

The Hennigar Family Experience on Sable Island in the 1970s

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My call to duty in 1971 as a young hydrogeologist with the Nova Scotia Department of Mines was to assess the fresh water availability on Sable Island. A request came from Mobil Oil who was planning an exploration drilling project on the island. Mobil Oil needed enough good quality fresh water to supply their base camp with a staff of up to 80 persons, plus water for drilling operations. When the Deputy Minister of Mines asked if I would like to tackle the assignment there was no hesitation of my acceptance. I later learned and realized it was the best order, or direction, of my career.

My role was to represent the province and lead the exploration project to define and evaluate the fresh water system on the island. There was no provincial support system available on the island at the time so the federal facility and staff, together with Mobil Oil staff, provided the field support and assistance with project logistics.

Experience was quickly gained in being flexible, for planning trips and delivery of supplies, equipment, and food because of delays related to favourable weather and beach conditions for flying and landing on the island. My wife, three children, and department staff, became a functioning team with a minimum of bureaucracy....a dream job during the summers! My memories include the connection with the wild nature of the island, the independence, the changing moods of the island, the complex and dynamic landscape and ecosystem in the middle of the Atlantic ocean.