

## ***CANADA 22: GRAND CODROY ESTUARY, NEWFOUNDLAND***

### ***Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands***

**Effective Date of Information:** The information provided is taken from text supplied at the time of designation to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, May 1987 and updated by the Canadian Wildlife Service - Atlantic Region in October 2001.

**Reference:** 22nd Ramsar site designated in Canada.

**Name and Address of Compiler:** Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, P.O. Box 6227, 17 Waterfowl Lane, Sackville, N.B., E4L 1G6.

**Date of Ramsar Designation:** 27 May 1987.

**Geographical Coordinates:** 47°50'N., 50°18'W.

**General Location:** Grand Codroy is located on the west coast of the Island of Newfoundland approximately 30 km north of Port aux Basques, Newfoundland.

**Area:** 925 ha.

**Wetland Type (Ramsar Classification System):** *Marine and coastal wetlands:* Type F - estuarine waters; Type G - intertidal mud, sand, or salt flats; Type H - intertidal marshes.

**Altitude:** Sea level to 1 m.

**Overview (Principal Characteristics):** The site is principally a broad intertidal river estuary of open water with depths to 2 m and deeper waters in the meandering river channel.

**Physical Features (Geology, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Soils, Water, Climate):** The site is a large coastal estuary. The 7 km-long wetland varies in width from 1 to 1.5 km and narrows to a 100 m channel at the outlet to the ocean. The tidal amplitude is approximately 1 m.

**Ecological Features (Habitats, Vegetation):** The mouth of the estuary is separated from the waters of Searston Bay by a 1 km-long sandspit vegetated by dune grass *Ammophila* sp. The meandering river channel of the Grand Codroy occupies 15% of the area, while the remainder is a shallow, brackish wetland with flats and sand bars exposed at low tide. Portions of the intertidal area are heavily vegetated with eel grass *Zostera marina*. Four small islands occur within the wetland and the surrounding rolling upland is largely farms and open fields.

#### **Land Tenure:**

(a) **Site:** The area is undeeded but under the jurisdiction of the Province of Newfoundland. The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Province own 104 ha of upland habitat.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** The surrounding uplands are privately owned except for the 24 ha Codroy Valley Provincial Park.

**Conservation Measures Taken:** Since 1974 the entire site, including the surrounding upland, has been closed to hunting by a provincial Order-in-Council known as the Hunting Prohibition Order. Land acquisition has been pursued by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. As a result, approximately 104 ha of upland habitat has been secured. The Conservancy also now owns 21 ha and an additional 83 ha has been transferred to the Province for management.

**Conservation Measures Proposed:** Since 1990, there have been on-going discussions with local landowners concerning protection for this area. The recommendations under the *Grand Codroy Estuary Wetlands Conservation Plan* call for the securement of key habitat sites and entering into stewardship agreements with private landowners who border the Ramsar site. Lands acquired by the Nature Conservancy of Canada it is proposed will be eventually transferred to the Province.

**Current Land Use/Activities in:**

**(a) Site:** An annual waterfowl banding station is operated during September and early October. More than 500 ducks are annually trapped and banded at this site.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** The surrounding land is a pastoral rural landscape with mixed farming activities and private homes.

**Threats to Integrity of:**

**(a) Site:** Further development of the upland fringe could alter patterns of waterfowl use and there are concerns over siltation in the estuary.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** Cottage development and other land use practices such as spring burning could impact wildlife use of the site.

**Hydrological/Physical Values:** The Codroy Valley is a very scenic rural landscape.

**Social/Cultural Values:** The delta and estuary wetlands of the Grand Codroy River are the province's most productive and valuable wetland habitat.

**Noteworthy Fauna:** The estuary supports flocks of up to 3 000 Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* during fall and early winter, and upwards of 1 000 Black Duck *Anas rubripes* in late September. Pintail *Anas acuta*, Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis*, American Wigeon *Anas americana* and Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* also occur in lesser numbers. Small concentrations of shorebirds use the intertidal bars and flats at this site in late summer. The endangered Piping Plover is reported to have nested on a sand bar at the mouth of the estuary in 1992. However, no Piping Plovers were reported nesting at Searston Breach during a 1996 international census.

**Noteworthy Flora:**

**Current Scientific Research and Facilities:** Environment Canada has banded waterfowl at this site annually since 1979. In 1992, the Newfoundland and Labrador Inland Fish and

Wildlife Division conducted resource inventories for the preparation of the *Grand Codroy Estuary Wetlands Conservation Plan*.

**Current Conservation Education:** Education and public awareness programs have been recommended under the *Grand Codroy Estuary Wetlands Conservation Plan*.

**Current Recreation and Tourism:** The estuary is a favourite birding area and often frequented by naturalists. A small visitor and interpretation centre is operated on the site during the summer tourist season.

**Management Authority:**

Inland Fish and Wildlife Division  
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Natural Resources  
Building 810, Pleasantville  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
A1B 4J6

**Jurisdiction:** Provincial - Newfoundland Department of Natural Resources.

**Selected Bibliography:**

- Burke, T. 1992. *Waterfowl Habitat Study in the Grand Codroy Estuary*. Unpublished Internal Report. Wildlife Division, Newfoundland Department of Environment and Lands.
- Soper, L. 1993. *Grand Codroy Estuary Wetlands Conservation Plan*. Unpublished Internal Report. Wildlife Division, Newfoundland Department of Environment and Lands.

**Reasons for Ramsar Designation:** The site is an exceptionally fine example of a large coastal estuary and is the province's most important wetland, supporting large numbers of geese and ducks.

**Status of Management Plan:** In 1992, the *Grand Codroy Estuary Wetlands Conservation Plan* was drafted as part of the land stewardship initiatives of the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.