

Action is Our Middle Name

WILDERNESS

In December, we headed to Montreal to take part in COP15, the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, where representatives from 188 governments gathered. On our way, we were part of the Atlantic leg of Nature Canada's cross country NatureBus, collecting letters of hope and action from local communities that were then delivered to Canada's Environment Minister Guilbeault at COP15. The conference concluded with a landmark Global Biodiversity Framework that aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights.

We celebrated World Wetlands Day by cohosting two workshops about protecting wetlands in Nova Scotia. At both workshops, participants shared insights into the gaps of wetland protections, and discussed ideas of visions for current and future wetlands management.

We also welcomed the implementation of the Triad system for Crown land harvesting as recommended by the Lahey Report. Good progress, but still a lot more to do to "fully Implement" the Lahey Report.

TRANSPORTATION

Since December, we have completed Youth Mobility Audits in two new communities. We participated in two panel discussions, one with the University of Rotterdam panel discussing mobility justice and another with Nature Canada discussing how ENGOs can partner with organizations serving diverse youth. We are developing a community guidebook based on our successful program, the Pop-Up-Bike-Hub. This is a comprehensive resource for communities interested in creating local bike repair spaces. The Active Transportation Dashboard was updated with new plans in development and infrastructure projects progressing toward implementation.

Eighty schools participated in our February Winter Walk Day program, encouraging youth to be active outside. The excellent Welcoming Wheels volunteers repaired over 30 bicycles this winter for our Bike Buddies program this spring. We have three students doing a placement with us, working on mini-promotion campaigns such as our 1-meter Rule magnets, our safe cycling videos, and a new story-sharing accessibility project.

MARINE

Our community-led marine planning project in Gros Morne region kicked off another round of engagement, meeting with Indigenous Peoples, fish harvesters, tourism operators and community members to review two years of marine planning and mapping work. Feedback will be incorporated into our draft marine plan set to be released this fall.

We had strong representation at the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 in Montreal. We presented as part of a panel discussion, focusing on Atlantic seascapes and the importance of protecting, managing and restoring marine ecosystems. COP15 ultimately saw nations agree to pursue 30% protection of oceans by 2030, a target critical for safeguarding biodiversity at sea.

At IMPAC5 in Vancouver, we connected with others doing marine protection work around the globe. Following 5 years of advocacy with our SeaBlue partners, the Canadian government released new standards for Marine Protected Areas at IMPAC5 which incorporated many of our key recommendations.

FOOD

The Food Team has reached an exciting milestone with the JustFOOD Action Plan, representing years of work from community food advocates! In March, Halifax Regional Council endorsed Part A of the Plan, which contains 56 title recommendations shaped by extensive community engagement. Halifax Regional Council also voted to sign onto the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, an international protocol aimed at tackling food-related issues at the municipal level.

Through the Nova Scotia Coalition for Healthy School Food, the Food Team has met with senior staff at the Province to advocate for investment in the human resources necessary to support a locally-sourced school lunch program.

We're still working hard to ensure there are strong policies to support farmers, and are excited to have been part of the consultation process for Canada's new Sustainable Agricultural Strategy, announced in December of last year.

ENERGY & CLIMATE

The Energy & Climate Team, the Affordable Energy Coalition, and Nova Scotia Power worked toward signing a NS Utility and Review Board settlement agreement in December. We recommended phasing out biomass electricity and balancing the expansion of renewables with energy storage. Renewable-energy staff initiated a community-based campaign to better understand concerns of rural Nova Scotians on transitioning to clean energy.

We're working to ensure Nova Scotia is properly supplied with zero-emission vehicles under the Government of Canada's forthcoming regulated sales targets to address the electric-vehicle shortage. We await results of NS's feasibility study on school-bus electrification and urge Atlantic Canada to collaborate buying electric school buses. Please sign our call for electric-school-bus deployment: ecologyaction.ca/take-action-electric-school-buses-nova-scotia.

This fall we co-hosted a conference for faith groups concerned with climate and released new videos on church retrofits and passive-house design. In February we held a gathering with international students at the Nova Scotia Community College to help them access 15,000 emerging jobs in energy and environment.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

What do you see when you look up at the sky anywhere in Halifax? Cranes. Halifax Regional Municipality continues to experience unprecedented growth, as people move here to live and work. As the city grows, the Built Environment Team continues to be a voice for more sustainable development patterns. At both the municipal and provincial levels, we have met with elected officials to discuss complete communities, integrated mobility, and greater protection for our parks.

Working with community groups in the Our HRM Alliance, we continue to engage with every opportunity for public input in the Regional Plan review. This included presentations, written submissions, and media coverage. So far, we have seen progress on new policies which consider housing diversity, environmental and cultural values, and climate change. With the help of volunteers and local experts, we continue to search for planning tools to discourage sprawl, while meeting housing pressures.

COASTAL & WATER

Throughout this fall and winter, we have been working with three Dalhousie students - one in planning and two in law - on research projects related to our new coastal access initiative. Two additional planning students have come aboard with their own projects for the Fall 2023 term. Our collective goal is to develop and implement a suite of tools for coastal climate adaptation, including inventorying & improving coastal access, and legislative & legal guides.

Understanding and improving coastal access in Nova Scotia is a critical part of improving our relationship to shoreline ecosystems and adapting to a changing ocean.

The Coastal & Water Team continues our work with Nova Scotia Environment & Climate Change staff in finalizing the Coastal Protection Act (CPA) and pushing for follow-up legislation to address gaps in on-site septic system and well regulations. We are hopeful that the CPA will roll out in early 2023.