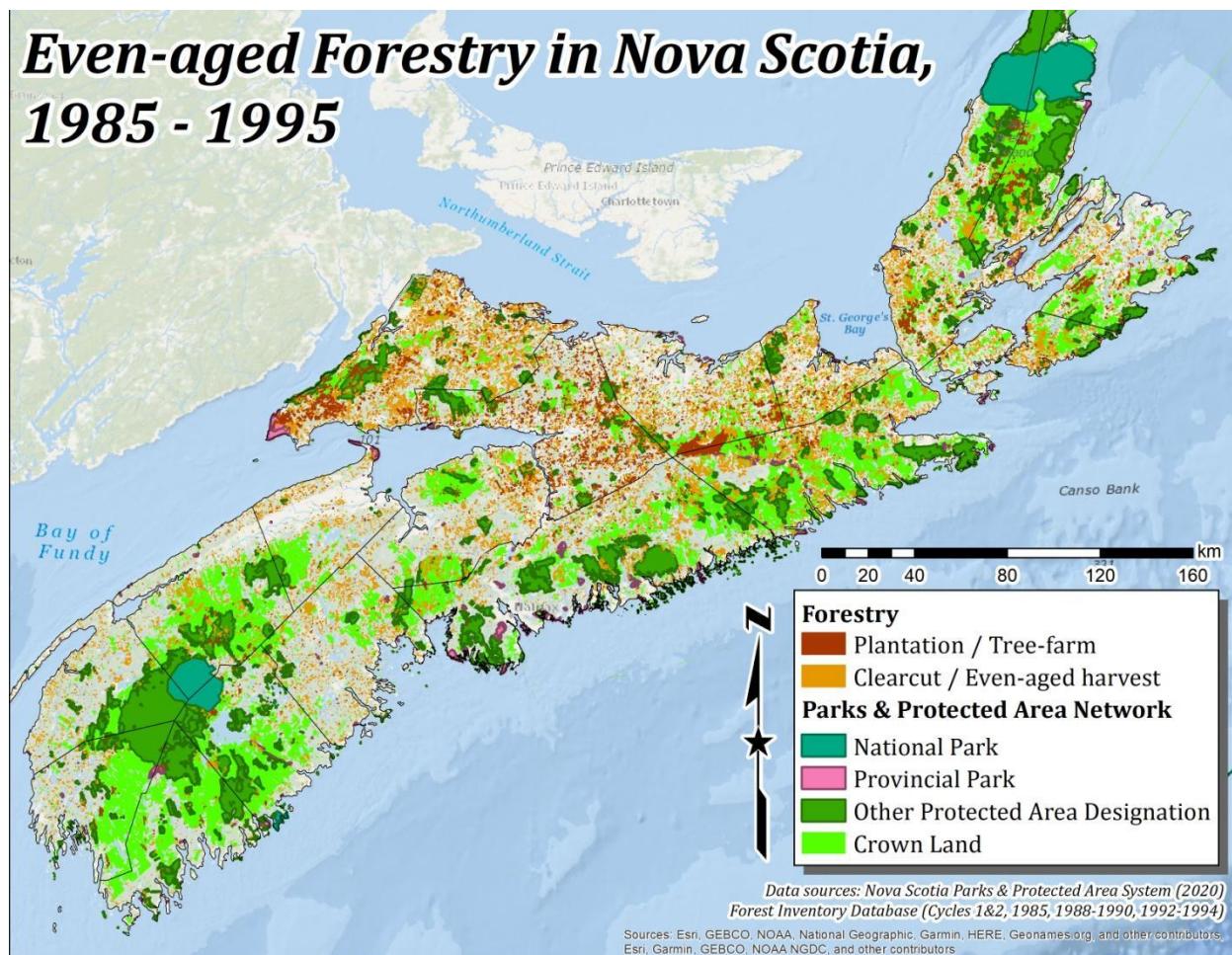


AN OPEN LETTER TO NOVA SCOTIA'S MLAS
FROM THE HEALTHY FOREST COALITION

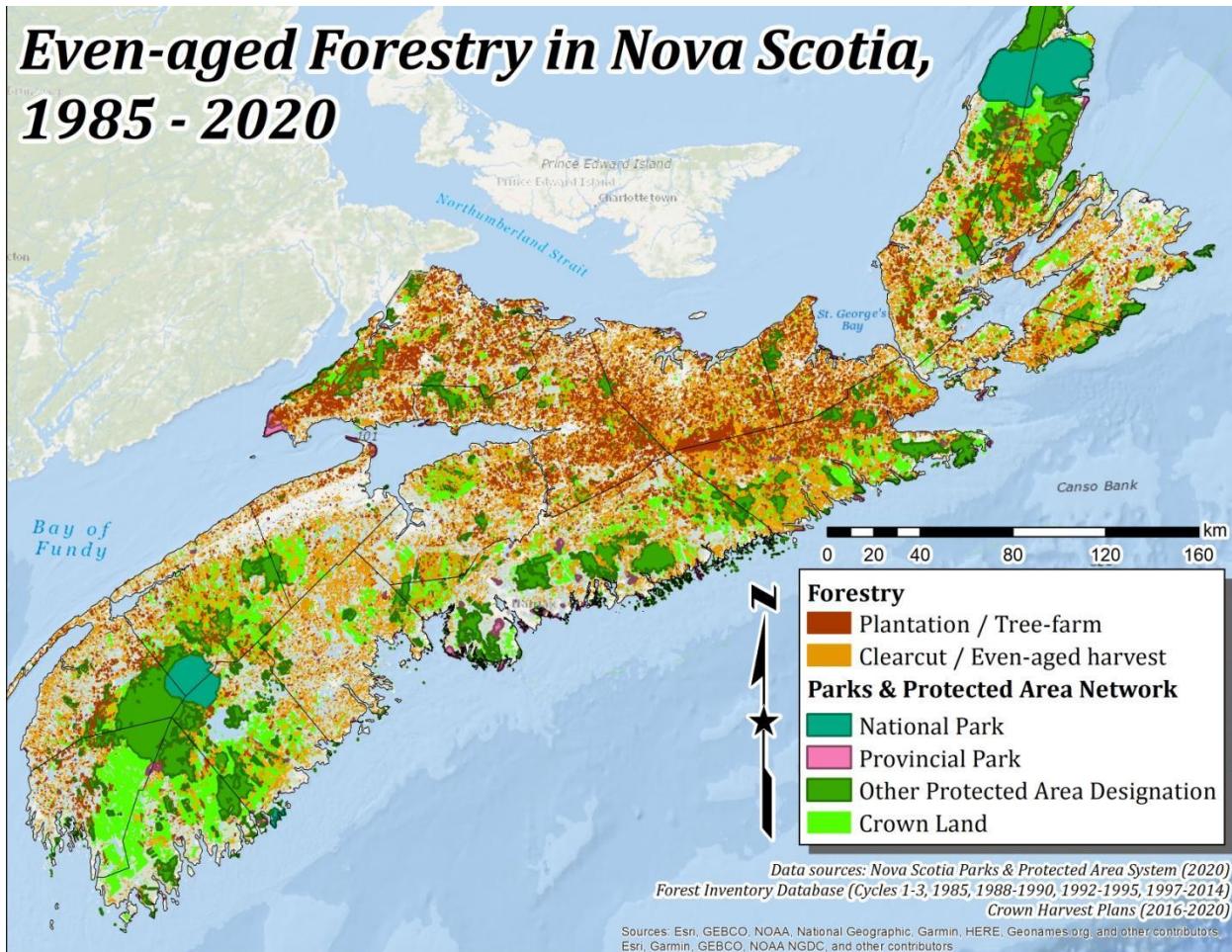
The Healthy Forest Coalition recently released a series of maps which compared the state of our forests today with their condition in 1985.

Media commentary suggests that environment issues will be much discussed in this session of the Legislature. With that in mind we are presenting those maps to you personally. We hope that they will help you participate in these discussions.

Clearcuts – or in Department of Lands and Forestry terms ‘even-aged management treatments’ - and plantations became widespread in the period covered by the maps. At first, between 1985 and 1995, private lands experienced the heaviest cutting. Our first map represents that period:



Over the next 20 years cutting greatly increased on Crown lands as well. The dark brown polygons, which represent the softwood plantations that succeeded cutovers, became prominent. The map for 2020 shows how little is left of the forest that existed in 1985:



Maps for 1985-2005, 1985-2015 and for the parks and protected area network can be found at the HFC website:
<https://www.healthyforestcoalition.ca/>

Our forested land base comprises 3,766,003 hectares of Crown and private land. This is a lot of forest, but many demands are made on it. It is integral to the survival of a great variety of animals and plants, including rare and endangered species. We ourselves rely on it for tourism, recreation, traditional purposes - such those of the Mi'kmaq - and, of course, forestry. The forest industry has access to slightly over two million of the 3.7 million hectares.

Between 1997 and 2018, using modern harvesting methods, the industry removed 109,557,000 cubic metres of wood from 964,662 hectares. This was nearly half of the forest land available to it. If harvesting were to continue at that rate – nearly 46,000 ha. per year – only 44 years would pass before

the land would be cut again, as other areas would already have been cut.. This rate of harvesting has already changed the forestry industry. Increasingly it is focusing on short rotation harvesting for small dimension lumber and wood chips, an industrial strategy that spells closure for many sawmills. In other words, modern clearcutting is bringing about the decline of what was once a bulwark of Nova Scotia's rural economy. .

Apart from undermining the industry, clearcutting (even-aged management) devastates animal habitat and forces radical changes of animal and plant populations, particularly for rare and endangered species. It forces the cycle of forest development to remain in early successional stages, dominated by pioneer species such as white spruce, birch, fir and alders. By removing the forest canopy, clearcutting exposes the forest floor to sun and heat and so to alternating episodes of drought and flooding, turning what was once an insulating blanket sequestering carbon into a carbon emitter and contributing further to global warming. It has removed much of our native Acadian forest which, having a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees of many ages , represents the kind of older, intact forest which is our best means of mitigating climate change. Unless we retain the Acadian forests we have left, and restore those we have eliminated, the existential threat of climate change will be even more devastating.

For the sake of all life, we in the Healthy Forest Coalition believe that we must address the clearcut/even-aged management problem. We can do that by amending the Crown Lands and Forest acts and thereby implement the Lahey report's central recommendations for ecological forestry. Over the next few weeks we will send you a series of briefing notes about the costs that clearcutting has imposed on the forest and on us all. These will be very short. They will not be hectoring or high pressure. They will outline particular issues, explain them, and offer recommendations for remediation.

We hope that you will find them useful.