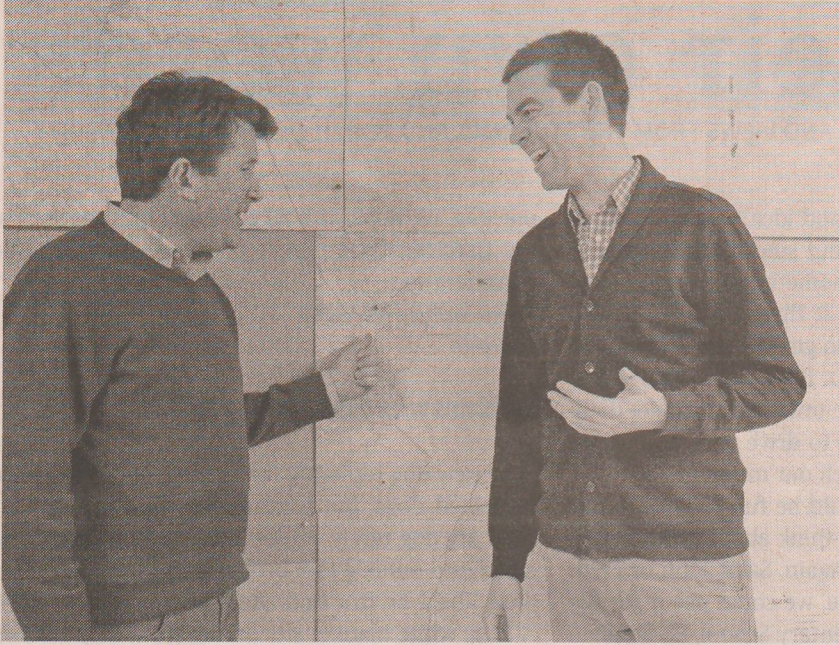


STUDY



Barb Rayner/Courier

New Brunswick Southwest MP John Williamson (left) and Eastern Charlotte Waterways executive director Donald Killorn take a look at the map of locations where hydrophones will be placed to gather data on underwater noise in the Outer Bay of Fundy.

Funding will study underwater noise in the Gulf of Maine

Barb Rayner

BLACKS HARBOUR

Eastern Charlotte Waterways (ECW) will receive \$88,750 under the Gulf of Maine Initiative (GMI) to gather data on the underwater acoustic environment in the open water of the Outer Bay of Fundy.

New Brunswick Southwest MP John Williamson, who announced the funding Friday, said scientists and researchers from ECW and UNB will use hydrophones to gather baseline data and study underwater noise, how it is created, current levels and the effects on wildlife.

More than 3,000 marine species and birds are found in the Gulf of Maine, including more than 30 which are at risk such as the Roseate Tern and the endangered North Atlantic right whale.

The project has the capacity to assist industry in assessing the impacts of their activities through the development of best practices for ship traffic and habitat conservation.

"The National Conservation Plan has made the Gulf of Maine a priority and underwater noise pollution is something that is very important to me because the marine mammal population and the fish population depend on a healthy environment", said ECW executive director Donald Killorn.

"When we think of pollution we think of air and water but it is important we think of these other things

which are just as harmful and capable of destroying habitat. We were really happy to have a project that we thought could be successful and we really can't wait to put the program into use."

Anchors will be dropped as specific locations on the seabed with hydrophones attached to them and, between May and November, ECW staff will travel to these locations every four weeks to change the battery boxes and record the data collected.

The funding received from the GMI will be used to purchase the equipment, said Killorn, and ECW will be depending on other sources, hopefully the province's Environmental Trust Fund, to help with the operational costs.

"We will be able to do it with our normal staff. We will not be hiring extra people for this but it will create a position for a grad student to do a lot of data analysis."

Williamson pointed out that the locations for the hydrophones include the potential LNG tanker traffic route for the proposed Downeast LNG project so it will be good to study that and see what tanker traffic would do in that area.

"There is a lot of traffic from Saint John harbour and the government is talking about putting money in to expansion. We need to do research to find what the impact will be on the environment. We cannot do that without collecting data."