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## Firm has deal to explore resources in game sanctuary

By DAVID JACKSON Provincial Reporter  
Wed, Sep 9 - 7:23 AM

Conservationists are worried again that the Chignecto Game Sanctuary, home to three endangered species, could soon be the site of oil and gas exploration.

Energy Minister Bill Estabrooks announced on Friday that Calgary-based Eastrock Resources Ltd. has a three-year exploration agreement for parts of Cumberland and Colchester counties.

Environment Department spokeswoman Sherri Woodland said the agreement covers only a small portion of the 22,000-hectare sanctuary. She said environment, natural resources, and energy officials would together set terms of access to the Crown land that's under the agreement.

Proponents of protecting the game sanctuary say the Dexter government should just start designating the area now.

"It's disappointing that there would potentially be any industrial activity on those Chignecto Game Sanctuary lands," Harry Thurston, of the advocacy group Cumberland Wilderness, said Tuesday.

"What we're trying to do as (a) citizens group is to remove industrial activity from the Chignecto Game Sanctuary, which would include logging or mining." Eastrock had also received approval last fall for seismic testing within the sanctuary. Mr. Thurston said conservationists successfully lobbied to get the testing done closer to existing roads than first planned, thereby minimizing the disruption in the area.

The game sanctuary is home to the endangered mainland moose, Blanding's turtle, and the inner Bay of Fundy salmon, said Raymond Plourde, the Ecology Action Centre's wilderness co-ordinator.

"We're very concerned that a further exploration licence has been given when we've made it very clear we think that area should be protected," Mr. Plourde said.

Ms. Woodland said the department is sensitive to the conservationists' concerns, and will make sure any drilling in the area won't hurt the environment.

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Mr. Plourde and Mr. Thurston both questioned why the government would allow any possibility of drilling in the game sanctuary while officials evaluate it as a possible protected area.

The province has a goal of protecting 12 per cent of land by 2015.

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