



June 25th, 2010

Coastal Coordinator
NS Fisheries and Aquaculture
P.O. Box 2223
Halifax, NS B3J 3C4

Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: Protection of Dykelands, Agricultural Land, and Cultural Heritage in the Coastal Strategy

We are writing to you on behalf of the Nomination Grand Pré Advisory Board, the group that is working to submit Grand Pré as a candidate for UNESCO's World Heritage List. The purpose of this letter is to highlight the reasons behind our submission to UNESCO and the importance of protecting the coastline around dykelands, in particular at Grand Pré. We feel it is important that the Coastal Strategy include and emphasize the importance of protecting dykelands, agricultural land, and cultural resources around the coast, as it is these resources that contribute to Grand Pré's outstanding universal value.

Grand Pré is being proposed according to three of UNESCO's criteria and as an enduring agricultural and memorial landscape. Our submission to UNESCO states that:

1. *It is an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition. **The intact dykelands at Grand Pré are an exceptional example of the Acadian tradition of turning wetlands into highly fertile farmland.***
2. *It is an outstanding example of a traditional land-use that is representative of human interaction with a distinctive environment. **The enduring agricultural use of the dykeland and persistent settlement pattern on the upland at Grand Pré is an outstanding example of an adaptation to a distinctive coastal environment in North America.***
3. *It is tangibly associated with living traditions and ideas of outstanding universal significance. **Through its evocative memorials to a people who overcame a tragedy of a forced migration, the Acadian Deportation, Grand Pré is a symbol of hope, perseverance and pride for all humanity.***

Grand Pré's dykeland was created by the Acadians in the 1680s and it is one of the most fertile lands in Kings County, in Nova Scotia, and certainly in Canada. That legacy has enabled farmers to prosper for centuries. In creating that land, they and the generations of farmers that followed, have had to learn to overcome the challenges of working in the face of the highest tides in the world. In addition, the Grand Pré area has seen generations of people settling and living off the bounties of the land and the sea. We have recently uncovered along the coast within the boundaries of our nominated area evidence of human use going back as far as 4,000 years before present. Layers of history, from Mi'kmaq artifacts, to Acadians aboiteaux, to Planter dykes, are apparent along the coastline of Grand Pré and area.

The environmental pressures facing our nominated property include storm surges and coastal erosion. These conditions can have significant impacts on the dykes themselves as well as archaeological heritage. These concerns need to be addressed to protect Grand Pré's agriculture, cultural and heritage resources, and to maintain its legitimacy as a candidate for World Heritage inscription.

We have identified some objectives for Grand Pré and area in our World Heritage nomination proposal that the Coastal Strategy may wish to consider:

- We are setting up a buffer zone around the nominated property to allow for the monitoring of coastal change and to encourage a coordinated approach between jurisdictions and landowners to mitigate the impacts of coastal erosion.
- We envision the implementation of a coastal erosion monitoring strategy that will be a shared responsibility among jurisdictions in the area. Currently, there is no formal documentation of coastal erosion in Grand Pré, but with a collaborative approach to documenting coastal change we could better understand coastal processes thus protecting the cultural and heritage resources.
- The coastal erosion monitoring strategy will also monitor for the presence and assess the condition of archaeological sites.
- We focus on protecting the agricultural land and the cultural resources, including the dykes, aboiteaux, and archaeological sites.

These objectives are found in the draft Management Plan for the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site and in the goals of the draft Grand Pré and Area Community Plan prepared by the Municipality of the County of Kings (www.nominationgrandpre.ca). These are goals that make sense for both the protection of this extraordinary part of our collective heritage and for the agricultural community.

Despite these objectives, there are broader issues of coastal management that we cannot take on alone. Chief among these is a comprehensive provincial approach to dykeland protection. While the state of Nova Scotia's coast report identifies dykelands as being 'not too sensitive to change if properly managed' and that 'Nova Scotians have a strong will to preserve them because of centuries of investment and the value of farmland', these statements are conditional on having the proper information and resources to manage those lands. Our observations are that the ability for communities to protect these dykelands is dependent amongst other things on a coordinated response to sea-level rise, investments in infrastructure protection, and research on coastal change. These are intrinsically tied to proper management and cannot be taken on by landowners and communities alone.

We encourage the Coastal Strategy to clearly articulate Nova Scotia's vision for research on coastal change and the importance of investing resources in the protection of dykeland infrastructure. In our experience, this includes investing in programs that address saltmarsh regeneration and management, and not just structural erosion mitigation measures such as rock facing.

The World Heritage nomination proposal for Grand Pré requires us to clearly articulate the commitment of landowners and authorities to protect the nominated property's outstanding universal value. It also requires us to outline the vision that will guide that commitment. We hope that the Coastal Strategy will contribute to providing us with the tools necessary to achieve that important goal.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our observations.

Sincerely,



Peter Herbin
Co-Chair,
Nomination Grand Pré Advisory Board



Gérald C. Boudreau, Ph. D.
Co-Chair,
Nomination Grand Pré Advisory Board