

## **Water professionals gather for provincial stormwater workshop**

**Dartmouth, N.S., June 25, 2013** – Nova Scotians are making a splash this week as nearly 100 of the province’s water professionals congregate for a stormwater management workshop hosted by Clean Nova Scotia. Taking place June 25-27 at the Mic Mac Amateur Aquatics Club in Dartmouth, individuals from government, private and public sectors will come together to discuss potential improvements to practices and policies for the management of stormwater, which encompasses rainfall and snowmelt.

The workshop, entitled *Nova Scotia Stormwater Innovation: Management & Solutions* (NS SWIMS), encourages discussion between a variety of sectors including the province, municipalities, utilities, industry, planning and development, consulting and community groups. Together these groups will share best practices and discuss potential obstacles moving forward.

“The NS SWIMS workshop is an excellent opportunity for Nova Scotians to learn about what stormwater management tactics are working here and abroad,” says Chris Morrissey, Executive Director of Clean Nova Scotia. “The lessons learned by peers in other jurisdictions can help us move towards more effective and comprehensive stormwater management across our province.”

Funded by Nova Scotia Environment, the workshop aims to explore and identify practices and policies that can help Nova Scotians better tackle stormwater issues. Many parts of the province experience overburdened stormwater systems, which struggle to drain excess water (run off) after a heavy rainfall or rapidly melting snow. As a result this run off water, which can be contaminated with pesticides and other urban pollutants, funnels into rivers, lakes, and streams – including recreational areas and sensitive natural habitats. This process can lead to flooding and the spread of harmful contaminants through our water sources.

In some older parts of the Halifax Regional Municipality, storm drains connect directly to the water treatment facility, which means the area’s stormwater and sewage go to the same place. When there is too much rain for the facilities to accommodate, the excess untreated water can overflow into the harbour and other areas. This becomes a problem as a growing urban population places higher demands on existing stormwater infrastructure in combination with a larger urban landscape unable to absorb and disperse water in the way that soil ground would.

“Managing stormwater in the context of a changing climate is one of the most pressing issues that municipalities in Nova Scotia face today,” says Jocelyn Rankin of the Ecology Action Centre. “Climate change models suggest annual rainfall amounts could increase in the coming years so we need to adapt and prepare for that. This workshop is designed to equip municipal staff, developers, consultants, watershed organizations and decision-makers with the information they need to be better stewards of our freshwater and our coasts.”

Workshop highlights include a keynote address by Dr. James Houle, a professor from the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Centre, as well as a field trip to visit innovative stormwater management sites in Dartmouth and Halifax on Thursday, July 27. A detailed agenda for the conference is available online: [clean.ns.ca/programs/water/ns-swims/](http://clean.ns.ca/programs/water/ns-swims/)

## **Media Contact**

Leann Grosvold, Clean Nova Scotia, Communications  
lgrosvold@clean.ns.ca | (902) 420-8803 | [clean.ns.ca](http://clean.ns.ca)

## **Backgrounders**

### **About Clean Nova Scotia**

Clean Nova Scotia is a Dartmouth based not-for-profit organization that seeks to create a more sustainable environment by informing, enabling and inspiring Nova Scotians to respect the environment in all aspects of daily life. Founded in 1988, Clean Nova Scotia has since evolved into the largest environmental education organization in Atlantic Canada, engaging thousands of Nova Scotians annually. This year marks the organization's 25th anniversary.

Committed to making our province a better place, Clean Nova Scotia aims to provide individuals and communities with the means, knowledge and opportunity to make responsible environmental choices. Community education and engagement are delivered through an array of programs, services and resources on ways to protect streams, reduce waste, save energy and much more. In addition to hosting this stormwater workshop, CNS also offers a stormwater home assessment program called RainYards, which provides homeowners with information and recommendations on how they can mitigate stormwater issues on their properties. To learn more please visit [clean.ns.ca](http://clean.ns.ca).

### **About stormwater and stormwater management**

Stormwater is rain, melted snow or any other form of precipitation that has come in contact with the ground or another surface. In the natural environment, this water typically evaporates, seeps into the ground, is absorbed by vegetation, or runs off the land into streams, lakes and even the ocean. In an urban environment, where pavement and other structures limit the amount of water that can be absorbed naturally, most of this water is funneled into storm sewers.

Stormwater problems arise when there are periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt that create more water than the environment and the storm sewers can handle. In these cases, excess water accumulates on the ground in what is known as "run off." As runoff spreads, it can be contaminated with pesticides and other urban pollutants, which are then deposited into rivers, lakes, and streams – including recreational areas and sensitive natural habitats. It can also cause flooding events. This is why a variety of stakeholders across Nova Scotia are so invested in developing practices and policies to ensure stormwater is managed effectively.

Stormwater management is a mounting problem, as a growing urban population is placing higher demands on the existing water treatment infrastructure, and climate change models suggest there could be higher level of precipitation in the future. In addition, some areas of the province have old infrastructure in place with storm drains that connect directly to the water treatment facility, funneling stormwater and sewage to the same treatment area. When there is too much rain for the facilities to accommodate, the excess untreated water can overflow into the harbour and other areas.

Stormwater management also contributes to community safety and financial risk management by reducing the risk of urban flooding and erosion. The associated basement flooding and damage to public and private properties can also be avoided (in conjunction with major drainage systems built by municipalities) through effective stormwater management.