

## **Chasing swamps: building a research site inventory and long-term monitoring project of forested wetlands in Kespukwitk**

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Forested wetlands include a variety of ecosystems dominated by trees and shrubs with saturated soils, at least periodically, and they cover extensive regions of Kespukwitk (Southwest NS). Their diversity in site conditions, size, and surrounding ecosystems allow them to support many species of wildlife, including several rare and at-risk species.

Our work, identified through the Kespukwitk Conservation Collaborative forested wetlands target (KCC-FW), aims to make it more efficient for researchers to find appropriate forested wetland sites for their work. We are also developing a long-term monitoring project to better understand how these ecosystems are changing from factors such as climate change and invasive species.

Currently, our inventory includes 34 sites identified using the latest wetland maps from the provincial government and has collected information on the wetlands' plant, bird, and amphibian communities as well as their environmental conditions and surrounding landscape. Moving forward, we are working with other researchers to include more sites from previous research projects in our inventory. This winter we will also begin developing the long-term monitoring project with the KCC-FW committee and intend on including wildlife community monitors as well as environmental variables, such as climate and hydrology data.

Our two projects will reduce a major burden on forested wetland research, reliably finding appropriate sites, and give an improved understanding of these ecosystems' stability and future in the region.

Keywords: Forested wetlands, site inventory, monitoring, multi-taxa community, climate change, Kespukwitk.

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