

Too much "touching"?

It seems odd that in this year of Touch Nature we should be worrying about the provincial government's position on natural areas. Two proposed developments - at Greenwich and Boughton Island both would need government action and approval to go ahead. Will they get it?

They are two very different areas, but both are beautiful, sensitive and represent some of the best natural areas left on P.E.I. And the same developers are involved with both properties. The Island Nature Trust is leading the fight against development at Greenwich and has suggested a land trade for nearby, less-sensitive land. The Land Use Commission would have to 'de-identify' the 740-acre parcel of land if the 385 condominium complex were to go ahead. According to Update, the Trust's newsletter, "it is one of the finest sand dune systems in the province and there are rare species and even endangered species such as the Piping Plover in the area. Additionally, for archaeological and historical reasons the property is important in the context of north eastern North America." It goes on to say that "if an important area like the Greenwich dunes can't be saved, then there is little hope for any other area."

Land Use Commission hearings began on April 25 in West Royalty and hearings will also be held in St. Peters.

The Natural History Society sent a letter to Honourable Gilbert Clements, Minister of the Department, voicing concern over the proposed development on Boughton Island. The 47-cottage subdivision and link to one our last undeveloped natural areas would adversely effect wildlife, including a Great Blue Heron rookery. Geoff Hogan, NHS director and well-known authority on birds, says "P.E.I. has only a few offshore islands left where herons still nest and each is critical to the survival of the herons on the Island."

The loss of habitat for Common Terns, Ospreys, cormorants and other birds, and the potential negative effects of any link on the marine life only compound the problem.

The Society is also concerned that any swap of provincially-owned land on Boughton Island - land that was purchased for conservation purposes - would give developers a clear signal that development is more important than conservation. This would set an unacceptable precedent.

If you are concerned about these issues, your presence at the hearings would let politicians know where you stand. Letters to local newspapers and to politicians can also make a difference. You can bet that the developers are lobbying extensively on their own behalf.

- Gary Schneider

