

Stepping up with (re)purpose



Clean-up crew standing in front of washed up and collected fishing buoys. Photo courtesy of Scotian Shores.

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Written By Alison Auld

One impressive Nova Scotian shows the huge impact one person can make as she and fellow volunteers collect garbage from Nova Scotia shorelines — to the tune of a million and a half pounds since 2020 — giving much of it a second life.

Angela Riley wanders through a scrubby field near a Nova Scotia shoreline, passing by industrial-strength white bags lining her path and stacked on a 50-foot transport trailer behind her. All are bulging at the seams and full of debris that has been sorted before heading to recycling facilities.

Riley, her hands in white work gloves, stops and rifles through one of the super sacks, rhyming off some of the contents that have been plucked from coastal areas throughout the province: plastic strapping, disposable coffee cups, water bottles, milk jugs, fish bins, bleach containers, fishing rope, tires, metal and motor oil containers.

The sizable haul is just a small part of the 150,000 pounds of waste she and dozens of volunteers have collected so far this year,



Angela carrying bags of collected lobster elastics. Photo courtesy of Scotian Shores.

marking a noteworthy milestone since she started her group five years ago as the pandemic set in.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would turn out to be what it is now,” Riley says with a chuckle about Scotian Shores, the organization she founded from her home in Eastern Passage.

“For my health and for a lot of other people’s health, we can say we’re actually doing something and we’re being positive about it and finding friendship through it. It’s just formed into a community and a really big grassroots movement that I didn’t realize was going to grow to the point it has!”

What it has become in a short time is a fixture in shoreline cleanup efforts in the province after Riley, 38, found herself at home with two young children and little to do when the pandemic was declared in the winter of 2020. She had long had an attachment to the ocean, having grown up in a fishing family on the eastern shore and serving as a sea cadet, so says she would take her kids for walks at nearby beaches, often finding them littered with marine debris.

Being raised to believe that people should take care of their environment, she and her family started picking up the tires, lobster traps, glass, water bottles and fishing gear they would come across on their walks. The more she did it, the more Riley realized there was a need to organize regular outings to recover waste that would wash ashore day after day and didn’t appear to be anyone’s responsibility.

“Every time we went to this beach it was dirty, and I was like, ‘I just cleaned this

yesterday. What is going on?’” she says. “So, we kind of stepped in, and I said, ‘I’ll be responsible for it.’”

Riley started organizing beach cleanups with a marketing pitch she launched at a local market: buy a handmade bracelet and she would collect one pound of garbage. She sold out and has been hosting cleanup events ever since, attracting scores of volunteers who turn up to help out.

In 2020, the group collected 5,000 pounds of debris and the amounts have been rising steadily since then, with 1.6 million pounds being collected since Scotian Shores was created. Riley estimates that they collect more than 800 pounds of waste a day and have done about 775 cleanups so far.

They recycle between 60 to 90 per cent of the collected waste, with some of the plastic being shipped to a Nova Scotia company that can transform it into synthetic fuel. They also repurpose plastic and rope into key chains, jewelry, rope bowls, and other crafts that are sold online and at markets, with proceeds going toward more cleanups. Scotian Shores relies on grants, donations and merchandise sales to sustain its small group of team leads.

“Scotian Shores is a powerful example of what’s possible when community comes together for a shared purpose. What began as a small grassroots effort has grown into a province-wide movement, showing that collective action can make a real and lasting impact,” says Kurt Laskow-Pooley, director of programs and development at Divert NS.

“Reducing litter and debris along our shorelines is critical to preserving the natural beauty of our province, protecting wildlife and keeping our communities clean and healthy.”

Climate Stories Atlantic is an initiative of Climate Focus, a non-profit organization dedicated to covering stories about community-driven climate solutions.

Alison Auld
Alison Auld is a freelance writer and the Senior Research Reporter at Dalhousie University in Halifax, where she often writes about scientific advances, climate change, and the marine environment. She worked as a journalist for The Canadian Press for two decades and her stories appeared in national and international publications. Alison has won a National Newspaper Award and several Atlantic Journalism Awards.

Forestry Digital Adoption Program 2025/2026

On Wednesday June 18th Digital Nova Scotia (DNS) in partnership with the Forestry Sector Council announced a new program called the Forestry Digital Adoption Program. This program is designed to help eligible forestry businesses build capacity by improving their on-line visibility and providing essential services that meet customer expectations, such as, but not limited to online booking and seamless digital transactions. As forestry businesses in Nova Scotia adapt to rapid changes in technology and consumer expectations, a strong digital presence is essential. A modern online footprint helps businesses connect with customers, showcase services, and operate more efficiently.

The application process was open until Friday August 1, 2025 and approved projects will start October 1, 2025 with a completion date no later than March 31st 2026. There will be four projects eligible for up to \$10,000 in services and eleven projects eligible for \$5,000, tax inclusive.

For more information on the application process, the type of projects that can be considered, and participant eligibility go to Forestry Digital Adoption Program - Digital Nova Scotia - Leading Digital Industry and choose “Forestry Digital Adoption Program (FDAP) Brochure” lower right of the page.

Developing a Forest Soil Health Assessment and Extension Program (ForestSHARE) for Private Woodlot Owners in Nova Scotia

The ForestSHARE program is creating a baseline of soil health for forestry in Nova Scotia. The program has identified 850 sites throughout Nova Scotia (51 in Cumberland County) that represent the optimum random sample and are currently organizing the sample gathering (30 plus per site - non-destructive) phase of the project. Those samples will then be analyzed for key soil

properties such as pH, Nutrients (calcium, magnesium, nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, aluminum, etc.), Texture, Aggregate Stability, Organic Matter, Carbon and Microbiome information.

Why is this project seen as important?

Soil Health is essential to forest ecosystem health and sustainable forest management:

Improved soil health can lead to increased: Forest productivity, Carbon sequestration, Biodiversity and Climate change resilience.

This project has impacts on two scales: Woodlot scale and Helping achieve overarching climate goals.

The project outcomes are seen as: Framework to take and deliver samples, guidance on soil properties and benchmarks across the province.

Examples of how soil data can help manage woodlots: Silviculture, Ecological Forest Management, Selection and Reforestation, Harvesting and Regeneration Strategies, Erosion and Compaction precautions (road and infrastructure planning), Fertilization and Amendments, Assess susceptibility to disease, pests Carbon Sequestration and Climate Adaptation

What the project is asking of landowners whose woodlots have been selected: Allow a sampler (Forest Professionals with forest ecosystem classification (FEC) training) access to your land to collect samples. Allow project to use the data (check a box). Individual data will not be shared but the overall data in combination with total project data will be

Let the project know about your harvest activities or any other history of the sampled land.

If your woodlot is one of the selected sites you will be contacted directly. It’s expected that it will take three years to collect the samples and another few months after that to complete the report and create the benchmark tool. If you participate you can expect to see the data on your own land but it will not be available to anyone else other than as an unidentified component of the aggregate



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