



SOME URGENT FORESTRY QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE NOVA SCOTIA LEGISLATURE

The Healthy Forest Coalition is writing to you, and every other Member of the Legislative Assembly, asking that you set aside your party affiliation, and the constraints it imposes on you, and dedicate some time to think about the condition of our forests. We ask you to visit clearcuts and to read Professor Lahey's *Independent Review of Forest Practices*. We ask you as an individual, a person with a commitment to the best interests of our province, to address three questions:

QUESTION 1:

Do you as an MLA acknowledge the mismanagement of the provinces forests resulting in widespread environmental and ecological damage and the limiting of economic and social benefits from the forests?

QUESTION 2

Do you as an MLA accept the recommendations of the Lahey Report?

QUESTION 3

What will you do – what steps will you personally take - as an MLA to insure forestry reform, including the reform of the Department of Lands and Forestry, and the timely implementation of the Lahey report is achieved?

We are asking you to respond by June 15 and hoping to post the responses on our website. Please send to Mike Lancaster, HFC Coordinator, at: ofthewoodsmike@gmail.com. or, if you prefer to use Canada Post, to The Healthy Forest Coalition, c/o Friends of Nature, P.O. Box 577, Chester, N.S., B0J 1J0.

Critical background information

In August 2017 the government of Nova Scotia engaged Professor Bill Lahey to conduct an independent review of forest practices in the province. In August 2018 Prof Lahey submitted a report calling for major reforms of all aspects of the province's forest management system. It was supported with extensive documentation. He made 45 recommendations intended to balance environmental, social, and



economic values by adopting forest practices that would give priority to protecting and enhancing ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Lahey report was not the first major government-initiated review of forestry in recent years. In 2010 reporting on a multi-year, multi-stage public consultation on Natural Resource Strategy, the late Hon. Constance Glube, chair of the Steering Committee for the process, concluded that:

The status quo is not an option. Unless there is change, Nova Scotia's natural resources will continue to be destroyed. We urge Cabinet to act on the recommendations contained in this report - to seize this opportunity to make a substantial change in how government operates, with an aim to creating a future for natural resources.
(A Natural Balance- Report of the Steering Committee on Natural Resources.(2010)

Change was required in forest governance, and also in how the Department of Natural Resources, the predecessor of the Department of Lands and Forestry, operated and made decisions.

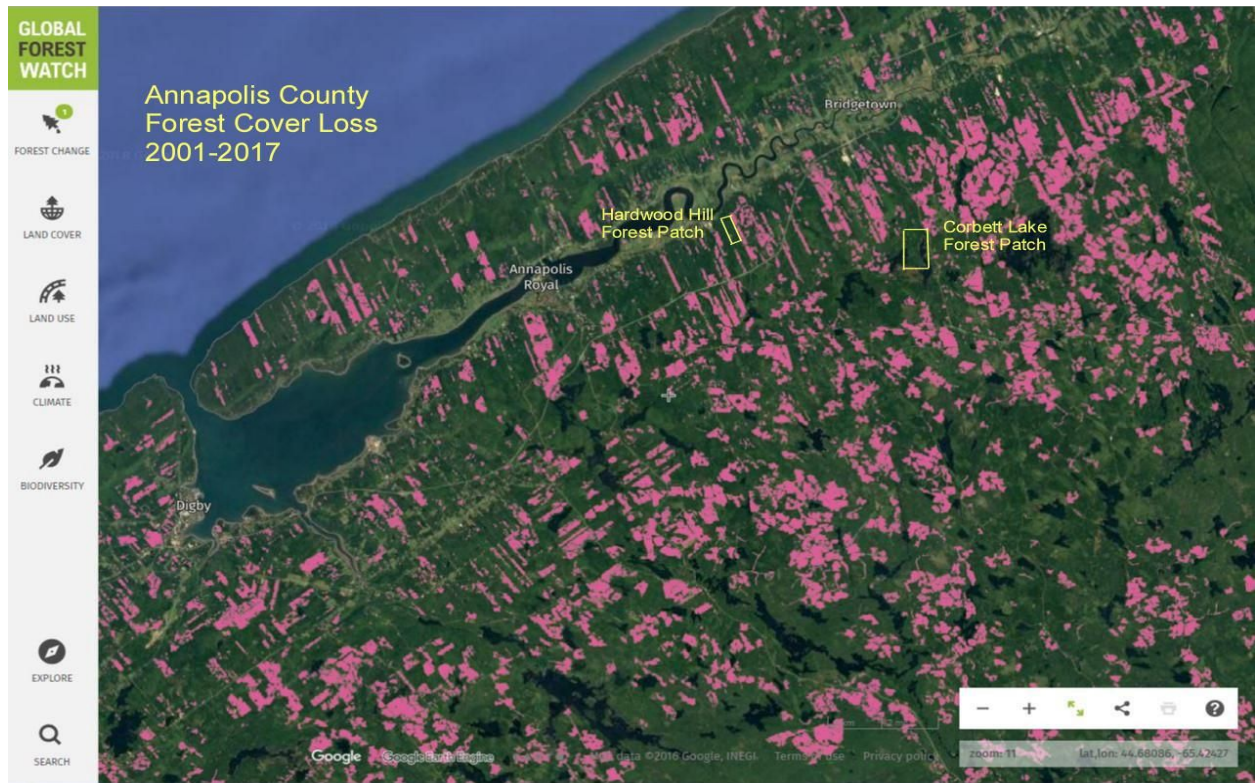
In short, the government has two major reports calling for a better balance in the management of forest resources.

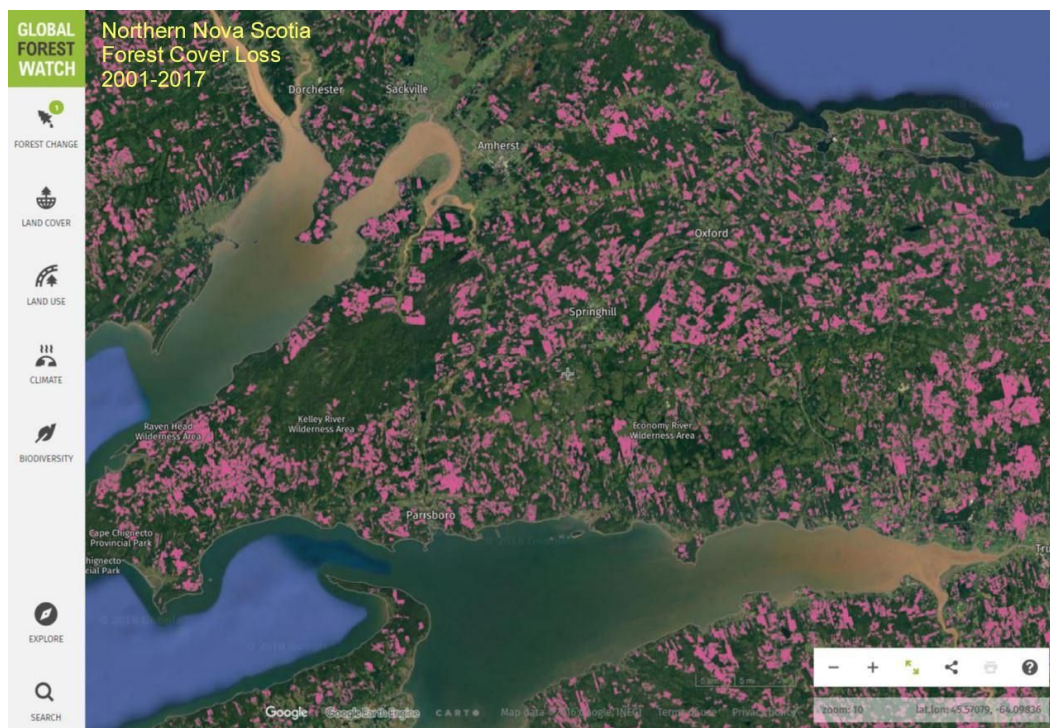
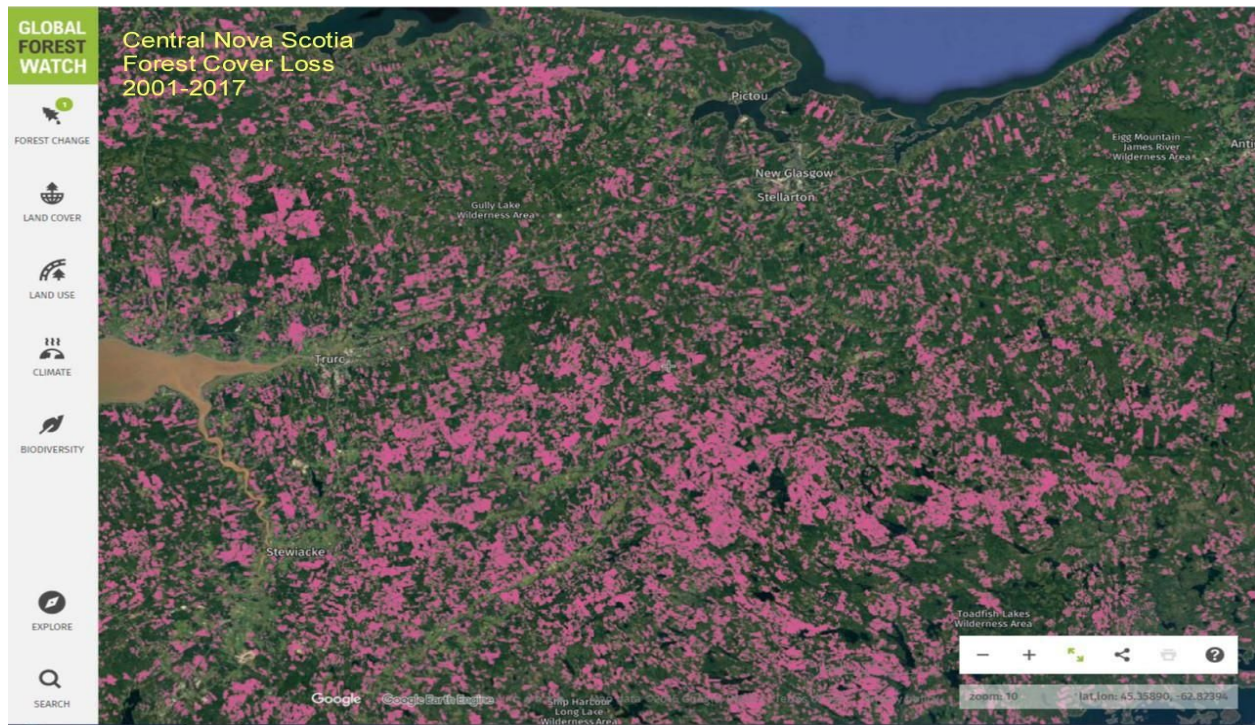
In December 2018 the Minister of Lands and Forestry, Ian Rankin, released the government's response to the Lahey report and stated:

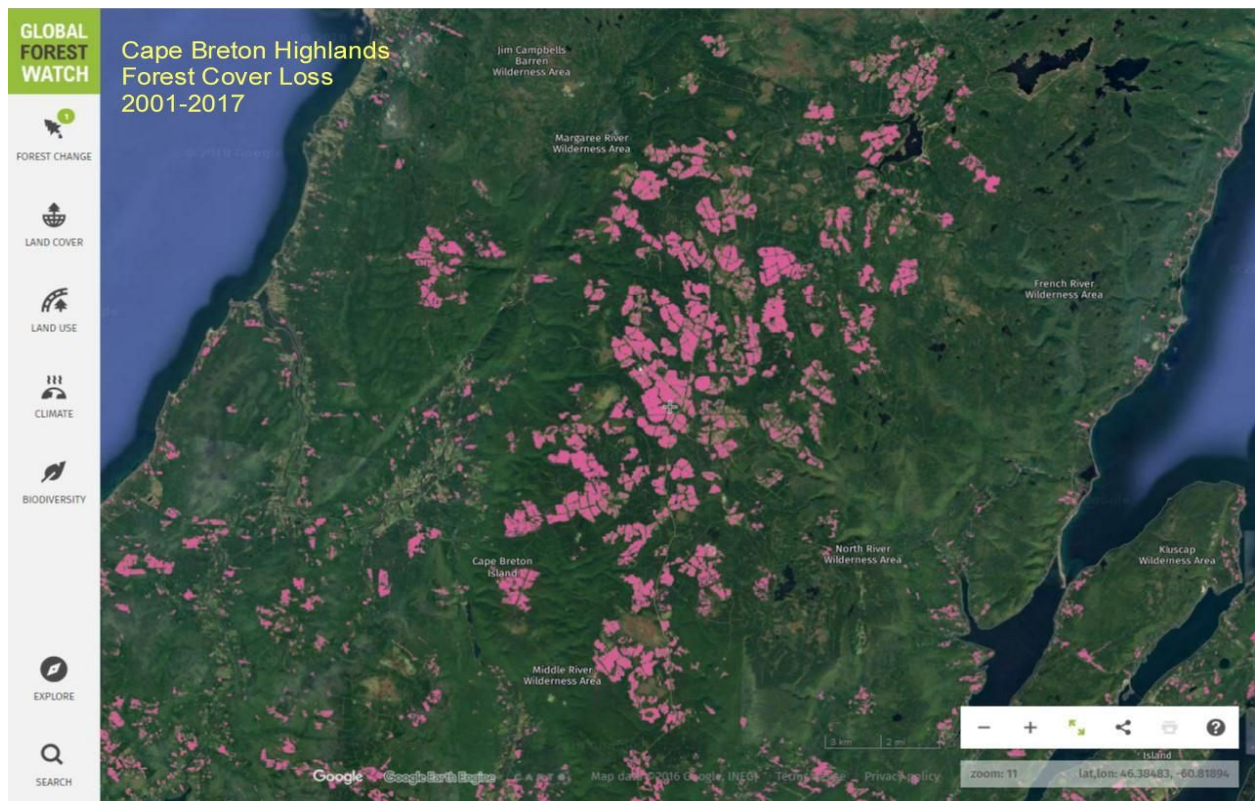
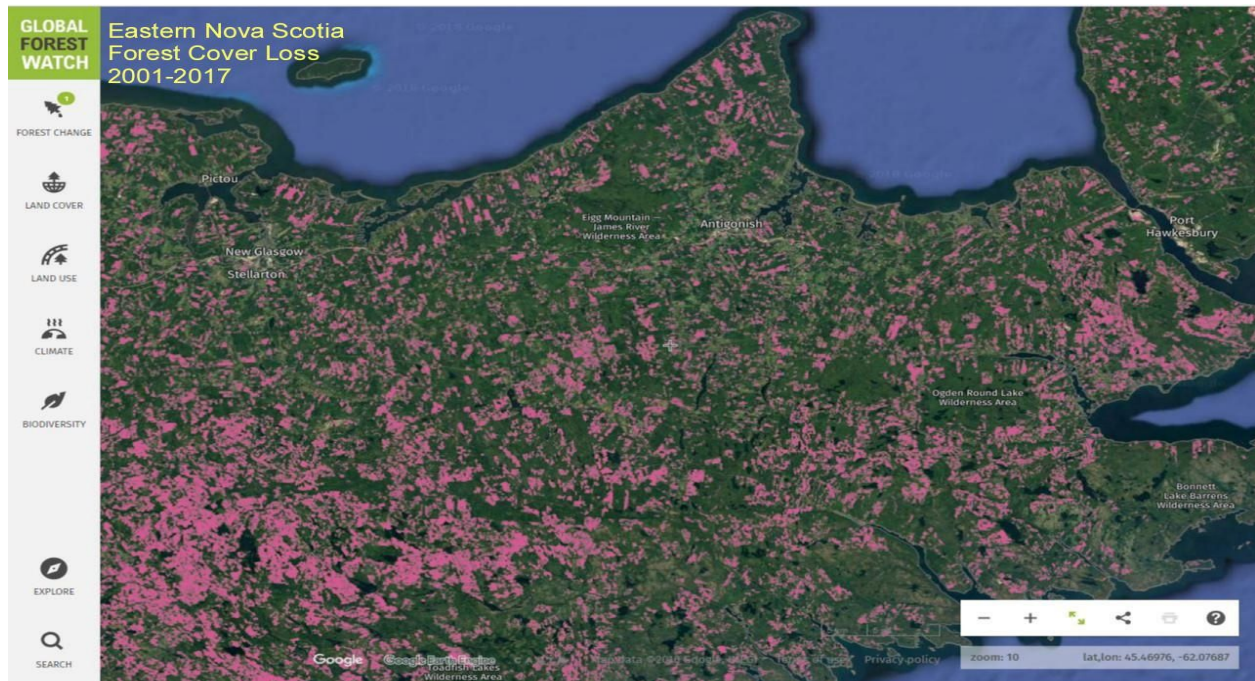
Government accepts Professor Lahey's Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia and agrees with the spirit and intent of his recommendations. Many of Professor Lahey's recommendations are interconnected, and their implementation will be phased in over time.

The response identified priority actions to move towards ecological forestry in the province but was incomplete and did not directly address all of Lahey's recommendations.

The immediate effects of clearcuts can be seen by visits to clearcut sites, and their long-term impact can be observed by similar visits many years after the harvest has been taken. But the extent of the problems identified in the two reports can be rapidly assessed through investigating websites such as Global Forest Watch, or by viewing some of the imagery obtained from Global Forest Watch which follow. Forest cover loss areas (mainly from clearcutting) are shown in pink. Note that these harvests were carried out between 2001 and 2017. Earlier cutting is not marked but can be shown by choosing to view 'forest cover gain' (locations where trees are growing back following earlier clearcuts and disturbances, but represent very young forests of low quality in nature.)









The images originate from one of several satellite databases readily available that clearly portray evidence of mismanagement of our forests and the rapid loss of our complex Acadian forest. Specifically, they identify extensive forest ecosystem degradation exhibiting the following impacts:

- ❑ **simplification of forest ecosystems mainly due to domination of clearcut/short rotation management.**
- ❑ **loss of older age classes**
- ❑ **removal of forest structure**
- ❑ **loss of tree species diversity**
- ❑ **fragmentation of forests particularly by road systems and clearcutting patterns**
- ❑ **loss of biodiversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels**
- ❑ **impacts on water quality, quantity and flow regimes; in some cases extensive tree removal within a single watershed has jeopardized vital freshwater ecosystem services**
- ❑ **loss or reduction in capability of forest soils to sustain biological productivity (i.e. nutrient losses) coupled with further excess acidification of surface waters, especially in SW Nova Scotia, and**
- ❑ **loss or reduction of carbon storage functions, thereby contributing unnecessarily large quantities of greenhouse gases that exacerbate climate change (particularly from exposing soil carbon stores to direct sun, causing carbon to volatilize into CO₂).**

The catalogue of degradation does not end there. Economists and sociologists express concerns that include:

- ❑ **the creation of employment and economic dependency based on single dominant use (eg. pulp mills and forest biomass burning) and over exploitation of forest resources**
- ❑ **lack of incentives for forest land conservation and for small private landowners to conduct lower impact ecological forestry**
- ❑ **loss or reduction of potential to accrue a fuller range of economic, social and environmental benefits that can be derived from less intensive, longer rotation, more diversity, forest management approaches, and**
- ❑ **loss or reduction in potential to accrue benefits from other forest uses such as tourism, recreation, and health.**

This mismanagement inspires the calls for forestry reform by both Prof. Lahey (2018) and Justice Glube (2010).

The role of government agencies:

The record clearly demonstrates that all three major provincial political parties bear responsibility for the mismanagement of the provinces forests and their current state of degradation.

But it is the agency specifically charged with forest management that has earned the most criticism from the public. The Department of Lands and Forestry (formerly DNR), is widely believed to be determined

to maintain the status quo in forest management, and possesses neither the capacity nor the willingness to reform itself.

Professor Lahey captured their sentiments:

141. Judging by what I heard in this Review, there is a general lack of trust and confidence in DNR shared by people who otherwise strongly disagree on forestry practices and other forestry issues.

*145. I have observed a significant gap between what DNR says it is doing to manage forestry on Crown land and how it is actually managing forestry on Crown land. It says it is making a transition to ecosystem-based forestry, a version of what this report calls ecological forestry. As noted by Van Damme and Duinker in their paper, "Silviculture Reporting, Progress, and Accountability,"¹ the 2017 State of the Forest Report states: "The Department of Natural Resources is committed to advancing the practice of ecosystem-based landscape scale management." In reality, the forestry taking place on Crown lands continues in significant measure to be governed by the philosophy and methods of the 1984 Royal Commission. **Unless the minister and deputy minister of the department make it clear and unequivocal that the department is fully committed to ecosystem-based management, within a triad model of doing so on a landscape basis, this gap will continue to exist. The result will be confusion and uncertainty for the industry and distrust and opposition from those concerned, including much of the public, about how forestry is being conducted on Crown land. Further, the idea that DNR is setting an example for management on private land will be an illusion.**(bold added)*

As Professor Lahey noted, the Department's commitment to the status quo and the use of deceptive communications on what it says it is doing versus reality, has made the public distrustful. Public interest in forestry and conservation has been increasing exponentially and with it an increased awareness of and dissatisfaction with...

- **the widespread clearcutting of the province's forested landscapes**
- **wasteful practices like large scale biomass burning for energy in inefficient boilers such those at Point Tupper and Abercrombie.**
- **a forest management system that emphasizes:**
 - short rotations
 - a bias to clearcuts
 - the harvesting of old growth
 - the poor use of science, and
 - the lack of transparency and accountability.

All of these were addressed in the Lahey report.

¹ Presented in Volume 2 of Professor Lahey's report.



The overriding concern of the public is a lack of trust and confidence in the ability of the department to lead forestry reform, particularly due to its close ties with industry. It is like the farmer asking the fox to design a new chicken coop because the fox knows something about chickens.

What has happened since Professor Lahey reported?

Despite the completion of the Lahey report and Minister Rankin's acceptance of its findings, public dissatisfaction has continued to grow.

Prof. Lahey, in his third recommendation to government, stated that:

Consistent with the ecological forestry paradigm, the objective of forestry practices in Nova Scotia should be, wherever appropriate, to maintain or restore multi-aged and mixed-species forests in which late-successional species have the opportunity to grow and mature where they represent the forest's natural condition. Practices that do otherwise in those forests should be curtailed.

There have been many local examples of "forestry business as usual" and little evidence of on-the-ground forestry reforms. Ecological forests harvests are well established in other parts of eastern North America; but in this province there is evidence that stalling tactics are being used to delay implementation of any such practices for a full year. Given the large number of newly approved proposed clearcuts, delay will *likely be much longer*, as they cannot all be complete within one year.

Making matters worse is a continuation of the Department's practice of re-naming terms it finds difficult to deal with. The recent elimination of the forestry term "clearcut" to describe large even-age management cuts and replacing it with other less easily visualized terms is a case in point. The government claims the term is a layman's term and not one used in forestry. This is simply false. The term 'clear-cut' is common in forestry literature and used by the federal government in its national state of the forests reporting, as it is in other jurisdictions. Such attempts to address forest management reform by treating problems as communication issues simply add to the growing public distrust and lack of confidence in the government's ability to manage our natural resources. It is like putting sunglasses on a horse and claiming it is no longer a horse.

The public has grave concerns over the wasteful large scale burning of wood produced from our forests for energy and the exporting of large volumes of wood chips produced from our forest, also to be burned for energy. The government should openly and urgently address these issues with the end goal of prohibiting the burning and exporting of forest products for large scale energy production. These wasteful uses of our forests are not carbon neutral, as is falsely claimed, and they create market pressures on the private and crown forest land base that leads to widespread clearcutting. If leadership were shown to address these wasteful uses of our forests, it would engender a high level of public confidence in the government's commitment to building a new forestry for Nova Scotia.

What can you personally do to assist with forestry reform?

The forest reforms recommended in the Lahey Report provide the province with the pathway to build public confidence and trust in the conservation and management of the province's forests. These reforms would establish a forest management system that would be accepted by the public, the scientific community, private woodlot owners and others as credible and legitimate.

The government needs a fuller, more complete and responsible response to the Lahey Report. In order to implement ecological forestry on crown land, we urge you to support the following priorities:

- ☐ **Immediately freeze clearcutting (even age management) in all of its forms on the few remaining intact forest patches on crown land. The third or intensive leg of the triad has long been used up on crown land as aptly demonstrated in satellite images of the province.**
- ☐ **Commit immediately to protecting all forest stands over 125 years old.**
- ☐ **Complete the Protected Area System (i.e. 13% commitment), with management consideration to connectivity between such areas.**
- ☐ **Protect Species at Risk according to legislation and supporting science.**
- ☐ **Adopt a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent approach to establishing ecological forestry as the new forestry paradigm.**

High level direction from the Premier and Cabinet, together with all-party support , is required to lead and guide forestry reform and reform of the Department of Lands and Forestry.





It is because Nova Scotia needs that high level commitment and all-party support that we ask you to respond to the three questions we presented earlier. We are asking all MLA's for their individual response whether you are an opposition MLA or government MLA. We are very much aware of what the response would be to these questions from the Department of Lands and Forestry and ask that you give your personal consideration as an MLA to the questions rather than defer to DLF.

QUESTION 1

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What will you do – what steps will you personally take - as an MLA to insure forestry reform, including the reform of the Department of Lands and Forestry, and the timely implementation of the Lahey report is achieved?

Please let us know if you have any questions or need clarifications or additional information.

We ask you to respond by June 21. We will be posting them on our website after that date. Please send your replies to Mike Lancaster, HFC Coordinator at: ofthewoodsmike@gmail.com, or, if you prefer to use Canada Post, to The Healthy Forest Coalition, c/o Friends of Nature, P.O. Box 577, Chester, N.S., B0J 1J0.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike L".

Mike Lancaster

Coordinator

Healthy Forest Coalition



A +-100 acre clearcut bordering on the Old Annapolis Nature Reserve (Halifax County). Not seen in this photo but within several hundred metres are two other clearcuts of a similar area. A further 80 acres of adjacent forest (middle shoreline area and right area) are proposed to be harvested by even-aged practices, further fragmenting the Nature Reserve and directly contrasting the Recommendations of the Lahey Review.