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Submerged Crown Land

The Province of Nova Scotia considers submerged land located along the coast of Nova Scotia to be provincial Crown land, owned by the province, unless it has been sold by way of provincial or federal grant or it is considered to be a federal public harbour. Under the Crown Lands Act, the Minister of Natural Resources is responsible for Crown lands, including submerged lands along the coast of the province.

The landward boundary of coastal land owned by the province begins at the mean high water mark on the shore - generally where plants and vegetation begin to be visible and the beach is not impacted by the water.

It is illegal to infill submerged Crown land or construct a wharf, mooring or boat launch without a permit. Such unauthorized structures must be removed at the expense of the person who constructed them.

Under the Crown Lands Act, the Minister of Natural Resources may lease or sell Crown land (including submerged lands).

The Department of Natural Resources issues leases on submerged Crown land for commercial purposes such as a wharf, marina, tidal power generation or utility cable landing site. Rent is based on market value.

Easements may be issued by the province for submerged utility cables or for bridges and utility services to private properties.

Submerged Crown land is usually sold by the province for market value, as determined by an appraisal, however final authority over the price of any Crown land is determined by the Governor in Council.

As well, under the Beaches and Foreshores Act, the Minister of Natural Resources may sell or lease ungranted flat, beach or foreshore land on the coast of the province. The land may only be sold or leased to the landowner whose property abuts the flat, beach or foreshore land, unless the abutting owner consents to the sale or lease to another person or company. These sales are normally limited to those areas where it can be proven to have been historically infilled and used as an addition to the original privately owned upland area (the land directly adjacent to the shore). The province's policy is that the abutting owner must be able to show that the infilled land is essential to the establishment or ongoing operation of a commercial venture such as a lobster pound, or for a public purpose of benefit to a community or region.

