

# Community Perspectives: River Associations and Watershed Groups

Jocelyne Rankin, Water Coordinator,  
Ecology Action Centre

Amy Weston, Program Coordinator,  
Adopt-a-Stream

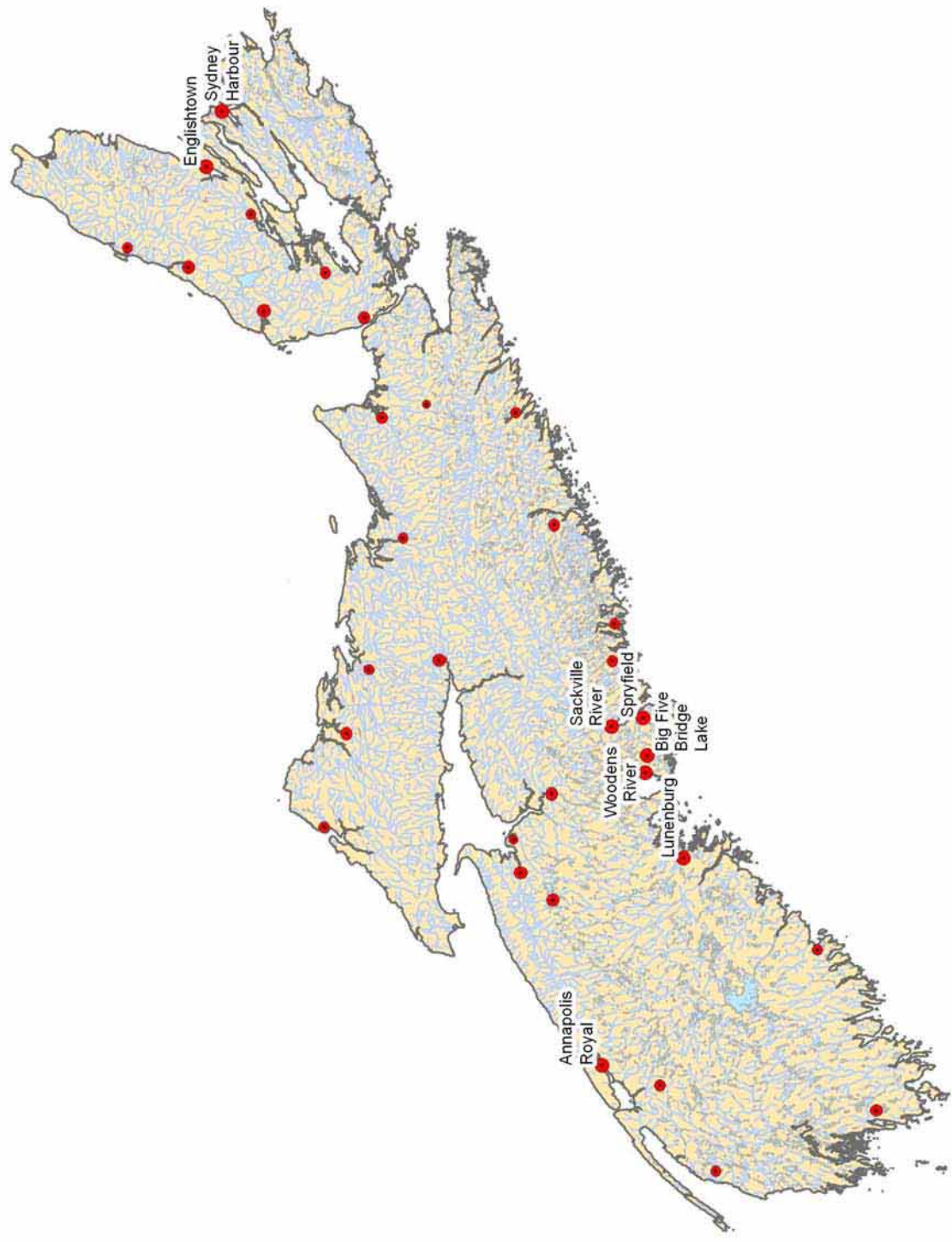
Wading In, March 26-27 2009

# Overview

- River and watershed groups
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives
- Water issues and approaches
- What is needed for watershed management



# River and Watershed Groups



# River and Watershed Groups

- Ecological Monitoring
  - Water quality data (temp, pH, DO, nitrates, phosphates, E. coli, turbidity, salinity, etc.)
  - CABIN (Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network)
  - CAMP (Community Aquatic Monitoring Program)
- River restoration work
  - Adopt-a-Stream
  - Digger logs
- Education and Outreach
  - River Rangers
  - Project WET

# River Restoration



# River and Watershed Groups

- What's working
  - Wealth of knowledge, experience and interest
  - Certain groups have high capacity
  - Good momentum around water
  - NSEN Water Caucus

# River and Watershed Groups

- Challenges
  - Lack of incorporation of monitoring information into planning or policy
  - Need for greater receptivity for monitoring information by decision-makers
  - Chronic problems vs. acute problems
  - Need for provincial framework and standardized procedures

# Multi-stakeholder Initiatives

What community groups have to offer to watershed planning & management –

- Local leadership
- Community ties and influence
- Expertise
- Vested interest
- Track record / credibility
- Long-term commitment

## Four Examples

- Sackville Rivers Association
- Habitat Unlimited – Antigonish
- Mabou & District Community Dev. Assoc.
- Lahave Water Rescue Project

# Sackville Rivers Association

20 years

- Many partners and contributors
- Community involvement and awareness
- Education
- River habitat restoration
- Raising the alarm
- At the table



# Habitat Unlimited – Antigonish

15 years of river & riparian restoration

- Key relationships with the Area DFO,
- St FX & with the Town of Antigonish
- Channel restoration reduced ice jamming, flooding as well as improving fish habitat
- Town drinking water supply reservoir in James River – recently added a cold water siphon
- Increasingly wider cooperation with other local NGOs

# Mabou and District Community Development Association

Mabou Harbour Watershed: focal point

- 1986 closure due to shellfish contamination
- Active sub-committees
- Evolution from tourism focus in 2001 to include:
  - integrated coastal management planning;
  - water quality & invasive species monitoring (CAMP);
  - watershed stewardship; stream restoration;
  - oyster reef enhancement
- working with all levels of government,
- connected with the Rural Secretariat, DFO Habitat and,
- worked in partnership with Canada - Nova Scotia Water Supply Expansion Program;
- NSSA Adopt-A-Stream and others.

# LaHave Water Rescue Project

Objective: To improve and maintain, into the future, the water quality of the LaHave River watershed

- Involved are:
  - well-established local community groups with different perspectives and strengths
  - Three levels of governments
  - Academic Institutions
  - Others, watershed citizen, and rep. from forestry
- Initiated about 2 years ago
- Up to now the focus primarily on establishing water quality monitoring program –19 months of data collected
- Next steps: evolution from an advisory group (re WQM) to a steering committee to also drive the other facets of the strategy -
  - i.e. the improving and maintaining parts.

# Water Issues and Approaches

- Cornwallis Headwaters Society
- Chezetcook Clammers Association
- Amherst Wellfield Committee

# Cornwallis Headwaters Society

- 60% of watershed agricultural land use
- Partnering with Federal and Provincial Agriculture departments
- Water quality monitoring in watershed
- Best management practices implemented

# BMPs in Cornwallis Watershed



Arch culvert crossing to reduce erosion of stream banks



Constructed wetland to handle milkhouse wastewater before it enters stream



Fencing cattle 5m+ from waterways

Alternative cattle crossing of pasture, cattle bridge

# Chezzetcook Clammers Association

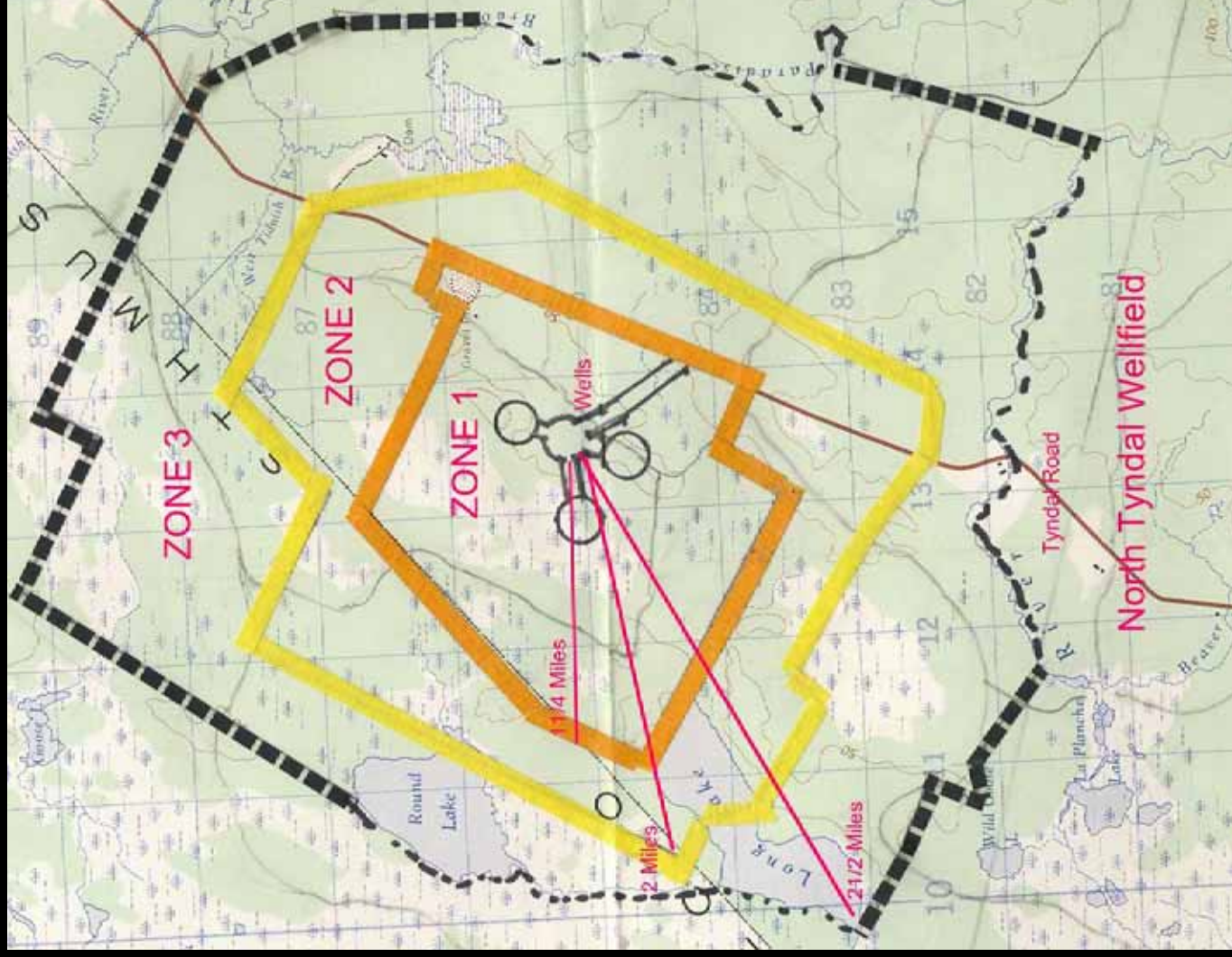
- Land-based impacts affecting water quality
  - Septic and sewage outflows
  - Low flushing capacity of harbours
- Loss of economic activity in rural area
- Better septic systems, well-planned coastal development

# Amherst Wellfield Committee

- Aerial spraying of herbicide by forestry company
- Restricts hardwood growth in favour of softwood
- Risk of contamination to groundwater

# Drinking wells for the Town of Amherst

- Aerial spraying permitted in Zones 2 & 3
- Potential for contamination of groundwater is unknown



# Watershed Management

- Build more capacity within groups and stronger connections among community groups and other agencies to expand watershed protection efforts and fish habitat restoration
  - o Facilitate dialogue among groups, sharing of expertise
  - o Access to more information and training i.e. Map skills and/or data, assessment tools (riparian, stream crossings), best management, practises, restoration methods, etc
  - o More planning support to help groups develop strategic plans for habitat restoration and watershed stewardship
  - o Increase public awareness of watershed issues
  - o Funding



# Questions to ponder

- How ready are community groups to tackle watershed management?
- What role should community groups play in watershed management?
- What support do they need to get there?