

# St. Mary's River gets help from 93-year-old man

**Rudy Haase responded when the Nova Scotia Nature Trust had 30 days to come up with \$260K**

By Paul Withers, [CBC News](#) Posted: Nov 17, 2014 11:00 AM AT Last Updated: Nov 17, 2014 3:22 PM AT

When future generations paddle down the St. Mary's River in Guysborough County, enjoying the sight of old growth forests on the steep hillsides and floodplains, they can thank a tireless 93-year-old champion of the environment.

"I've always done it so why not keep doing it," says Rudy Haase from his farmstead outside Chester, N.S.

This fall, Haase responded when the Nova Scotia Nature Trust had 30 days to come up with \$260,000 to buy a 54-hectare stretch of the St. Mary's River.

He provided a \$100,000 interest free loan to complete the purchase, buying time for a Nature Trust fundraising campaign.



The money came from the sale of his parents' home in Milwaukee, Wis., which he had rented out for many years.

"That actually represents the old homestead you might say, recycled."

The boat builder, adventurer and activist has been preserving pieces of Nova Scotia since he first came to Canada in the 1960s.

The stretch of the St. Mary's River he helped save - mostly likely from logging - is home to endangered birds and turtles and contains old Acadian floodplain forests once prominent on every river in Nova Scotia.

"It really is an important site ecologically and as a vestige of the forest wilderness that used to be such a big part of Nova Scotia," says Bonnie Sutherland of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

The trust has been slowly assembling a protected area upriver from the small community of Sherbrooke.

"Adding more, I think, is a big plus," says Haase.

Closer to home, Haase slowly brought up the 121 hectares of land surrounding his 100-year-old farmstead at Goat Lake, near Chester.

It's protected under a 2007 easement with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and now called the Goat Lake Conservation Lands.

As for his latest endeavour, Haase calls the St. Mary's River in fall "the most beautiful drive in Nova Scotia."

He's walked the area as well.

"I love nature and I appreciate what the forests do for the environment," he says

Bonnie Sutherland of the Nature Trust says Haase - dubbed Canada's "great unknown environmentalist" in a 2007 documentary - has been an inspiration and mentor for generations of environmentalists.

"He's a person who has really devoted his whole life to social justice and the environment and making the world a better place," she says.

