

Nature Trust Honours Paul Gauthier's 100 Wild Islands Legacy

Halifax, NS (October 23) – The Nova Scotia Nature Trust honoured Nova Scotian-born entrepreneur Paul Gauthier tonight in Halifax, recognizing him for his transformative \$3.5 million donation and his pivotal role in bringing the dream of Nova Scotia's "100 Wild Islands" to life.

Originally from Cole Harbour, but now living in California, Gauthier has brought an entrepreneurial flair to conservation in Canada. He saw an opportunity to make conservation happen on a scale never dreamed of before in Nova Scotia, and now he's helping to make it happen.

Just an hour outside of Halifax lies one of Nova Scotia's least-known, yet greatest, natural treasures. A vast, wild archipelago of over 100 beautiful, unspoiled coastal islands nestled between Clam Harbour beach and Taylor Head on Nova Scotia's eastern shore. The unspoiled and wild islands are one of the last ecologically rich, island groups of this size, anywhere in North America.



The importance of the islands had been recognized before, with attempts to designate the islands both as a national park in the 1960s and later a provincial park. Neither effort succeeded, and the importance of islands was mostly forgotten for decades.

It was Gauthier who challenged the Nature Trust. In meeting with Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland in 2007 about ongoing conservation project, he asked, "What if we tried to protect them all?"



He saw that a new window of opportunity was opening for the islands. Since those original park initiatives, the Province had committed to protect 12% of Nova Scotia by 2015, perhaps re-opening the door to protect the many Crown islands. The Nature Trust had also been established and brought new approaches, conservation tools and incentives to engage the local community and island owners to be a part of an island legacy.

"Ten years ago, this couldn't have happened. Ten years from now it would be too late. But now it seems like everything is lined up," said Gauthier.

Gauthier persevered and his quiet enthusiasm was infectious. Inspired by Gauthier’s vision, and game-changing offer to invest \$3.5 million to realize the eastern shore islands dream, the Nature Trust embarked on the largest conservation campaign in Nova Scotia’s history, the 100 Wild Islands Legacy Campaign.

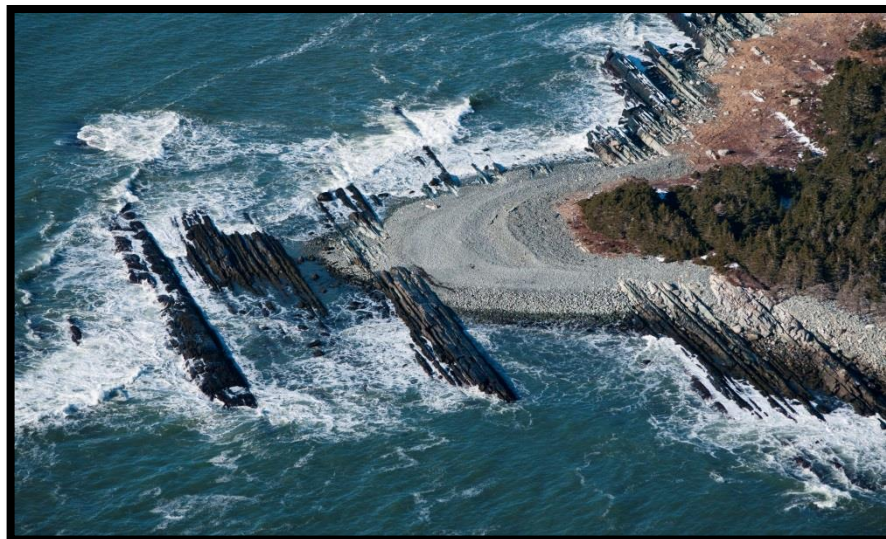
“It was big and ambitious and on a scale that I don’t think has happened in Nova Scotia before. But the Nova Scotia Nature Trust has risen to the challenge amazingly and accomplished a tremendous amount.”

In addition to his generous financial support, Gauthier has also added conservation lands to this island legacy story. He acquired Stoney and Tuff Islands to ensure their protection, before the campaign was underway. He has now placed conservation easements on both islands with the Nature Trust, safeguarding their natural values, in perpetuity. The two undeveloped islands support a variety of ecologically rich and diverse habitats, from sand and cobble beaches to coastal barrens, rocky headlands, and unique coastal rainforest. They add to the growing coastal wilderness protected by the Nature Trust.



Gauthier’s initial involvement in the campaign was anonymous, to ensure focus remained squarely on the campaign and this irreplaceable conservation opportunity. Tonight he made his contribution public, hoping to inspire others to join in making conservation history.

“These islands will stay this way forever. The way they’ve been since the last ice age. I think it’s amazing that my kids will be able to come out and enjoy these islands, pretty much as they are, and hopefully their kids and so on. Just having this place unchanged forever is going to be great for all Nova Scotians.”



In honouring Gauthier at the Nature Trust’s 20th anniversary dinner in Halifax tonight, Sutherland noted, “The 100 Wild Islands campaign has drawn on the efforts of many people, but Paul Gauthier’s game-changing investment and the entrepreneurial spirit he brought to our project made it happen.” She added, “He helped us all to raise our sights and to aim higher. The Nature Trust, the Province, the island owners and the local community. To dream big and to see new possibilities in conservation and in ourselves.”

The Nature Trust has raised \$4.6 million of the \$7 million needed to protect, forever, Nova Scotia’s largest and most ecologically important coastal islands. The public is invited to be part of the legacy and make a gift online at 100wildislands.ca. Every dollar donated will be matched by Gauthier’s generous challenge grant.



Photos: Dean Casavechia