop a business a model that looks at theme, authenticity, emotional trigger, educational components, enrichment/entertainment quality, hands-on nature, value added etc.

Following the meeting attendees who have an idea for developing such a business will be given 20 days to prepare an outline for of their idea. From the submissions received fifteen with the best potential for successful development (based on a pre-determined assessment matrix) will be invited to attend a series of in-depth experiential workshops and market-readiness assessment.

iii) Deliver a series of in-depth experiential tourism workshops and market-readiness assessment to the fifteen selected participants based on the Nova Scotia Tourism Toolbox and industry experts with a particular emphasis on developing opportunities for visitors to visit the islands first-hand.

- Project Management:

Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores

- Timing:

June 15 2016 – August 15 2016

## **5. Prepare island-viewing look offs and land-based route-guide concept plan**

- Goal:

To prepare a concept plan that includes an implementation budget for the phased development of an integrated route guide, directional signage and island-viewing look offs that will allow road-based visitors to better experience the islands without having to actually visit them.

- Workplan:

- i) Drive the #7 Highway from Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke, as well as principal headland roads, to gain an insitu understanding of the area. Then review on-line and/or specialty publications to review other locations worldwide (including the Wild Atlantic Way) that have developed applicable integrated route guide and look off installations and rank the three best examples that can act as a model, with the client making the final decision based on the review.
- ii) Conduct criteria-based and numerically assessed field research to identify fifteen ideal locations, evenly spread throughout the area (on both headland roads, as well as the #7 highway as appropriate), that can accommodate an island-viewing site that has parking for ten vehicles, a coin-operated telescope, and interpretive panels with the names and history islands that can be seen (minimum of five islands). Information will be provided by the Project Historian identifying all 400 islands and which ones have the highest visitor-viewing attributes together with a general location for viewing sites.
- iii) Prepare a design concept for client approval of a typical look off together with a range of probable implementation costs, recognizing that some sites will be less costly to develop than others. The purpose of this work is to allow the client to properly plan and budget subsequent stages of planning, design and implementation.
- iv) Prepare a design concept for a downloadable road-based route map/guide that will guide visitors to the look offs and is easily updateable as the look offs are completed.
- iv) Develop a detailed and comprehensive implementation budget to prepare detailed designs to build all twenty sites over a three-year period with the first third probably sited on publically owned properties such as the Clam Harbour Beach Provincial, the Pope's Harbour look off, Taylor's Head Provincial Park and the Marie Joseph look off, where implementation can likely take place quickly and cost-effectively, as there will be minimal site work needed. Consider also locating some look offs at government wharves if adequate parking is possible. The purpose of this work is to allow the client to properly plan and create a realistic implementation budget.

- Project Management:

Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores

- Timing:

June 2016 – November 2016

## 6. Develop an essential visitor services strategy

- Goal:

To develop a realistic strategy that will provide visitors with an essential level of fundamental services (clean washrooms, potable water, gas, food, information) throughout the area on a year-round basis no more than one hour apart by car together with full cell phone and wireless internet coverage.

- Workplan:

i) Research other cold-climate areas of the world to determine if there are examples that could apply to the STEP area. If possible, assess the established cost/benefit for both users and providers as a guide to what might be possible, recognizing that a key requirement is year-round access for visitors. Note that there are Irving gas stations in each of the three primary service centres (Musquodoboit Harbour, Sheet Harbour and Sherbrooke).

ii) Identify and consult private sector businesses within the area who have year-round operations to determine their interest in working collaboratively to ensure that there is a minimum level of fundamental visitor-service sites that provide modern and clean washrooms, bulk potable water, visitor information and signage that clearly identifies their operation as a visitor-service centre. Ideally, the service providers should see their provision of these minimum services as a net business benefit as they will be identified on the branded website and thus have a motivation to provide the services at highest possible level.

iii) Document current cellphone coverage for the entire area and service-provider plans, if any, for upgrading the service. Target is “three-bar” coverage either side of the #7 Highway and all peninsular roads.

iv) Prepare a strategy to achieve the goal identified above ready for implementation.

- Project Management:

Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores

- Timing:

July 2016 – November 2016

## TRAVEL DEMAND GENERATOR MODEL: Phase 2 Brand Action Details

### 7. Establish target-market profiles, branding and visual identity

- Goal:

To create a brand statement, name and visual identity for the archipelago of islands between Jeddore Rock and Liscomb Island that has been tested in the target markets and found to be effective in enticing visitors to the area.

- Workplan:

i) Review all available documentation for the target markets of Outdoor Enthusiast, Authentic Explorers and Cultural Explorers, and prepare a synthesis that profiles the target market attributes as they apply to the MH-S STEP area in both the immediate future and over the longer term as the destination is developed. Based on the created synthesis, identify and document the primary communication channels used by the MH-S STEP target market in making their travel decisions and also identify subscriber profiles for print and internet entities, such as Canadian Geographic,

Saltscapes, MEC etc. who best match the MH-S STEP target market. The entities that best match the MH-S STEP target market profile will be used to conduct a target market focus group survey as outlined below.

ii) Propose 2-3 identification/marketing names for the area that reflect and are informed by the research work carried out to date, particularly the STEP committee review of the “Wild Atlantic Way Final Report”, as the Wild Atlantic Way is seen as being very relevant to the MH-S STEP area.

iii) Test marketing names with an on-line target-market focus group survey carried out with the subscriber base of the entity that best fits and is willing to participate. It is envisaged that this entity will be willing to survey their subscriber base in return for exclusive access to the findings of the archaeological survey and the inside story on the STEP process and the development of a sustainable tourism destination that is community-driven. Tabulate survey results and recommend, with justification, the best name for the area with the Working Group making the final decision.

iv) Prepare branding statement(s) for the selected name based on the area’s unique selling and value propositions.

iv) Prepare three, ranked, visual identity options for Working Group review, with the Working Group making the final decision.

v) Prepare visual identity manual for the selected identity to guide all future use of the visual identity

vi) Commence process of having the area officially designated with the same name.

- Project Management:

Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores

- Timing:

August 2016 – December 2016

## **8. Design branded website, social media and self-escorted digital tour strategy**

- Goal:

To create the structure and content for a branded website together with a social media and self-directed digital tour strategy that will utilize existing, readily available information, with the capacity to add new information as it becomes available, so that the website is ready to “go live” once a long-term website management service has been secured, and the social media and self-directed digital tour strategy can be implemented once funding is secured.

- Workplan:

i) Review other websites worldwide and rank the three best examples that can act as a model, with the Working Group making the final decision.

ii) Create the structure and appearance (based on the previously approved visual identity and branding) of the website with sample content to illustrate usage and secure Working Group approval.

iii) Gather all existing readily available information that can provide potential content (i.e. an image library using Nova Scotia Nature Trust, Saltscapes and Canadian Geographic sources; Atlantic Boating Guide; Scott Cunningham kayak route guide, location of existing marinas, “A for Adventure” video, links to the area’s service providers and attractions etc.)

iv) Test and finalize website so that it is ready to go live.

v) Develop a social media and self-directed digital tour strategy linked to the branded website that is ready for implementation once funding is secured. Review best practice options in other

jurisdictions (eg. New Zealand Tourism Radio) to determine what might work best along the Eastern Shore.

vi) Add a downloadable version of the route map/guide (see #4 above) once it has been created.

- Project Management:

Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores

- Timing:

December 2016 – March 2017

**PHASE 2 SEQUENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: Implement once research and planning done**

1. Based on the research, planning and inventories conducted as part of Phase 2, prepare an outline for a comprehensive integrated management plan for the islands and headlands that will support the sustainable economic development of the area, with a focus on an iterative approach whereby actions with the most potential for success are implemented quickly on a small scale and then modified as needed after insitu testing.
2. Launch branded website and social media strategy once a long-term website management service-provider and their funding, if required, has been secured. Ensure that the website and strategy does not promise what cannot yet be delivered and is focused on the target markets with a product that is genuinely market-ready.
3. Commence implementation of the three-year island-viewing look offs and land-based route-guide concept plan. Consult summary of the Economic Planning Group report.
4. Implement the essential visitor-services strategy.

**PHASE 3 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: Review Phase 2 before proceeding**

The specific elements for Phase 3 of the Musquodoboit Harbour – Sherbrooke STEP Project are difficult to authoritatively identify and prioritize at this point in time but they should include:

- An impartial effectiveness-analysis of all initiatives undertaken during Phase 2 to determine what has worked well, and what may not have, to help guide the prioritization, planning and implementation of the next phase.
- The preparation of a comprehensive development/management plan for public access to the islands that is consistent with their environmental protection (both natural and cultural) while maximizing the options for visitors to intimately experience and visit them in a variety of ways.
- The planning and execution of a research and community engagement process designed to secure the information necessary for the development of a comprehensive, integrated management plan for the watershed lands bounded by Jeddore Head and St. Mary's River
- The development of a longer-term marketing plan utilizing the most effective marketing channels.
- A review of all in-place natural and cultural heritage interpretation and then the development of a comprehensive integrated interpretation strategy that might include a traditional interpretation centre, located roughly in the centre of the area, but at a location that provides a dramatic island-viewing experience.
- The preparation of an integrated routes/facilities guide for visiting the islands by kayak, sailboat and powerboat, that has is fully in accordance with a comprehensive development/management plan for public access. The water route guide should not be released until the access plan has been completed and approved by all stakeholders.