



INTRODUCTION -

Welcome to the Nova Scotia Underwater Council's first newsletter! While Facebook is a great resource for announcing meetings, significant events and meeting minutes, it is not conducive to disseminating the full details of our current activities. We have received requests for a news letter so we thought, let's give it a try and see how it goes. Not only do we hope to keep everyone updated on the latest, but as part of our commitment to promote local diving and, for a bit of fun, we will also have articles of general diver interest.

In this first edition we will update you with the latest information on:

- The Rupert Brand Artificial Reef Project
- Underwater park development
- The Inaugural Jane Biggs Award
- Membership incentives

Once all the serious stuff is out of the way, "Tales from the Dive Site" will feature a story about a diver's favourite site or memorable dive experience at one of our beautiful Nova Scotia dive sites, written in his or her own words. The intent is to invite members to submit their story and pictures for inclusion in the newsletter. For this edition I wrote my own little yarn about a recent dive at a site that is usually not paired with the word "beautiful". But you will have to read on to find out where!

Additionally, in the future we will begin a "Diver Profile" If you would like to be featured, or nominate someone to be featured, please let us know.

Well, that's the big introduction so let's get on with the news!

Artificial Reef Project -

While it has been quiet lately on the artificial reef front, the executive has been working over the summer with respect to site selection and hazardous material testing on board the Rupert Brand. Unfortunately, the results of both were not what we had hoped for. These obstacles will take some time, effort, and financing to overcome.

a. Site Selection:

Cliff and JP continued to evaluate Second Peninsula Provincial park located in Mahone Bay to see if it will be a suitable site for an artificial reef. It was calm and sunny with no appreciable rainfall in recent days so we were optimistic. Visibility was good at the start of the dive, but diminished with depth and by fifty feet visibility was very low, down to less than ten feet. Additionally, the bottom is very soft: we inserted a thirty centimeter rod into the silt without striking solid bottom.



Conclusion

Second Peninsula does not appear to be a good site for an artificial reef and finding another shore accessible site suitable for an artificial reef seems unlikely. Without any other options for shore access it is time to consider boat accessible sites. Some possible sites include Shut-In Island in St. Margaret's Bay, a site close to the Saguenay in Lunenburg, or Apple Island in Mahone Bay. Herring Cove was suggested as a possible shore accessible site via a surface swim from the government wharf. An exploratory dive is being planned to evaluate Herring Cove.

b. Hazardous Material Assessment

Tim Bryan of THB Safety Consulting conducted a site hazard assessment of the Rupert Brand in early July. Insulation and paint samples were collected for asbestos and lead analysis, respectively; air quality in the holds and engine room was tested; and the ship was inspected for structural integrity with respect to clean up crew safety. The results are as follows:

1. Insulation: Positive for asbestos
2. Air Quality: **Safe** for breathing, with O₂ levels at 20.1% – 20.8%. Other parameters tested were Carbon Monoxide, flammables, O₂ and Hydrogen Sulfide.
3. Structure: Ship is structurally sound but some areas should be roped off for safety. A competent safety professional should be able to address these concerns.
4. Lead Paint: Samples have not been analyzed yet.

Conclusion

Cleanup of vessel will not proceed until asbestos has been professionally removed. Currently estimates are being sought out.

c. Looking Forward:

It will be some time before we can start preparing the ship for sinking, but while the cleanup is on hold there is still much work that can be done: site identification, contact Department of Fisheries regarding site approvals, find an inspector qualified to approve the ship for sinking, and fundraising. To apply for government grants a business plan is required and as part of that we would like to reach out to Dalhousie Department of Oceanography. Work on a diver survey has been started with the intent to distribute as far and wide as possible to gather data supporting the assertion that additional artificial reefs increase dive tourism, thus contributing to economic growth. If anyone would like to get involved with any of these activities please contact any member of the executive.



Underwater Park -

When one door closes another door opens! Well, I guess in this case the door isn't closed, but just jammed for now. Anyway, in light of the of the wrench in the wreck we decided to turn our main focus back to the creation of an underwater park. Then, serendipitously, we were contacted by a NSCAD student who wants to create and sink a sculpture in the ocean for scuba divers and free divers to explore. Dave, Shelley and Cliff had a preliminary meeting with the student to get acquainted and exchange ideas. She brought along a rough sketch of her vision and without divulging the details right now I have to say it looks very cool! There was a lot of excitement around the table as we fleshed out the plan. The idea is to start off small with a single sculpture and then continue expanding the park in the future. We also tossed around ideas for some smaller items to complement the structure and add some fun for divers. However, this is a school project which has a deadline (spring of next year) so a reasonable scope must be maintained. Tasks have already been assigned for enquiring about concrete, a site for pouring molds, transport, regulations, etc. If anyone wishes to get involved with this project please contact our Treasurer, Shelley Weeks.

Jane Biggs Award -

To honour the memory of local diving legend Jane Biggs, the NSUC has created The Jane Biggs Award to recognize a Nova Scotia diver for their contribution to local diving. NSUC members can nominate any Nova Scotia diver they feel has made a valuable contribution to the promotion of diving in Nova Scotia. Members can submit their nominations and the executive will evaluate each nomination and select a recipient for awarding at the September event. The form is attached along with the newsletter. If there is someone you would like to nominate, just fill out the form and send it to info@nsunderwatercouncil.ca.

Membership -

We have received feedback and suggestions regarding paid membership. In response to that feedback we will issue membership cards to our paid members that can be presented at participating businesses for discounts on purchases and/or services.

The process of approaching businesses and confirming benefits of the membership cards has begun, and we hope to begin issuing the cards soon.

Let us know if you have any suggestions or business contacts that might be interested in sponsoring the membership.



Tales from the Dive Site –

Prospect Wharf

Cliff Andrews, Hammonds Plains, NS

When I first started thinking about a dive site, Prospect was the farthest thing from my mind. As I considered sites, I was thinking of beautiful Paddy's Head with its multiple sites in one, a winter zodiac dive to the bottom of the Narrows in Halifax Harbour, or even a kayak recovery from the dark depths of Kearney Lake. But certainly not Prospect with its shallow water and flat, muddy bottom. It is a great site for winter diving and it can be fun on any day scouring the sea bed for old bottles and clay pipes. And when the visibility is good it's a blast running a course around the pylons under the wharf. But I never thought it would be interesting enough for "Tales from the Dive Site". Then one recent Saturday I joined the Shearwater gang for a dive and found myself embarking on an almost two-hour adventure around the inner island. The dive started off as usual, setting out from the wharf over the soft bottom towards Saul Island. There was a haze in the water column as we left the wharf and crossed the soft bottom over the holes of wrymouth fish, crabs and various bits of debris. As Saul Island drew nearer, our surroundings gave way to a gravel bottom and clear water.



Under the wharf on a sunny day

Life was appearing – lobsters, cunners, the occasional flounder, slime worms nestled near rocks and all sorts of sea plants. For the rest of the dive until we rounded the inner island on our return we were treated to a bright, lively seascape. Moving west along Saul and Clark Islands the sloped bottom is covered with boulders that create interesting little crevasses until it flattens out at the bottom, where it transitions to



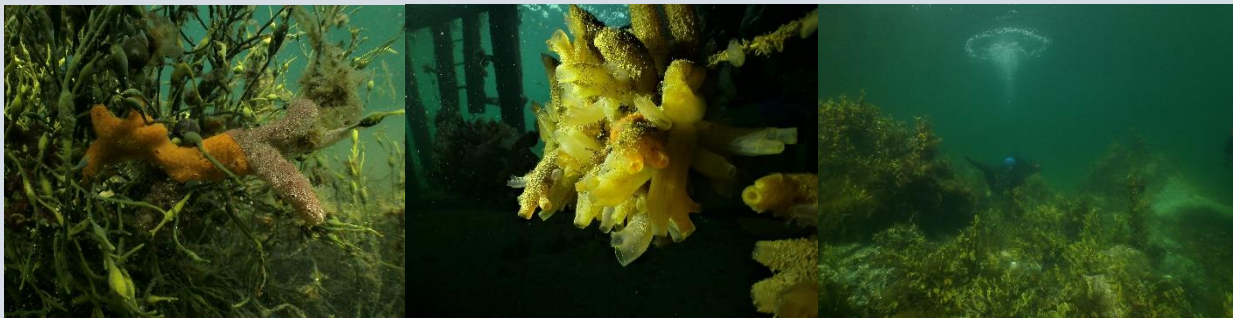
Stalks of Knotted Wrack in the channel

a gravelly bed. Along here you will see patches of kelp – one large patch reminded me of a giant Christmas wreath – or swaths of eel grass that are mini ecosystems unto themselves. Turning into the channel leading to the open ocean things change again. The bottom rises to within 5 to 7 feet of the surface, huge boulders appear and large stalks of Knotted Wrack stand up off the bottom, sometimes breaking the surface. Although it is very shallow it is one of the more fun parts of the site – the rocks and Knotted Wrack form open topped passages through which divers can pass through, almost like a maze. Just keep an eye your buddy, though – the plants are dense enough that you can temporarily lose sight of

each other if you take a different route! As well, given the shallow depths I would expect that this area is best explored on calm days. For the return trip we navigated through the maze of boulders and stalks



taking a route through Hardiman Cove. We passed over small rocky hills, passed huge, square boulders draped with kelp. On rocks thrived various tunicates such as orange and purple coloured violet tunicates and golden star tunicates. Periwinkles, blood sea stars, anemones and more slime worms are also plentiful. Before long we returned to the silty bottom and hazy visibility, indicating we were on the home stretch. Through the haze the wharf pylons slowly appeared and after a brief tour under the wharf we climbed out at the stairs, made our way to the parking lot where we were greeted with a delicious barbeque to recharge the batteries. The site is relatively shallow - no more than twenty feet - but what you miss in depth you gain in enormous bottom time allowing for the exploration of a very large area beyond the wharf. I always enjoyed this site, but after this adventure I have a much greater appreciation for it and look forward to future exploration around the islands.



From left: Violet tunicate, Vase tunicates attached to a rope under the wharf, a diver in the channel near Clark Island.

Diver Profile -

As mentioned in the introduction a local diver will be invited to talk about what inspired them to learn to dive, favourite dive sites, equipment and anything else we may get around to chatting about. We'll just have to see where the conversation goes. Stay tuned!

Upcoming Events -

- October 5 – NSUC Dive and Jane Biggs Award
*Tentative – rescheduled to avoid conflict with Treasure Hunt storm date)
- General meeting – fall date to be announced

Final Words -

So that's it - our first stab at a newsletter. We hope you enjoyed it. Being the first newsletter, the layout and formatting were kept to a very basic style, but hopefully we can shine it up as we find our way. Speaking of improvement, is there anyone out there who likes to write or has experience with newsletters? I don't mind typing my brains out, but if anyone has a knack for it come on board!



We have experienced a few setbacks with the Rupert Brand but are about to embark on an exciting new project in collaboration with a local artist. In retrospect, this will be much easier to achieve for a first project, as opposed to sinking a ship. We'll send out updates on the dive event and Jane Biggs award as the date draws near. And finally, to sound like a broken record, if anyone is interested in helping with any of the work



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