



# Nova Scotia Environmental Network

Connecting for a Sustainable Future

## 2023 Directors' Report

September 2023



## Summary

After an exciting year of growth for the Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) in 2021/2022, a new team of youth interns successfully sustained NSEN's momentum in 2022/2023 despite a decrease in total staff hours. Thanks to the combined efforts of our interns and volunteer Board members, the network has reached important milestones, including 9 new member organizations, a new biodiversity caucus, 14 online events, a successful donation campaign and the official release of our 1-hour documentary film detailing NSEN's 30-year history. The Board of Directors has secured internship grants for the remainder of 2023, which will ensure our continued growth.

## Membership & Caucuses

- NSEN welcomed 9 new environmental organizations to its [membership](#) between May 2022 and September 2023, increasing the membership size from 36 organizations to 45 (25% increase). New members include Harrison Lewis Discovery Centre, Friends of Sable Island, DataStream, Eco Connects, Islands to Cottages, Warrior Society, Scotia Environmental Education Delivery, Coastal Restoration Society, and Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council.
- NSEN's membership also includes 51 active individual members as of September 2023. While membership renewal is less consistent with individuals compared to organizations, 34 individuals joined NSEN's membership between May 2022 and September 2023.
- NSEN staff began the process of launching a new Biodiversity Caucus in spring 2023, which is the fourth [NSEN caucus](#) alongside the Water Caucus, Climate Change Caucus, and Environmental and Sustainability Education Caucus. The Biodiversity Caucus now has a steering committee and will begin holding regular caucus meetings in fall 2023.
- NSEN staff continue to engage with member organizations in 1-on-1 meetings to ensure they get the most of their NSEN membership.

## Staff Funding

- In spring 2022, NSEN was awarded two full-time 8-week positions through the Canada Summer Jobs Program, funded 100% by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Kass Harris (May – June) and Larissa Dean (July – August) were hired to work on communications, webinars, and supporting the outgoing lead staff, Dylan Yates.
- In summer 2022, NSEN was awarded one full-time 6-month position through the Science Horizons Youth Internship Program, funded 75% by United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC) via Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Kass Harris was re-hired (September – March) to work on communications, fundraising, online events, and the Biodiversity Caucus. Since the grant required a \$5,000 contribution from the host organization, NSEN partnered with the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) to share the staff hours and costs, with 40% to NSEN and 60% to RCEN.
- In spring 2023, NSEN was awarded one full-time 4-month position through the ImpAct Internship Program, funded 90% by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) via ESDC. Larissa Dean was re-hired (July – October) to work on caucus facilitation and other projects focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. NSEN will contribute approximately \$1,200 in payroll costs to host this internship.

- In spring 2023, NSEN was awarded one full-time 7-month position through the Natural Resources Internship Program, funded 75% by CICan via Natural Resources Canada (NRC). Kass Harris was re-hired (July – January) to continue working on the Biodiversity Caucus and other projects focused on environmental protection. Since the grant required a \$5,500 contribution from the host organization, NSEN renewed its partnership with RCEN to share the staff hours and costs, with 33% to NSEN and 67% to RCEN.
- In spring 2023, NSEN was awarded one full-time 8-week position through the Canada Summer Jobs Program funded 100% by ESDC. Rebecca Dennis was hired (July – August) to work on communications, webinars, and supporting other staff projects.
- Apart from the Canada Summer Jobs Program, all of NSEN's internships have been facilitated by Eco Internships, while the Capacity Building Institute has provided a free training program for the interns. GreenBooks has also provided free payroll and bookkeeping services. The services provided by these organizations (all contained within Sustainable Capacity Solutions) have been invaluable for NSEN since 2021.

### **Staff Activities**

- Between April 2022 and September 2023, NSEN staff hosted 14 online events including 10 educational webinars on diverse environmental topics (recorded on NSEN's [website](#)), two online speed-networking events to allow environmentalists to get to know one another and brainstorm ideas, and two information sessions to introduce NSEN member organizations to programs that can help them acquire volunteers and internships.
- NSEN staff have continued to manage NSEN's [Volunteer Hub](#) to help our member organizations connect with local volunteers. Between April 2022 and September 2023, we connected 41 different volunteers with NSEN's members organizations.
- In fall 2022, NSEN staff worked with 4 student volunteers from Saint Mary's University who contributed well-written blog articles about locally relevant environmental topics such as nature-based shoreline solutions, habitat restoration, coastal erosion, and invasive species. These and other blog articles are posted on NSEN's [website](#).
- NSEN staff organized online fundraising campaigns for Thanksgiving and Giving Tuesday in fall 2022, raising \$1,175 in donations over 2 months.
- NSEN staff have enhanced NSEN's monthly *Eco Connections* e-newsletter and increased its level of engagement with NSEN members and followers. All NSEN newsletters are archived on our [website](#).
- NSEN staff have maintained a very active social media presence by promoting the work of our members and creating educational content for our followers. Public engagement with NSEN's social media platforms continues to rise thanks to our skilled staff.

### **Annual meeting with Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change (NSECC)**

- After NSEN brought 14 member organizations together for an engaging meeting with Minister Halman and NSECC staff in March 2022 (see proceedings [here](#)), the NSEN team had hoped to organize another meeting in winter/spring 2023. Unfortunately, the NSEN team had very limited capacity at that time and had to postpone this initiative.
- With renewed staff capacity in summer/fall 2023, NSEN has initiated talks with NSECC to organize another meeting. NSEN member organizations can expect to be updated on this initiative in fall 2023.

## ***NSEN History Project***

- After two years of project planning and execution, the NSEN History Project was officially completed in spring 2023 with the public release of a 1-hour documentary directed by Makayla Cole. Through a series of interviews, the film tells the story of NSEN from its founding in 1991 through to present day, with a focus on the value of networks in the environmental movement.
- The NSEN team hosted an in-person premiere film screening event at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library on May 27, 2023, which was attended by about 40 people. We hope to organize more in-person and virtual film screening events in the future.
- The [full documentary](#), a short [trailer](#), and a detailed [NSEN timeline](#) are all now publicly viewable online for free.

## ***Outlook***

- NSEN remains in a strong position, with membership continuing to grow as our visibility increases. We expect to reach and exceed 50 member organizations in 2024.
- Staff capacity is secured through January 2024, after which NSEN will likely go without staff for a few months until the next round of internship grants opens up in the spring. There is sufficient volunteer capacity to maintain NSEN's core operations in the interim.
- Future growth is limited by NSEN's core budget of only \$5,000 per year. Ideally, NSEN would have sufficient funds to retain skilled staff and still have money left over to organize large in-person networking events for our members. Presently, all of NSEN's annual savings must be invested into maintaining staff capacity. Increasing NSEN's annual revenue is therefore a top priority for the Board of Directors.
- There are opportunities to grow each of NSEN's three revenue sources (membership dues, donations, and grants). Potential actions for the NSEN team include the following:
  - Carrying out a membership drive to attract new environmental organizations from across the province
  - Organizing in-person fundraising events in partnership with NSEN members
  - Acquiring charity status to open up more opportunities with large granting foundations and private donors
  - Leveraging NSEN's new documentary to increase visibility to new members, donors, and funders
- There is still much that NSEN can do with a small budget. For the remainder of 2023, NSEN staff will be focusing on the following:
  - Building capacity for NSEN's four caucuses
  - Organizing smaller-scale networking activities for NSEN members
  - Working with NSECC to plan a members-only meeting with Minister Halman
  - Engaging the public with educational webinars and social media content

A sincere thank you to all NSEN members for your participation and support!



**Chris White**

Chair of NSEN's Board of Directors