

# Project offers many benefits

BY GARY SCHNEIDER

When word first came out that a watershed management project was being planned for the Montague River, I was happy for any help that would be given to the area. Having lived on the Montague River and one of its tributaries and canoed and walked a good deal of the area involved, I saw many things that made me sad and even angry.

Truckload after truckload of earth/rock fill to shore up a very steep bank that quickly eroded into the river. A river that ran red after a rain, and was so silted up that it faded to almost nothing at low tide. Trees were cut along the shore to improve the view of the river. Woods roads running straight down to a stream, heavy equipment going right through the water and up the other side of the steep bank. Lots of trees down in the tributaries and often dying in nearby areas.

The Montague project will work to remedy many of these conditions and hopefully set a good example for future projects on other Prince Edward Island rivers because it is quite comprehensive and also brings together many groups in a spirit of cooperation. It involves the federal and provincial Departments of Conservation, Energy and Forestry, Fishing, Industry, Agriculture, Transportation, Employment, Public Works, Water Resources and Environmental Services and Community Affairs. Wildlife Habitat Canada, a non-profit conservation group, provided \$750,000 in initial funding for salaries, travel and supplies for the staff of three. Biologist Bob Thompson is the project manager, aided by forestry technician Wade MacKinnon and biological technician Mark Manning.

Farmers, recreational and commercial fishermen, road builders, woodsmen, hunters, naturalists and the landowners in the watershed will also be involved. The cooperation will result in improvements to wildlife habitat, agriculture and forestry in the area, as well as the general health of the 60km of river and tributaries above Knox's Dam.

Mr. MacKinnon and Mr. Manning, working out of the Southern Kings and Queens Regional Services Centre, are in the process of contacting the 300 landowners in the 75 square km watershed. Mr. MacKinnon will become the technician for the 35 landowners already involved through the province's woodlot management program, drawing up new plans where necessary. Eleven per cent of the landowners live out of the province, while three per cent live out of the country. There are also 12 Crown land properties involved.

Luckily for the river, most of the land bordering it is forested, so erosion from agriculture is not nearly as bad as it is in other parts of the Island, but the steep slopes and sandy soils, and highway construction and maintenance have contributed to siltation of the river. Dead and dying trees will be removed and seedling will be planted. Some of the wildlife enhancement techniques include underplanting already wooded areas and on suitable

