

Saving the birds and building a stronger forest economy.

Billboards at several Metro locations spell out the grim message: '80,000 birds' nests destroyed last year' during clearcutting.



The Margaree Environmental Association, the sponsor of these ads, shares the Healthy Forest Coalition's concern that excessive clearcutting is wreaking long-term devastation on Nova Scotia's wildlife, trees, forest plants, lichens, mosses and even the soil itself.

We humans suffer as well. Supporters claim that clearcutting sustains forest employment, yet between the late 1990s and 2014 employment in our forest sector declined from 10,000 to 12,000 jobs to between 6,100 and 5,500. (<http://forestns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FNS-Economic-Impact-Report-Gardner-Pinfold-Dec-2016.pdf>)

The number of mills operating in the province has declined sharply. These declines reflect changes in forest industry technologies. Modern harvesters have permitted deep cuts in forest employment. Estimates vary wildly about the amount that a feller-buncher can harvest in a day, but it is clear that men working with chain saws are no competition. The Gardner-Pinfold study cited above reports that 'forestry and logging' declined 33% between 2012 and 2014.^[1]

Bird life and biodiversity in general can be restored and sustained if we adopt ecologically sensitive forest management practices, such as selection management. As well, there is economic benefit to be gained from leaving timber standing.

Our forests constitute one of the most effective and natural carbon sinks the planet has. The mass of an intact forest and the amount of CO₂ sequestered from the atmosphere by that forest are proportionate. It follows that we should endeavor to conserve, and even grow our forests as we work to mitigate climate change.

In this respect, governments have begun introducing systems of carbon off-sets. The system adopted by Nova Scotia should enable the Crown and woodlot owners to benefit from retaining standing timber. Instead of burning our forests to generate electricity, we could lease forest lots that are on hills or mountains as wind turbine locations, whilst abandoned farm fields alongside these lots could be utilized for solar panel arrays.

Both could feed into local battery storage systems and electric utilities, thereby earning revenue that would more than pay for thinning and other forest management schemes. In other words, employment can be enhanced both in the forest and through embracing genuinely sustainable energy undertakings.

Even without carbon off-sets or investing in new energy technologies, the Crown and woodlot owners can benefit from silviculture and harvesting that allows our forests to develop older age-classes. In a well-managed forest, the older the tree becomes, the greater its value. Straight stems that provide veneer logs earn premium prices, as do logs that can be used in timber frame construction.

(<http://m.thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/1516786-opinion-forests-need-better-management>)

Some argue that 'we need jobs now, not fifty or a hundred years from now.' True, but allowing some trees to develop into 'merchantable timber' does not preclude earning money from and in the forest. We can find employment opportunities in more appropriate harvesting and in better public and private sector woodland management.

Thus selection management requires more extensive pre-treatment assessment and marking of selected trees, processes that would involve more boots on the ground. It could also require retraining or supplementary training of harvester operators. Training and funding for enhanced silviculture could be paid for by reducing subsidies for forest roads.

In the public-sector forest technicians would be needed to provide more detailed inventory information, better monitoring of harvesting and improved record-keeping. Stronger enforcement of harvesting regulations is essential and would require additional inspectors. Restoring the Acadian forest should be a high priority and would require hardwood planting and regeneration, tree release and pruning.

Although community forests have been developed elsewhere in Canada, they have not been encouraged in Nova Scotia. The Community Forest Model could be expanded across a much greater portion of the Crown lands. This is one of the very best ways to put our public lands back into the hands of a knowledgeable public in a way that benefits communities and local businesses, rather than a few companies owned offshore. (<https://www.saltscapes.com/people-culture-section/people-culture-category/2347-a-new-era-in-forest-management.html>)

Private woodlot owners have suffered unduly as a result of industrial forestry. For decades they have been price-takers in the Nova Scotia forest economy. Government policies could create a more level playing field. Raising stumpage rates on Crown timber would not only help to pay for the improved silviculture required under selection management, it would ensure that companies could no longer use Crown land harvesting to force down prices paid to woodlot owners. (See: '[WestFor GM calls for](#)

[cooperation over forest management/critics say difficult because of amount of wood cut on public land'](#) LighthouseNOW-Progress-Bulletin (www.lighthouseNOW.ca) Aug. 23, 2017, p. 1).

If building codes were to recognize NS materials, particularly wood products, demand, and hence prices, would improve. In short, government can ensure prices paid to private owners should match prices paid in other provinces under their marketing boards for private woodlots. (Currently in Quebec this price is approximately \$1,000 more per tandem truck load at the mill gate.)

And there are down-stream benefits as well. The hardwood flooring businesses that closed when hardwood supplies were diverted to co-gen operations might be re-opened.

(<http://thechronicleherald.ca/business/1269942-no-hardwood-no-business-rivers-bend-will-close-doors-lay-off-11-workers>) Instead of having to turn out studs and chips local mills could return to producing quality lumber that would earn good prices. Local woods products enterprises might reappear.

Then there are the collateral businesses that have been threatened by industrial forestry. Tourism, for example. A \$2.6 billion industry (2013) with a GDP larger than the combined GDP of mining, agriculture and forestry, and which, in 2012 employed 23,000 full-time workers and 15,000 part-time, for a total of 38,000. Almost seven times the number employed in forestry. (<https://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/2017-01/Tourism%20Impacts%20Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL%20February%208%2C%202017.pdf>)

Although tourism has been increasing in recent years, it is an industry that has to be carefully nurtured. Poor forestry practices can adversely affect it. Think, for example, of the luxury wilderness lodge in southern Nova Scotia that has to be approached through a former clearcut.

The disappointment of visitors who had expected pristine wilderness is comparable to that of Europeans who are shocked as their planes make the descent to Stanfield International and they see, for the first time, the clearcutting that disfigures the Eastern Shore and central Nova Scotia. If forest enterprises were to adopt selection management, tourism operators would no longer fear these disappointments. (<http://www.tians.org/search?searchword=wilderness&ordering=&searchphrase=all&limit=20>)

Similarly, selection management would help and foster the many small businesses that make their living from non-timber forest products. These have been adversely affected by industrial forestry. Maple syrup producers have complained that indiscriminate clearcutting, reflecting poor stand identification on the part of DNR, threatens their industry. Mushroom foragers, small businesses that have benefitted from the 'buy local' movement, do better in biodiverse forests than they do in clearcuts.

Indigenous crafts such as basket weaving and canoe building depend on older, biodiverse forests, as do the skilled crafts people who use boles to create bowls and fashion musical instruments out of the unusual timber that is sometimes found in older forests.

(See <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/industry/products-applications/13203>)

Neal Livingston, the co-chair of the Margaree Environmental Association, has coined the slogan:

Change = Jobs

We ask you, Members of the Legislature, to consider that slogan and to reflect on Nova Scotia's potential for developing a forest economy that, by being respectful of the forest and its wildlife, creates productive and inventive rural communities.

[u](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/home) The 1990s figure was reported in a Natural Resources Canada table available several years ago, but now apparently no longer accessible. (<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/home> – forests – forest resources – statistical data.). The Gardner –Pinfeld study uses two dates (2014 and 2015) for direct employment in forest industries.