

**For Immediate Release**

**April 28, 2010**

**Coastal Coalition urges Nova Scotians to speak up for the coast**

*“We’re only going to get one crack at this thing and for the sake of our province, our livelihoods, and our quality of life; we’d better get it right”*

The Nova Scotia Coastal Coalition, an alliance of the province’s 40 leading coastal NGOs, is eager to engage in a dialogue about Nova Scotia’s coasts and wants to see it expanded. With barely a week’s notice, the Provincial Oceans Network (PON) of Nova Scotia’s Department of Fisheries and Agriculture has announced a schedule for public consultations to seek Nova Scotians’ vision for the future of their coasts. The PON were the authors of last year’s 341 page report entitled “Our Coast: the 2009 State of Nova Scotia’s coast technical paper”. Consultations will begin next Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> in Bridgewater and in Yarmouth, on Wednesday May 5<sup>th</sup> (see schedule below).

An inter-departmental network, the PON is moving forward at last on its promised “broad-based” effort to get Nova Scotians’ input on the six major coastal issues contained in their report.

1. Coastal Development
2. Working Waterfronts
3. Public Coastal Access
4. Sea Level Rise and Storm Events
5. Coastal Water Quality
6. Sensitive Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats

“More storm surges, rising sea levels, declining water quality, disappearing fish stocks, coastal communities in decline, a complete lack of planning, coordination, and policy – the issues facing our coasts require urgent attention,” says Jen Graham, the Ecology Action Centre’s Coastal Coordinator and chief spokesperson for the Coalition. “We have repeatedly stressed the urgency to the government, stated our willingness to help, and flagged the need to expand the dialogue beyond the PON’s six issues, to take a multi-stakeholder approach, and to involve the coastal communities themselves.” The coalition has recommended a clear focus on the following:

- A Coastal Act by 2012 – binding legislation and regulations to protect our natural shoreline, its features and processes;

- A Coastal Policy – a road map to enable ecological, social, and economic sustainability for our coastal communities;
- A “land use bottom line” – minimum land use planning standards for zoning and setbacks in the coastal zone to which all players must adhere – municipalities, businesses, developers, community groups, private landowners;
- Coastal Governance Reform – Clarify who does what within provincial and municipal jurisdictions to achieve a coordinated cost-effective coastal governance structure with clear roles and responsibilities for all levels of government, aboriginal people, non-governmental organizations, citizens, and communities.

“We urge everyone with a stake in our coasts to get involved in the PON’s review process. Let them know what you think”, says Graham. The government has promised to deliver a Coastal strategy by the end of this year and the Coalition is eager to see them keep to that schedule. “We’re only going to get one crack at this thing” says Graham, “and for the sake of our province, our livelihoods, and our quality of life, we’d better get it right”.

The complete schedule for the PON’s public consultations is as follows:

- Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at the Bridgewater Curling Club, 90 Dominion Street, between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm
- Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> in Yarmouth at the Rodd Grand Hotel, 415 Main Street, between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm.
- May 11 – Digby
- May 12 – Wolfville
- May 18 – Truro
- May 19 - Antigonish
- May 20 – Sydney
- May 26 - HRM (Dartmouth)

Venues and locations are available at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coast> in addition to these public consultations the PON plans targeted private meetings with special interests. The public is invited to give input via the Department’s website, (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coast/views.htm> ) or via written submission. No public record for these submissions is planned; however, a “What we Heard” report is slated for this summer.

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#### **For more information**

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