

Taken together, these sites cover more than 129,000 square kilometres - close to half the total area that has been so designated around the world.

Designation of an area under the Convention does not guarantee that it will remain forever free of development or change. Nonetheless, the public declaration by a nation of its intent to follow wise, conserving, land-use practices establishes a strong moral and political pressure to live up to that commitment. It is a significant measure of the Convention's effectiveness that not a single one of more than 350 Ramsar site, in more than 45 countries around the world, has been delisted.

While the late spring storm howled outside, Tom McMillan spoke of these things, and of the qualities which make Malpeque Bay a wetland worthy of special attention. He described the diverse habitats - salt marshes, lagoons, estuaries, beaches, and islands - that make up the site; the thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds that sojourn there during migration; the colonies of gulls, terns, cormorants, and herons; the endangered Piping Plovers that nest on the outer beaches. He acknowledged the importance of Malpeque Bay, not only to wildlife or the renowned Malpeque oyster, but to a sustainable commercial fishery, to renewable recreation and tourism, and to the attainment of a humane quality of life.

The address wasn't long, or flowery, or partisan, but it had a convincing eloquence. And afterwards, as the little group of observers chatted and sipped hot coffee to warm themselves against the weather, there was a quiet sense that such events, repeated often enough, could help to heal the world.

Gov't protects natural areas



The provincial government's designation of seven parcels of Crown land and five properties owned by the Island Nature Trust as natural areas was announced on August 19 by Community and Cultural Affairs Minister Gilbert Clements.

These properties are now protected from development, even if the ownership changes hands. The Crown parcels are: Royalty Oaks, which contains a section of red oak in its 10 acres; the Townshend Woodlot, a 260-acre property west of the Souris Line Road which is one of the best old growth hardwood groves on the Island; the Murray River Pines, a 10-acre site of red and white pines; a 9-acre pine stand in the Brudenell River Provincial Park; the 12-acre Cherry Island, one of the Murray Islands; the 70-acre Savage Harbour marsh and sand dune complex; and two parcels of land on Deroche Pond that total 82 acres. The Island Nature Trust manages the Deroche Pond properties and Royalty Oaks under a lease arrangement.

The Nature Trust's parcels that have been designated as natural areas are two properties at Deroche Pond that total 203 acres; 130 acres of peat bog at MacKinnon's Bog near Cardross; 68 acres on St. Peter's Island; and 31 acres on Big Courtin Island.

Several landowners have also given agreement in principle for some form of protection for their land under the Natural Areas Protection Act.