



Yarmouth and Acadian Shores  
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Yarmouth & Acadian Shores is located in Kespukwitk, one of seven districts in Mi'kma'ki, and is home to Wasoqopa'q First Nation. Mi'kma'ki is the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people

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## Mitigating Light Pollution in a Certified Starlight Tourist Destination

(Advocacy Plan Outline) Prepared by Neil MacKenzie, CEO of YASTA and Tim Doucette, Deep Sky Eye Observatory

### Executive Summary

This outline presents a strategy to collaborate with key stakeholders to reduce light pollution and protect our region's dark skies.

### The Current Landscape (Situational Analysis)

Astrotourism is a growing tourism experience worldwide, especially in destinations with quality stargazing conditions (low light pollution).

***"Astro-tourism is an emerging niche within sustainable tourism, offering destinations worldwide the opportunity to attract visitors interested in astronomical experiences. By providing exceptional views of dark skies and minimizing light pollution, destinations can enhance their tourism potential, contributing to sustainability goals and increasing tourism revenues."***

Author(s). (2024). Astrotourism: A growing niche of sustainable tourism. ResearchGate.  
[[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377627679\\_Astrotourism\\_A\\_Growing\\_Niche\\_of\\_Sustainable\\_Tourism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377627679_Astrotourism_A_Growing_Niche_of_Sustainable_Tourism)]([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377627679\\_Astrotourism\\_A\\_Growing\\_Niche\\_of\\_Sustainable\\_Tourism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377627679_Astrotourism_A_Growing_Niche_of_Sustainable_Tourism))

In 2018, Airbnb recognized Yarmouth & Acadian Shores as a

***"trending astro-tourism destination leading to strong growth in travel."***

Since 2014, The Yarmouth & Acadian Shores Tourism Association (YASTA), the region's DMO, key community partners and astro-tourism champions, have leveraged the dark skies to differentiate the destination and drive visitation. Astro-tourism (stargazing and experiencing the night sky) is a major brand pillar for Yarmouth & Acadian Shores. YASTA has worked with partners to develop and market astro-tourism experiences, leveraging the designations to potential visitors. Significant investment in the destination's marketing dollars, infrastructure, and tourism products has been built around leveraging this unique tourism experience and opportunity for the region.

The destination of Yarmouth & Acadian Shores (YAS) has positioned itself as a stargazing destination, but night sky conditions are deteriorating. Local stakeholders must reduce light pollution to maintain its designations and continue marketing itself as a stargazing location.

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Several elements are required to maintain dark sky designations. These are Marketing stargazing experiences, supporting sustainable astro-tourism, delivering education about the night sky, and reducing light pollution. The [International Starlight Foundation](#) requires designated locations to demonstrate efforts in all these areas. By addressing light pollution, we aim to maintain our unique status as a starlight tourist destination and reserve while fostering economic development.

## Purpose:

1. Highlight the importance of the International Starlight Foundation designations.
2. Mitigate light pollution caused by unmanaged or inappropriate lighting.

## Stakeholders:

- Local municipal councils
- Yarmouth & Acadian Shores Tourism Assoc. (YASTA)
- Local tourism businesses and related business
- Yarmouth & Area Chamber of Commerce (YACC)
- Western Regional Enterprise Network (WREN)
- Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS)
- UNESCO South West Nova Biosphere Reserve (SWNBR)
- Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS)
- Nova Scotia Power (NSP)

## Expected Outcomes:

- Coordinated light pollution reduction efforts
- Preservation of starlight designations
- Improved stargazing conditions
- Increase in stargazing experiences and infrastructure

## Impacts of Excessive Light Pollution:

**Environmental:** Disruption to wildlife and ecosystems.

**Economic:** Risk of losing dark-sky tourism designation and associated revenue.



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## Stakeholder Insights

### Short-Term Objectives:

- Initiate stakeholder dialogues.
- Raise awareness about light pollution effects.

### Long-Term Objectives:

- Establish policies, best practices and or bylaws for sustainable lighting.
- Secure dark-sky designations to reinforce starlight tourism.

## Key Stakeholders & Roles

- Local Municipal Councils: Ensure policies for sustainable lighting.
- Local Businesses: Adopt dark-sky friendly lighting.
- Chamber of Commerce: Advocate for reducing light pollution and sustainable development.
- Efficiency Nova Scotia: Provide expertise on energy-efficient lighting solutions and potential partnerships.

## Advocacy Strategies

### Policy Advocacy:

- Engage with municipal councils to draft lighting bylaws and guidelines.
- Propose businesses that adopt sustainable lighting practices.

### Public-Private Partnerships:

- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses for joint initiatives.
- Partner with Efficiency Nova Scotia to leverage their technical expertise in developing compliant lighting solutions.

### Education & Awareness:

- Launch community workshops and informational campaigns highlighting the benefits of dark skies.
- Distribute educational materials (e.g., policy briefs, infographics) to demonstrate dark-sky preservation's economic and environmental benefits.

### Media & Communications:

- Craft messaging that underscores the competitive advantage of maintaining dark-sky designations.
- Utilize social media, local press, and community events to promote the advocacy initiative.



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## Action Plan & Tactics

### Timeline & Milestones:

- **Initial Phase:** Stakeholder meetings, formation of an advisory committee, and initial public consultations.
- **Development Phase:** Drafting proposals, hosting workshops, and piloting lighting initiatives.
- **Implementation Phase:** Rollout of agreed policies and monitoring light pollution levels.

### Tactics

- Establish a dedicated committee with representatives from each stakeholder group and all the municipalities within the dark skies area.
- Organize site visits and demonstrations with Efficiency Nova Scotia and propose a partnership.
- Develop a digital campaign to share success stories and case studies.
- Set clear, measurable targets for light reduction and compliance with new guidelines.

## Communication Plan

### Key Messages:

- The economic and environmental value of dark skies.
- How sustainable lighting practices can enhance local business reputations and tourism appeal.
- Visitor-facing messaging could include the destination's action to protect the night sky to enhance stargazing conditions. It's a community effort to protect the night sky.

### Channels:

- Direct stakeholder meetings, workshops and their communication channels
- Social media platforms, local newsletters, and press releases
- Public forums and community events

### Key Metrics:

- Reduction in ambient light levels ( goal is 2700 K or less)
- Number of businesses and municipalities adopting new guidelines or bylaws
- Maintenance or enhancement of International Starlight Foundation designations.

### Reporting:

- Regular progress reports to stakeholders.
- Annual reviews to adjust strategies and tactics as needed.



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## Risk

### Potential Challenges:

- Resistance to policy changes from businesses or municipalities. A belief that these efforts will hinder development and create red tape.
- Budget constraints for implementing new lighting systems.
- Delays in regulatory changes.

### The requirements for Starlight Lighting are:

- Reduced light emission in the blue, visible, and ultraviolet spectrum.
- Use fixtures that limit upward-facing light.
- Don't over-illuminate an area.
- Install lighting controls for nighttime hours.
- Use the Sky Protection Office of the Canary Islands and Chile recommendations.

## Conclusion

Recap the importance of mitigating light pollution to preserve dark-sky designations and promote sustainable tourism.

### Next Steps:

- Finalize stakeholder meetings and form the advisory group/committee. Town Council presentation
- Initiate policy discussions and begin public outreach.

### Call to Action:

- Emphasize the need for collaborative, community-driven action to protect Yarmouth & Acadian Shores' dark skies.

