



Eel grass Habitat Maps of the Near-shore Environment of the Bras d'Or Lakes



Written by

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No eel grass, no eels.

“No eel grass, no eels.” That’s the simple truth as told by Mi’kmaq knowledge holders around the Bras d’Or Lakes.

Habitat Mapping of the Near-shore Environment of the Bras d’Or Lakes, Capacity Building and Collection of ATK as it Relates to Juvenile American Eels, Kataq.

This mapping project used sophisticated computer technology and underwater sonar to see underwater to determine the bottom type. It allows us to see where eel grass is concentrated and where it is not.

The project identified habitat types using side scan sonar and bottom classification technology helping us to map the bottom of the Lakes. Single beam side scan sonar was used to classify bottom type and was groundtruthed by a drop towed video camera system. Maps were developed to show bottom-type and eel grass in the waters adjacent to Mi’kmaq communities around the Bras d’Or Lakes. This portion of the project was completed through collaborative efforts of UINR and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography.

Capacity in eel ecology and Mi’kmaq traditional knowledge was enhanced for UINR through self-directed research in eel ecology, identification of threats posed to eels and interviews with respected Elders and eel knowledge holders. This knowledge was integrated into a GIS database as one of the deliverables from our Map of Threats GIS Database Project (funded through the Habitat Stewardship Program 2007-2008).





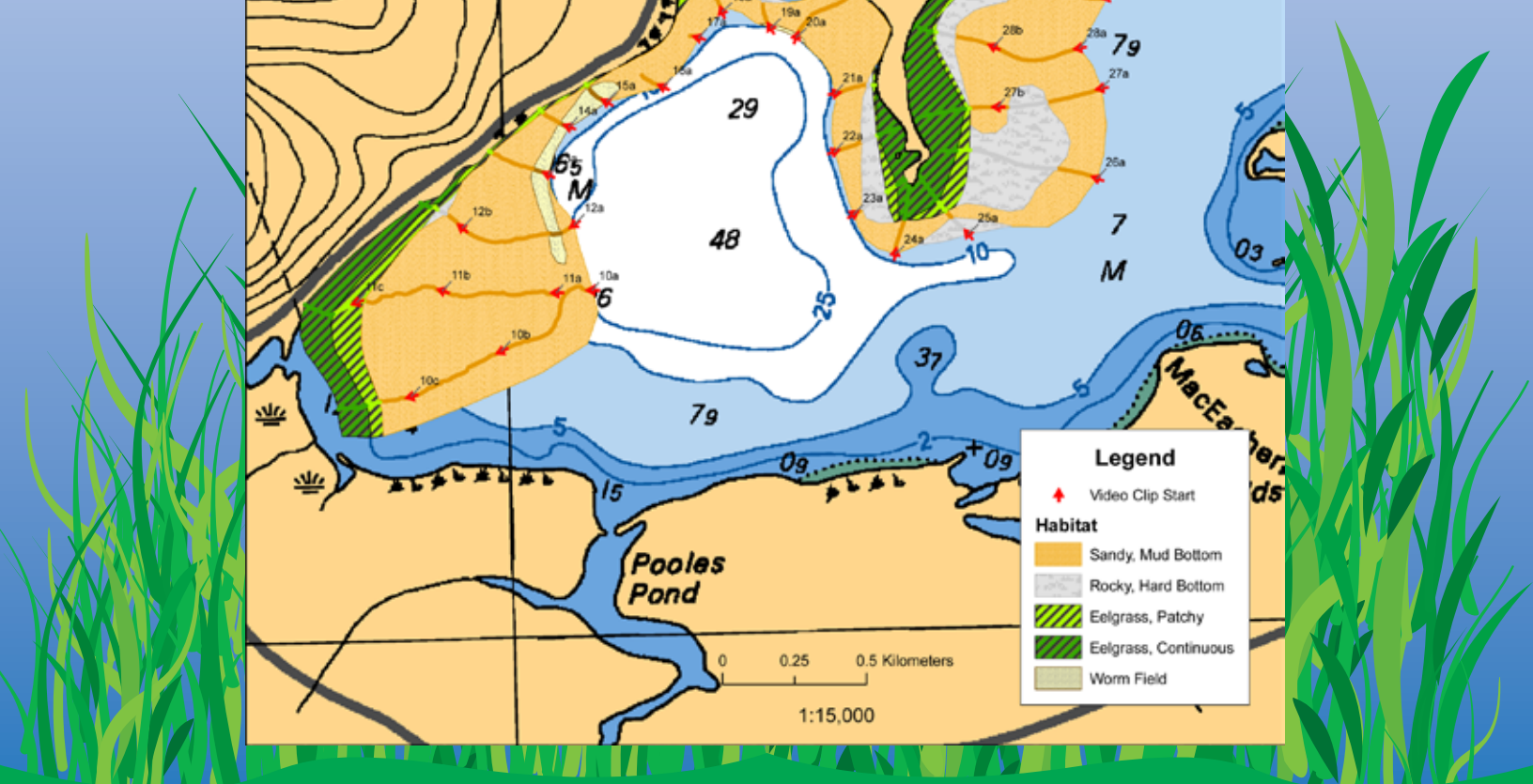
The project links eel habitat to land-based areas susceptible to erosion that could affect eel habitats identified in ATK surveys.

A strong relationship between eel grass distribution and eel fishing areas were consistent among those interviewed. Areas identified as having eel grass by knowledge holders closely matched eel grass identified through habitat mapping surveys.

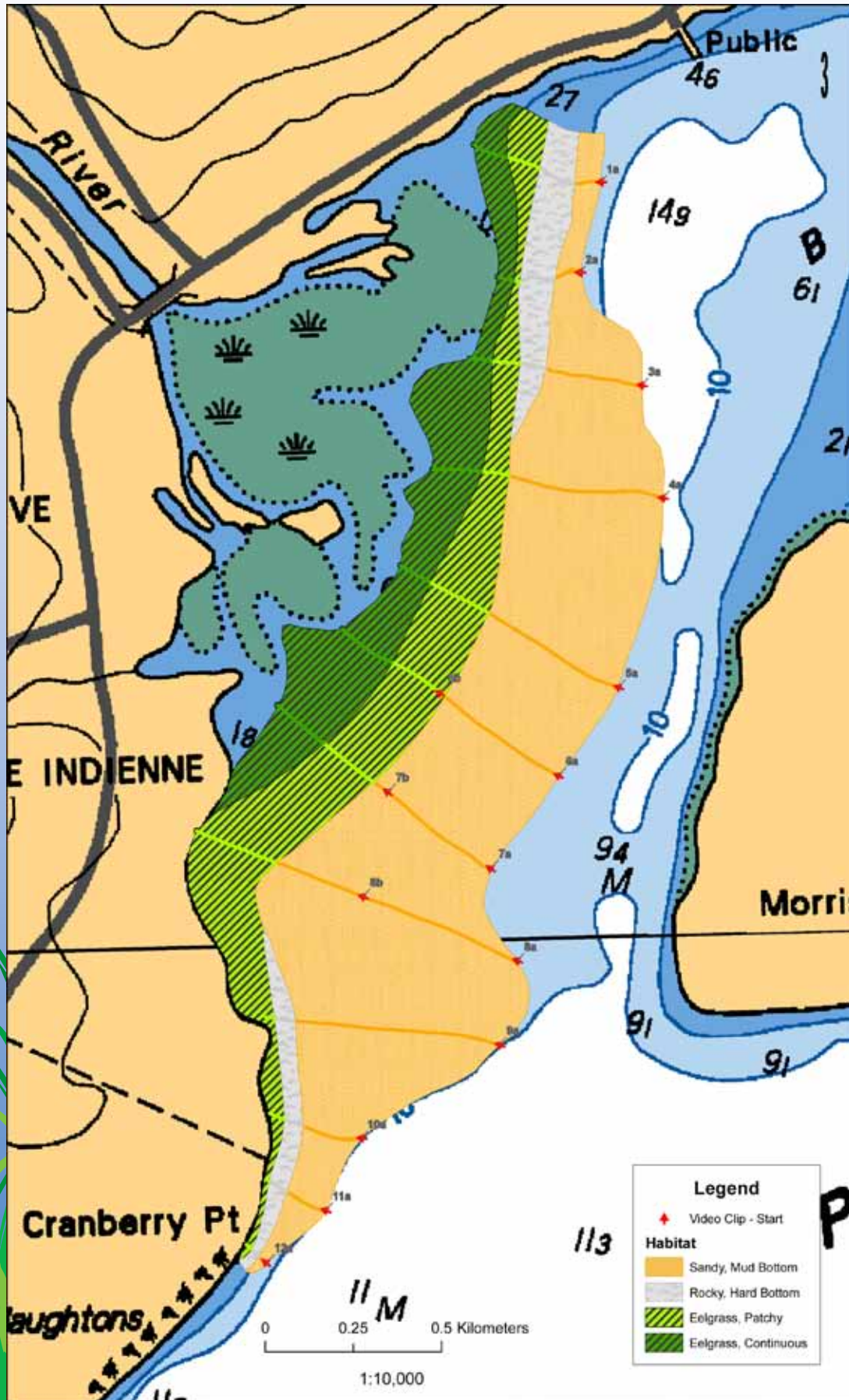
An educational brochure focusing on the Mi'kmaw Netukulimk approach to protecting eel grass is available at uinr.ca. Large format posters showing nearshore bottom types are available in each community.

These maps establish a base of information to help develop future protection strategies for eel grass habitat which will help preserve habitat for many species, including the eel..

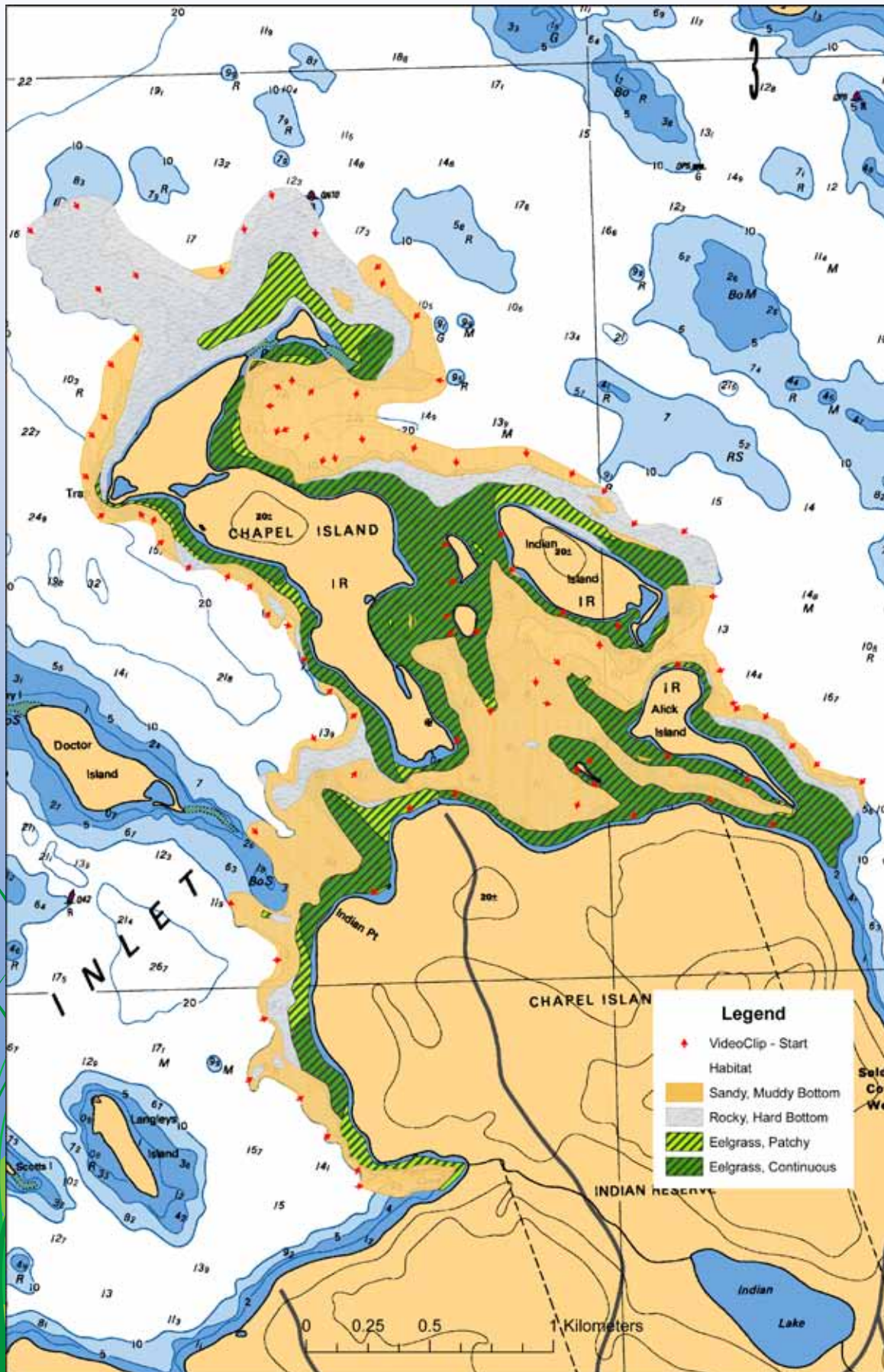




Bras d'Or Lakes Nearshore Bottom-Type Map: **Wagmatcook**



Bras d'Or Lakes Nearshore Bottom-Type Map: Potlotek





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