



Arts, Wellness and Heritage Community Site

Site Reconnaissance Report

November 2024



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Executive summary

The Arts, Wellness & Heritage Community Site Group [AWHCS] of Portugal Cove - St. Philip's, recognizes the natural heritage and rural character of their community as one of its most important assets. With this shared vision in mind, The AWHCS Group is planning to develop a community site that is characterized by the following:

- Land Conservation and Stewardship
- The Importance of Recreation and Relaxation
- Promoting Physical and Mental Wellbeing
- Fostering Community Spirit
- Educational Opportunities
- Boosting Tourism and Economic Growth Opportunities

To facilitate the first steps of planning, research and recording technical information AWHCS group has hired Murray's Landscape Services Limited (Murray's) as professional consultants to prepare a site reconnaissance report of an approximate 50-acre site located in the Beachy Cove Hill & Neary's Pond area (See page 4 for study area boundaries).

The following site reconnaissance report has been developed to support future public engagement and planning efforts. The report is based on the following criteria:

Landforms & Topography: The report shows the varied topography and landforms throughout the site. Locations of steep slopes, wet areas, streams & rock outcroppings are shown for each zone along with supporting photographs.

Social & Cultural: The report shows evidence of current and historic human activity on site. Existing buildings, parking areas, trailheads, and rock walls are just a few examples of human activity onsite that have been shown in this report.

Flora & Fauna: Microclimates throughout the site provide a variety of habitats for many species of plants, insects, birds and mammals.

This report is a working document and a first take on recording the existing site information. It is important to note, expertise in other fields (survey, geomorphology, hydrology, flora and fauna, etc.) may be required as programming for the site develops.

Inventory by Zone: We have divided the site into four zones to help show existing site inventory at a larger scale. Each zone map shows locations and photos of each existing site element. A brief description of each zone is as follows:

Zone 1
This zone contains site access from Beachy Cove Rd to the north and an internal site road providing access to a large parking area. Here we find the AWHCS Office Building, the adjacent Church and Cemetery properties, a community garden , seating areas, an old foundation, and the main trailhead. The trailhead provides access to the existing trail network to the south that is defined by old meadows, rock walls and forested areas.

Zone 2
This zone contains some of the most steep and challenging topography of the entire site. The zone is defined by a meandering trail network that navigates around steep cliffs to the north and through native forests, streams and mossy woodland groundcovers.

Zone 3
This zone provides access to the East Coast Trail. The existing trail network continues to follow the changing topography and provides access to scenic viewpoints of Conception Bay and views to the south and east of watersheds and forests.

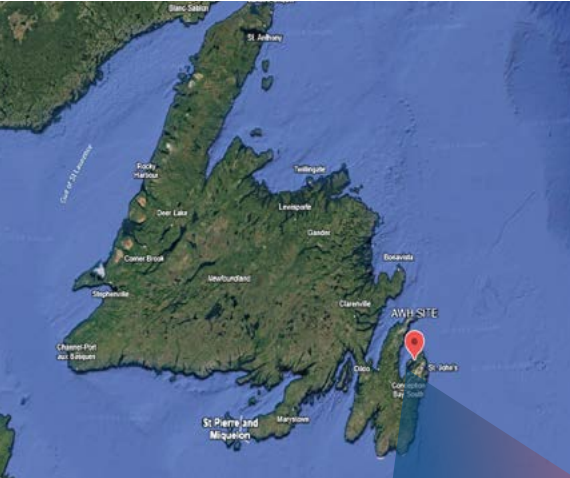
Zone 4
This zone contains a right-of-way that provides trail access from the AWHCS to the trailhead at Neary's Pond Road.

Digital Mapping and Aerial Videography
Murray's has provided a Google Earth and drone videos of the existing site. These documents can be accessed by links provided in the report.

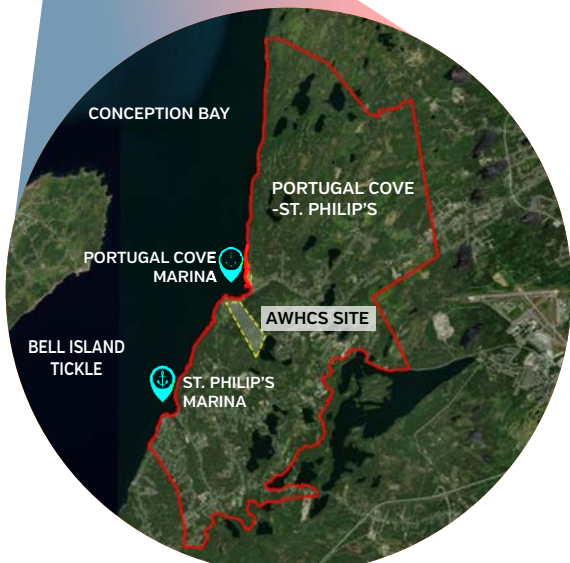
Next Steps
It is our hope that this report is the beginning of a solid foundation for further analysis, public engagement and concept development.

STUDY AREA

The information provided below helps define our study area. The area is made up of lands owned by AWHCS Group, Provincially owned Crown Lands, and privately owned lands by others. Only legal survey data provided by the client has been referenced. We have divided the study area into four zones to help show existing site inventory at a larger scale. Each zone map, that appears later in this report, shows locations and photos of each existing site element. A brief description of each zone has been provided below. The Site Zone map below also shows the main site path that was flagged by Robert Stapleton of AHWCS Group and the East Coast Trail.



Provincial Context Map
Scale NTS



Community Context Map

Our data collection and recording of the site were based on methods from the following three perspectives:



From the past



On the ground



From above



Site Zone Map

Legend:

Zone 1: This zone contains site access from Beach Cove Rd to the north and an internal site road provides access to a large parking area, AWH Office Building, adjacent Church and Cemetery properties, community gardens, seating areas, an old foundation, and the main trailhead. The trailhead provides access to the existing trail network to the south that is defined by old meadows, rock walls and forested areas.

Zone 2: This zone contains some of the most steep and challenging topography of the entire site. The zone is defined by a meandering trail network that navigates around steep cliffs to the north and through native forests, streams and mossy woodland groundcovers.

Zone 3: This zone provides access to the East Coast Trail. The existing trail network continues to follow the changing topography and provides access to scenic viewpoints of Conception Bay and views to the south and east of watersheds and forests.

Zone 4: This zone contains a right-of-way that provides trail access from the AWHCS to the trailhead at Neary's Pond Road.

ETC Trail Path

Study Area

Path Flagged with Robert Stapleton

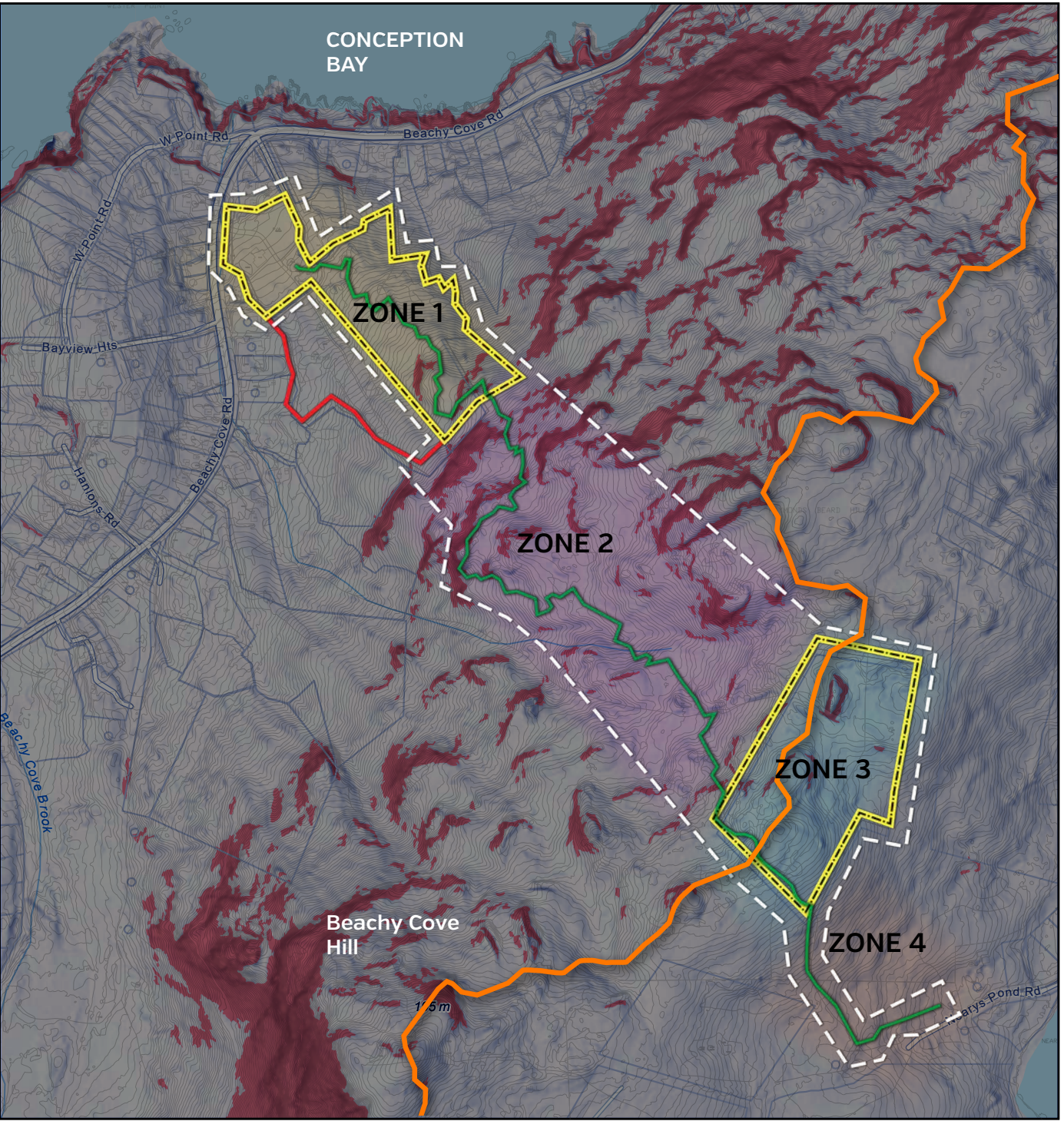
Land owned by AWHCS

Outline of H.R. Cemetery

Legal Property Lines

LAND FORMS & TOPOGRAPHY

The Topographic map shows the existing contours lines and grades of the site. Areas shown in red on the map are locations where slopes are greater than 25%. The network of existing trails and the outline of the study area are also shown to provide context.



Topographic Map
Scale NTS

General Description of Topography by Zone

- Zone 1**

The grades in this zone are the most accessible grades of the entire study area. The grades around the AWHCS Office, Parking lot and trailhead allow for easy access. The grades change slightly as you go south from the trailhead into the existing trail network that is defined by gentle sloping open meadows, rock walls and forested hills. At the southernmost extremes of zone 1 the existing grades become challenging as slopes exceeding 25% occur in certain areas. A distinct cliff face comes into this zone that the trail must navigate around.
- Zone 2**

This zone includes some of the most inaccessible areas of the AWHCS. The topography is steep and challenging. The northern portion of this zone contains cliffs and thick native forests and streams through a mossy woodland floor. A carefully chosen trail quickly rises over steep hills. Viewpoints can be found along this trail that provide panoramic views out over Portugal Cove and Conception Bay.
- Zone 3**

This zone includes moderately difficult grades along the trail. Tree spacing becomes less dense and the forests become more open and larger moss-covered boulders are present. As you ascend the slope to higher terrain more lookouts of the ocean and surrounding community can be viewed. A few low points are present in areas where watercourses flow. An area of particular interest is an outcropping of rock named "Finnegan's Rock" where local rock climbers have anchored a climbing route along the south rockface. At the highest point of this zone the East Coast Trail intersects with the AWH site trail and features a 360 full view of Conception Bay and inland out over Neary's Pond and beyond.
- Zone 4**

The slopes descend gradually along the trail from the high point of zone 3 to the parking area at the end of Neary's Pond Road.

Legend:

Land owned by AWHCS

Outline of H.R. Cemetery

Legal Property Lines

Path Flagged with Robert Stapleton

ETC Trail Path

Study Area

Zone 1:

Zone 2:

Zone 3:

Zone 4:

SOCIAL & CULTURAL ELEMENTS

Portugal Cove - St. Philip's

Human inhabitation in Newfoundland and Labrador can be traced back over 9,000 years to the people of the Maritime Archaic Tradition. They were gradually displaced by people of the Dorset Culture and finally by the Innu and Inuit in Labrador and the Beothuk on the island.

The AWHCS Park Site is in Portugal Cove, one of the oldest European settlements in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was claimed for Portugal in the 1500's, destroyed by the French in 1696, then settled in the 18th century by farmers and fishers largely from southern Ireland & West Country of England. Fishing and farming were a mainstay since the 17th century.

Portugal Cove – St. Philip's (PCSP) today is a thriving, rural, coastal community on the Avalon Peninsula located 10-15 minutes from St. John's. Since the 1990s with the decline of the fishery, PCSP has seen increasing economic opportunities in the region, has become a preferred place for people to live and grow, to be close to work and pursue recreation. Portugal Cove-St. Philip's was amalgamated in 1992 and has since grown to an estimated 8400. In response to the growing number of families, a new high school will be built for PCSP in 2025.

FLORA & FAUNA

This landscape is integral to the rural character of the community and is already a destination for residents and visitors keen to have the ecology of the region central to living on the Avalon. A walk through the site brings great views out and also offers a peaceful experience of the hundreds of species that also call it home.

The dramatic headlands of the coast, boreal forest, rock outcrops, streams and marshes of the Avalon Peninsula are the natural heritage of Portugal Cove - St. Philip's. The Avalon is the most easterly reach of the North American continent which extends out into the rich fishing grounds of the Grand Banks. Pinched into four smaller peninsulas PCSP is found on the Northeasterly peninsula of the Avalon. Created by tectonic events that shaped an immense region about 250 million years ago the peninsula was part of what is now southwestern Europe and Northern Africa.

There are few truly native animals on the island of Newfoundland. Bats, fox, pine martin and meadow voles among others. Many plants and animals found on this site have been introduced to Newfoundland: Moose, American Red Squirrel, Masked Shrew and others, were brought to the island through specific wildlife mandates. Newfoundland has no native amphibians, but frogs were introduced onto the island in the 1860s and toads almost a century later. Views out over Conception Bay from AWHCS Site lookouts witness populations of sea birds and migrating whales as well as sitings of icebergs in early spring. This landscape and many nature trails is integral to the rural character of the community and is a destination for residents and visitors keen to have the ecology of the region central to living on the Avalon.

iNaturalist

Interest in the ecology of the AWHCS area can be seen by the activity on iNaturalist by app users over areas currently accessible on existing trails and meadows in the area. Images reflect a small selection of the identifications made. Map recorded 10/30/2024



Brittle gills,
Genus Russula
Photo: Elizabeth Fowler



Newfoundland Chanterelle,
Cantharellus enelensis
Photo: Elizabeth Fowler



Feather Moss,
Rhytidiadelphus loreus
Photo: Elizabeth Fowler



Pixie Cup Lichen,
Cladonia asahinae
Photo: Elizabeth Fowler



Western Honey Bee,
Apis mellifera
Photo: Bobby Blackmore



Lowbush Blueberry
Vaccinium angustifolium
Photo: Carissa Brown



Black-throated Green Warbler
Setophaga virens
Photo: Bobby Blackmore



Red Squirrel
Tamiasciurus hudsonicus



Moose
Alces alces



Fox
Vulpes vulpes



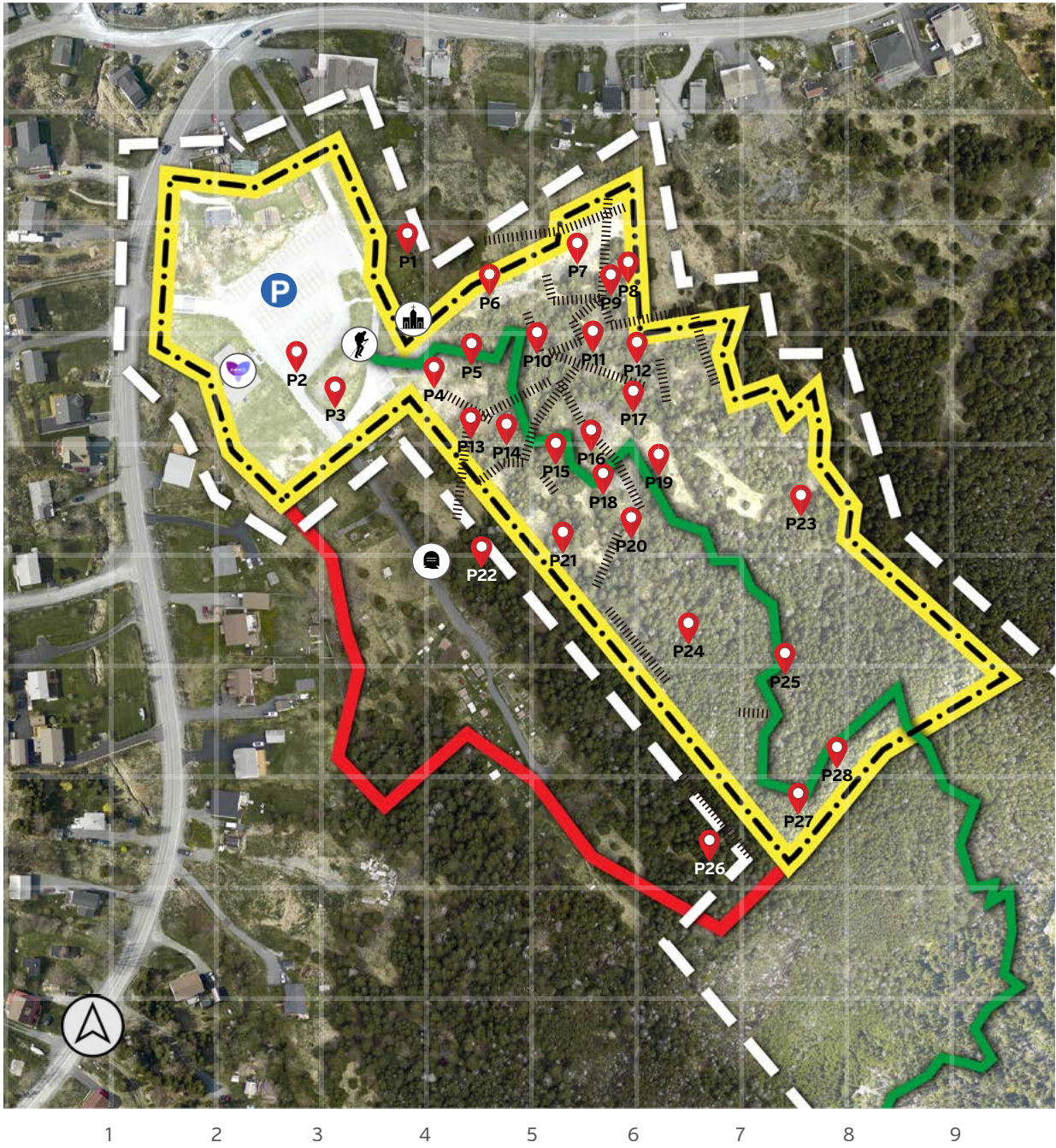
Bald eagle
Haliaeetus leucocephalus



Masked shrew
Sorex cinereus

ZONE 1

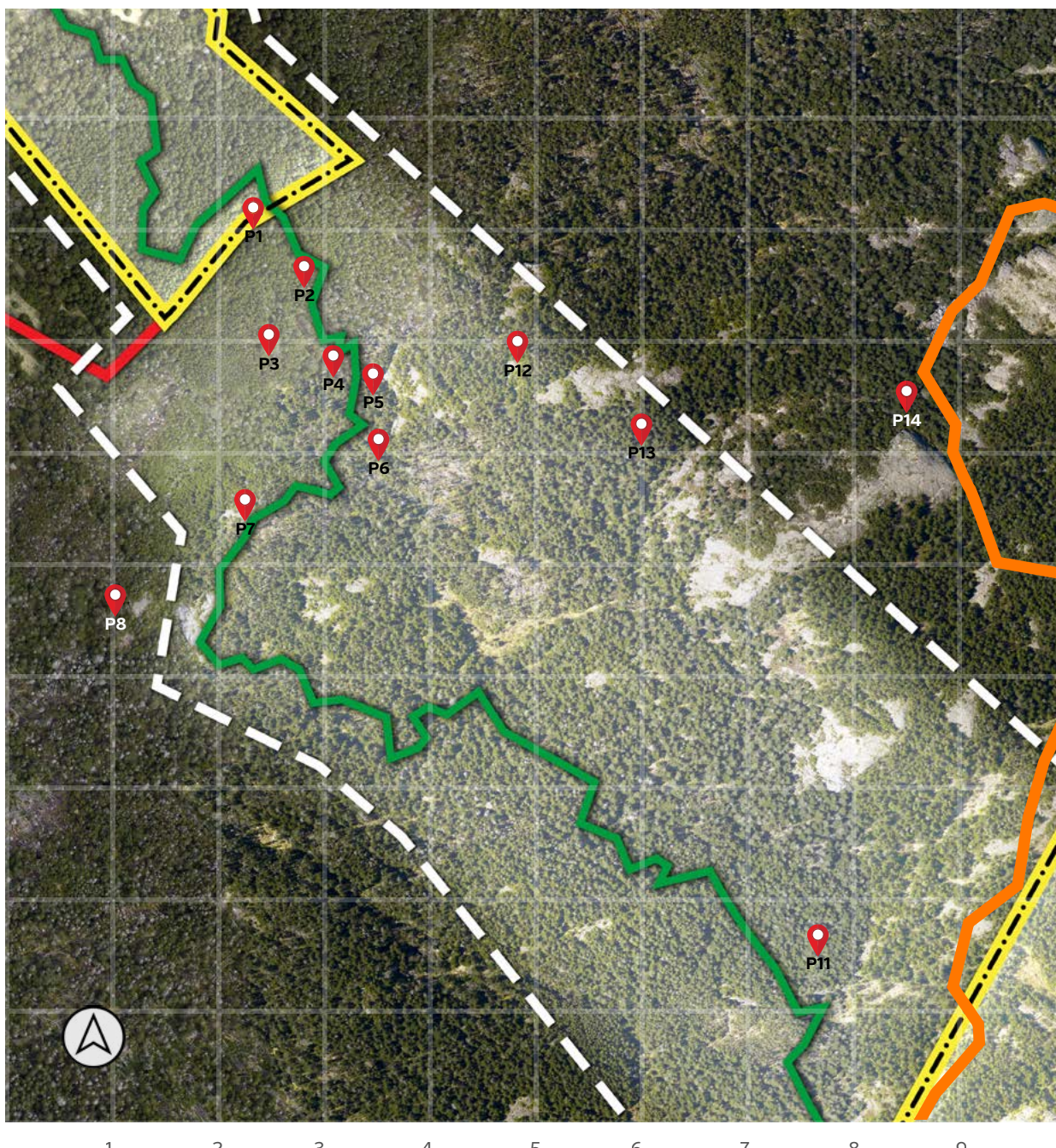
This zone is the closest to AWHCS offices and parking and is the most readily accessible overall. Zone 1 is characterized by the evidence of farming this site: An apple tree, the old foundation, clearings and rock walls. Rock walls also indicate two-track trails providing good access through the site and extending connection off site.



Site Pictures: 📍 Zone 1 is readily accessible. It is characterized by old rocks walls and meadows.

ZONE 2

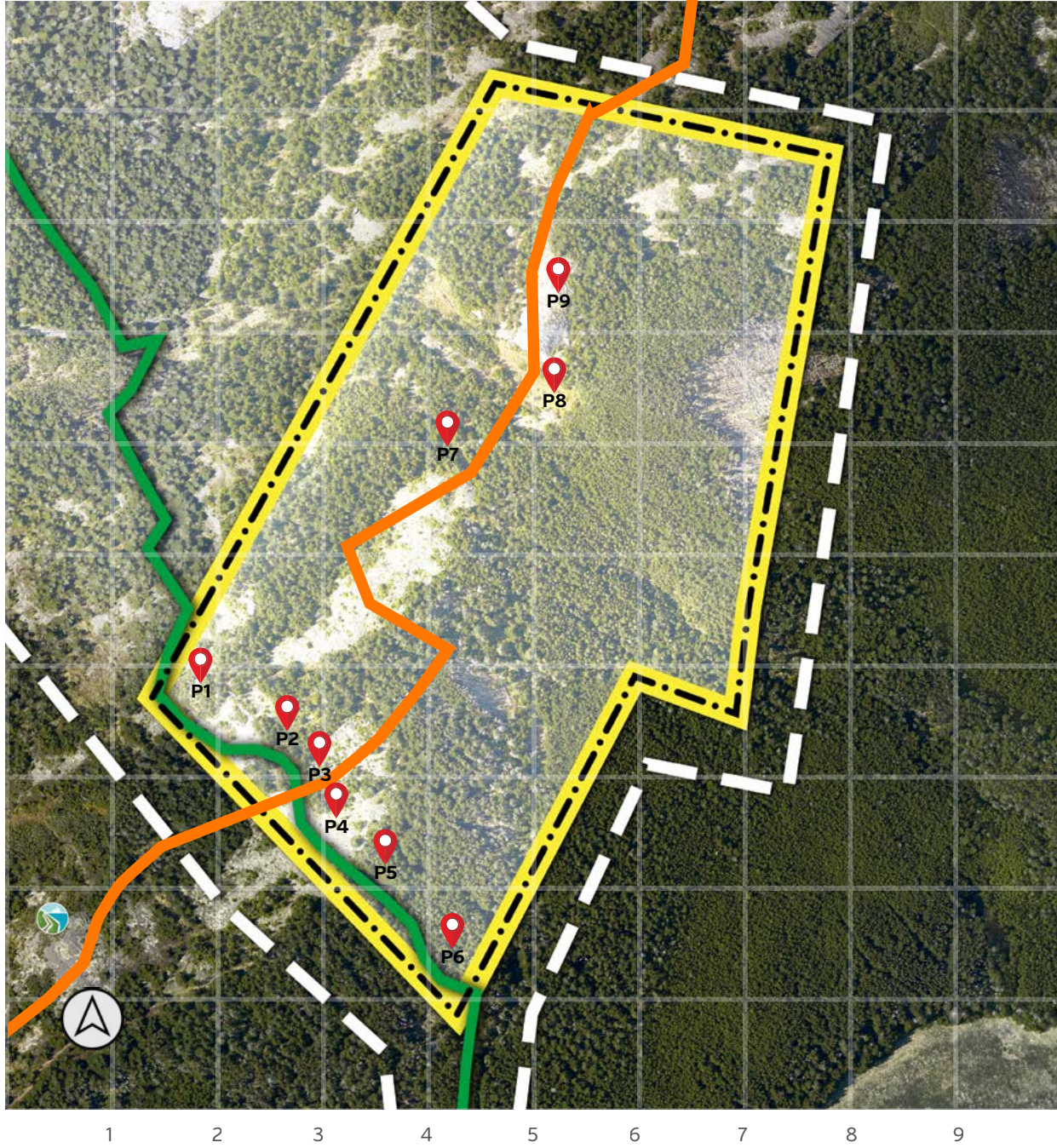
This zone includes some of the most inaccessible areas of the proposed AWHCS. The topography is steep and challenging. At the toe of the cliffs are quiet forests and streams through a mossy woodland floor. The carefully chosen trail offers a rising series of panoramic views out over Portugal Cove and Conception Bay.



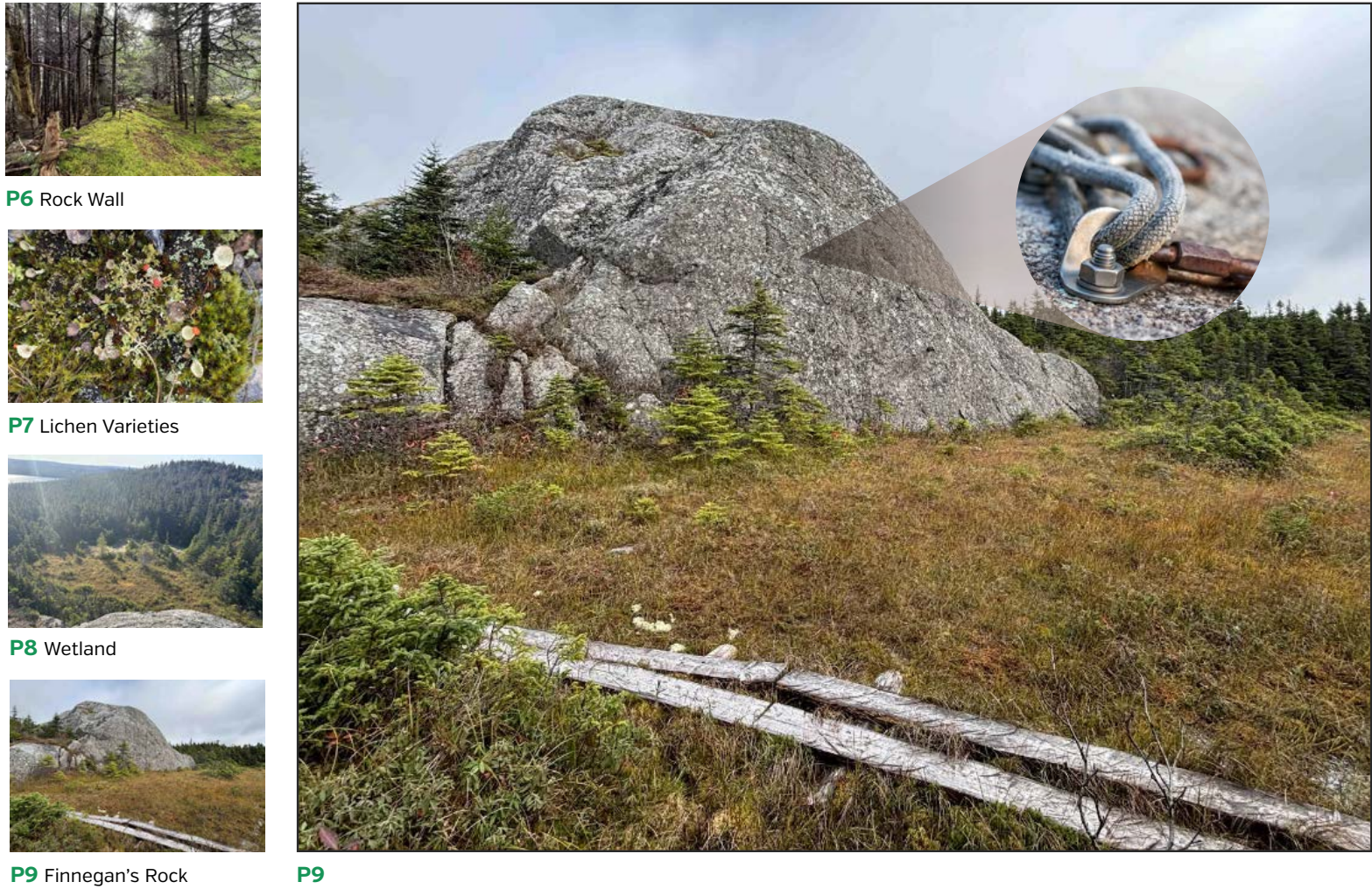
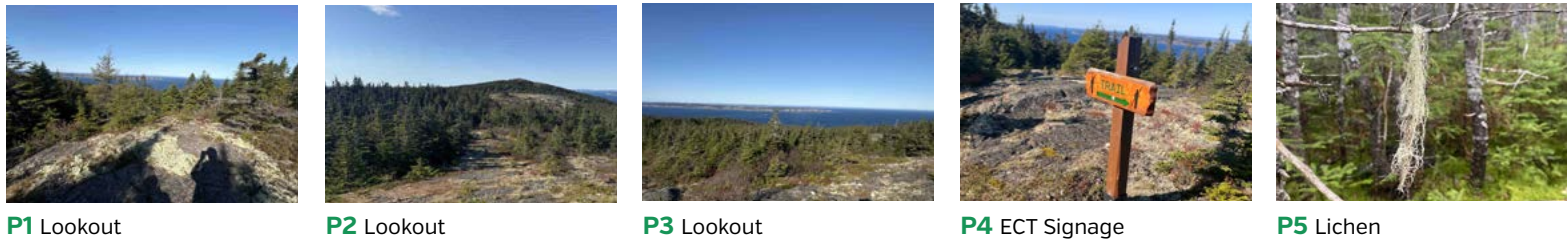
Site Pictures: 📍 Zone 2 includes challenging topography, quiet forests and streams through a mossy woodland.

ZONE 3

Opportunity to boulder is seen by the installation at Finnegan's Rock. This zone is traversed by the ECT trail and features a 360 full view of Conception Bay and inland out over Neary's Pond and beyond.



Site Pictures: Zone 3 is traversed by the ECT and features a 360 full view of Conception Bay and inland views over watersheds and forests.



P9 Finnegan's Rock

Legends:

- ECT Trail
- land owned by AWHCS
- Path Flagged with Robert Stapleton
- ETC Trail Path
- Study Area
- Legal Property Lines
- Site Features & Photos

ZONE 4

From parking at the end of Neary's Pond Road, a two-track trail leads uphill to the beginning of the second parcel of AWHCS land. This trail is used daily by hikers accessing the ECT trail.



Site Pictures: Zone 4 is a right-of-way giving access to the upper parcel of land owned by the AWHCS.



P1

Legends:

- Trail Heads
- Parking Lots
- land owned by AWHCS
- Path Flagged with Robert Stapleton
- Legal Property Lines
- Study Area
- Site Features & Photos

One of the goals of this project was to provide digital mapping for program development and community outreach. Another goal was to provide aerial photography highlighting the spectacular views into and out of the site. The links below invite online visits to the site map (featuring photo inventory) and provides an example of the footage taken.



AWHCS Site Overview [tap on the Map above]



AWHCS Site Inventory Video
[tap on the video above]

The consulting team reviewed several reports and background information before beginning the site inventory and mapping. The sources included:

- Town's Archives and Records
 - ESRI satellite and topographic mapping
- The Rooms Archives
 - Historic Photos
- Reports provided by AWHCS Committee
 - AWHCS – PCSP Sustainable Development Goals, October 2024
 - Place Based Destination Development of the AWHCS Community Site
- Project Team Site Visits with Google Earth and All Trails
 - Recording of mapping and inventory
 - Exiting trails marked for hiking including the East Coast Trail
- iNaturalist
 - Research Grade images of flora and fauna geolocated in the study area
- Further Reading
 - Catto, Norm. [2020]. The Avalon of Newfoundland: Geomorphology, People and Landscape. 10.1007/978-3-030-35137-3_15.
 - King, Aurthur F [1986]. Geology of the St. John's Area, Newfoundland Department of Mines and Energy, Mineral Development Division, Report 86-1, pp 209-218
- Internet Resources:
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal_Cove%E2%80%93St._Philip%27s
 - <https://pcsp.ca/>

NEXT STEPS: PROJECT PLANNING

Stakeholder Engagement

Determining key stakeholders and decision makers early in the project planning is key to the success of the overall project The end result is that people around the space—those with a vested interest in its success—not only have an active voice in the process, but they also become strong partners throughout the project.

- Goals:
 - o Collaborate with those that share the vision and mission
 - o Share ownership of programming, planning and operation
 - o Ensure the needs of the community are being accommodated
 - o Create and expand social enterprise and development opportunities
 - o Create business opportunities and contribute to the local economy
- Tools:
 - o Focus Groups
 - o Interviews and surveys
 - o Workshops
 - o Digital Engagement
 - o Pop-up engagement

Concept Planning

A detailed analysis of the existing site information will provide opportunities and constraints for future concept development. Continued engagement of stakeholders will help develop site specific activities and programming. This information can be used to develop an overall master plan for the site.

- Goals:
 - o Overall Master Plan
 - o Business Plan with Marketing Plan
 - o Identify sources of funding
- Tools:
 - o Stakeholder Engagement Analysis
 - o Place performance assessment of Pop-up engagement (short term experiments) and observed uses
 - o Program Development
 - o Cost Estimates

Detailed Design and Implementation

A request for proposal will be created for the design/build of places within AWHCS according to the Master Plan.

- Phased Approach informed by Master Plan and Budget
- Implementation
- Ongoing Place performance assessment leading to long-term improvements.
- Continued management of the community site.

CONCLUSION

The process of mapping and inventory has impressed on Murray’s team the beautiful variety of places within the proposed AWHCS landscape. Preservation of this landscape will offer many opportunities for Arts, Wellness and Heritage to prosper in Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s. We look forward to continuing participation in the development of the site in support of these goals.