

Council supports climate change project

by Arlene Benham

At their February 4 meeting, Grand Manan's village councillors listened to a presentation by Donald Killorn, executive director of Eastern Charlotte Waterways (ECW), Charlotte County's largest environmental research organization, which is based in Blacks Harbour. Killorn was seeking support for the organization's climate change adaptation planning project. ECW and the St. Croix Estuary Project hope to help municipalities plan for environmental change by providing information and expertise to facilitate understanding of the local effects. "Certainly there will be real challenges to coastal communities," Killorn said. "This [research] could very well reveal some troublesome things" for people in low-lying areas. The project aims to ensure that communities are "increasingly resilient" to environmental change.

Killorn asked for a letter of support and the village's agreement to establish a working group, which would include a municipal representative as well as five to eight members of the public. The group would provide background information such as community maps, emergency plan and historical flood information, aerial images and a venue for meetings. The group would work in partnership with climate scientists contracted by ECW. He anticipates they would hold quarterly weekend meetings for a year to generate a "vulnerability assessment" and planning recommendations for municipal council.

One of the tools ECW uses is LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), which uses laser to measure distances and map physical features at high resolution. This can help identify low-lying flood-prone areas. The data can be entered into climate-change models to examine effects on those areas and is high enough quality to be used in environmental regulations.

Killorn emphasized that he was not seeking money from the village. As a non-profit organization, ECW receives funding from government programs.

A motion to support the initiative in principle was passed, with Councillor Mark Ingersoll opposed. He questioned how the information obtained would be used and felt that the council should discuss it further before voting.