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Press Release

## Gypsum Quarry Approval Threatens Watershed And Endangered Species

*Sierra Club of Canada – Atlantic Chapter*

Halifax – Nova Scotia Environment Minister Sterling Belliveau's decision to approve a gypsum quarry near Windsor, NS threatens the watershed for some of the province's most valuable agricultural land and endangered species, according to Sierra Club Canada – Atlantic Canada Chapter. The approval is for a quarry one-third the size proposed by Fundy Gypsum, however even at its reduced size, groundwater, surface water, and endangered species are under threat.

"This decision fails to connect healthy watersheds with healthy communities and thus eliminates an important opportunity for the region," according to Gretchen Fitzgerald, Director of the Sierra Club Canada – Atlantic Canada Chapter. "We are forced to wonder if the province is serious about developing a progressive water strategy."

The approval allows the quarry to operate for twenty years in a 105 hectare footprint (equivalent to 47 football fields) that includes wetlands, brooks, and streams. The approval also fails to increase the size or design of the conservation area proposed by the gypsum company to protect endangered and rare species like lady-slipper orchids.

"The notion that a small conservation area can conserve the unique assemblage of threatened plant species in the area is a Noah's Ark approach that does not reflect modern conservation science," says David Patriquin, a retired Professor of Biology and President of the Halifax Field Naturalists. "Protection of headwaters and biodiversity should have been sufficient to nix the quarry entirely."

Community-based groups had proposed rejection of the quarry in favour of lower impact tourism, recreation, and sustainable agricultural use: a proposal that would have protected current jobs in the area and created new ones. The Sierra Club is calling on the Minister to review the environmental assessment process and reverse his decision.

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