

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

P A R K S

OUR
COMMON
GROUND

F O R E S T S

M I N E R A L S

THE FUTURE OF NOVA SCOTIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

■ FINAL REPORT ■ MARCH 2009 ■ NATURAL RESOURCES CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE ■

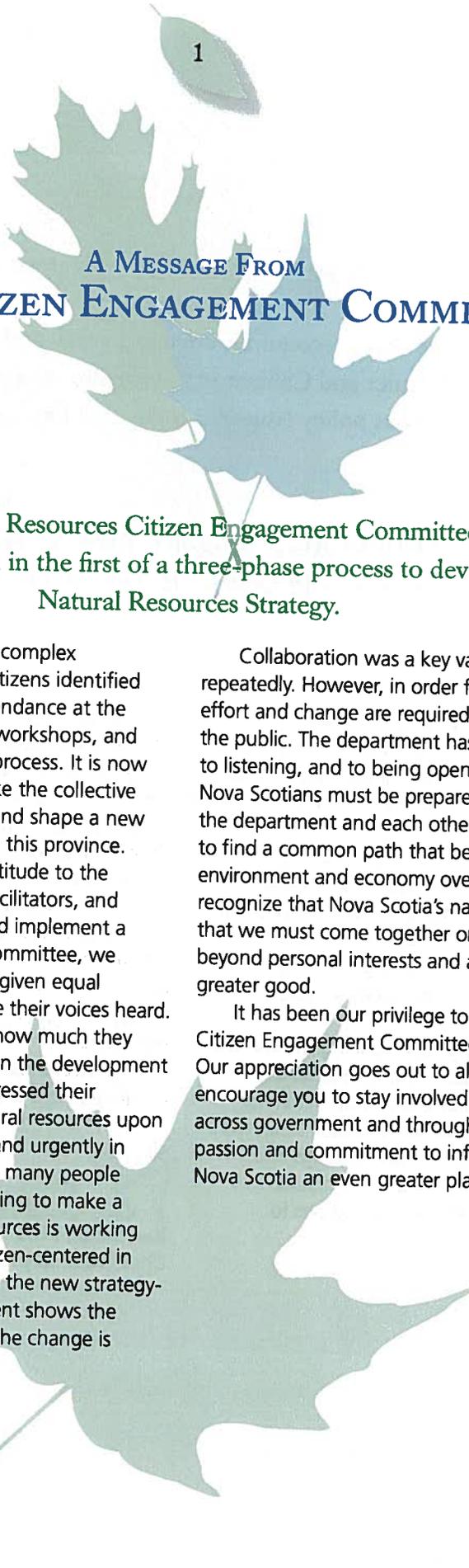


**VOLUNTARY
PLANNING**

A Citizens' Policy Forum

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Voluntary Planning Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee would like to thank all Nova Scotians who participated in the first of a three-phase process to develop a new Nova Scotia Natural Resources Strategy.

By listening, sharing, and moving through complex discussions in a most respectful manner, citizens identified their common goals and desires. Their attendance at the community meetings, participation in the workshops, and written submissions were essential to the process. It is now up to the next phases of the process to take the collective wisdom and experience of Nova Scotians and shape a new strategy and future for natural resources in this province.

The committee also extends its gratitude to the Voluntary Planning staff, the professional facilitators, and everyone who worked with us to design and implement a unique citizen-engagement process. As a committee, we needed to ensure that all citizens would be given equal opportunity to share their views and to have their voices heard.

Nova Scotians told us again and again how much they appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the development of the Natural Resources Strategy. They expressed their concern that the rural lifestyle, and the natural resources upon which it depends, are already under threat and urgently in need of a new management plan. Certainly, many people wondered if their participation was really going to make a difference. The Department of Natural Resources is working to become more collaborative and more citizen-centered in their policy-making. We believe that starting the new strategy-development process with citizen engagement shows the department's intent and demonstrates that the change is already in progress.

Collaboration was a key value Nova Scotians spoke of repeatedly. However, in order for collaboration to truly work, effort and change are required by both the department and the public. The department has demonstrated its commitment to listening, and to being open to new ways of doing things. Nova Scotians must be prepared to remain engaged with both the department and each other. Everyone must work together to find a common path that benefits us all through a healthy environment and economy over the long-term. We must all recognize that Nova Scotia's natural resources base is finite and that we must come together on a common ground that goes beyond personal interests and agendas and is truly for the greater good.

It has been our privilege to serve as the Voluntary Planning Citizen Engagement Committee during Phase I of this process. Our appreciation goes out to all those who participated. We encourage you to stay involved in this process and others across government and throughout your communities. A passion and commitment to influencing change will make Nova Scotia an even greater place to live, work, and play.

Voluntary Planning A Citizens' Policy Forum

MISSION

To measurably improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of all Nova Scotians by providing the Premier and Cabinet with valuable volunteer- and citizen-based advice on relevant policy issues for today and for the future.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR VOLUNTARY PLANNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Voluntary Planning has a more than 45-year history of providing citizen-based policy advice to the Nova Scotia Premier, Cabinet, and departments. This unique organization is an agency of the provincial government, yet operates at arm's length from it.

This latest project, on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, reflects our mandate to meaningfully engage as many Nova Scotians as possible in the province's policy-making process. On this occasion, as with previous major Voluntary Planning projects, we assembled a highly capable and credible team of volunteers who brought a wide range of perspectives to bear on the discussion at hand.

The Board of Directors of Voluntary Planning is immensely grateful to the individuals who gave their time to be on the Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee for this project. Collectively, these dedicated individuals met with thousands of Nova Scotians in community meetings and workshops around the province, considered hundreds of written submissions, and met on many occasions to reach consensus.

The committee was asked to find out what Nova Scotians value about our natural resources, with a view to strengthening a final strategy. While it is difficult to adequately portray all the enthusiasm and wisdom shared with the committee in meetings and through written submissions, the committee worked hard to capture the essence of what was said, to highlight the issues of most importance to citizens, and to identify the areas of common thought.

The Voluntary Planning Board of Directors has reviewed and approved the committee's final report. As Board Chair, I wish to affirm that the committee has adhered to the citizen engagement principles of Voluntary Planning in conducting their work.

We wish those ultimately responsible for writing and implementing this strategy the greatest possible success.

Sincerely,



Ron Smith, FCA

Chair, Voluntary Planning Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The status quo cannot sustain the biodiversity of our natural environment, enhance the economy, or preserve the rural lifestyle so valued by the citizens of this province. During a citizen engagement process on the future of the province's natural resources, Nova Scotians made it clear that change must happen in all areas of natural resource management—and happen soon.

The world around us is changing rapidly. Nova Scotians are concerned about the effects of environmental degradation, such as climate change, and the uncertainties of the global economy. They want to know their government has a plan to address these issues.

Nova Scotia aims to have one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020. To help reach that goal, the Department of Natural Resources is developing a new Natural Resources Strategy, to be completed by 2010.

The department is committed to becoming more collaborative and citizen-centered in their policy-making. For this reason, they started their strategy development with a citizen-engagement process led by Voluntary Planning, an arm's length agency of the Nova Scotia provincial government that develops policy advice for the Premier, Cabinet, and departments.

A Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee of volunteers was recruited to assess the values, concerns, and visions held by Nova Scotians about the province's natural resources, specifically biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks.

Five key values emerged from the collective wisdom and experience of those who participated in this engagement process. Nova Scotians expect to see these values reflected in the new Natural Resources Strategy. These values are as follows: Sustainability, Diversity, Collaboration, Transparency, and Informed Decision Making.

Sustainability: The current approach to natural resource management is not sustainable. Wise management of natural resources is vital to sustaining the environment and economy of rural communities and the Nova Scotian way of life. Nova Scotians clearly stated they want a Natural Resources Strategy that can provide for them today in a manner that will not negatively impact the culture, society, environment, and economy of the generations to come. They want an increasing number of rural jobs to be based on sound ecological principles.

Diversity: Nova Scotians highly value their province's great diversity in landscapes, climate, and ecosystems. These factors have allowed for an equally diverse array of activities and industries, which in turn is reflected in the diversity of Nova Scotians' beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. Nova Scotians believe diversity is an essential element of a resilient economy, a vibrant ecology, a thriving society, and a healthy lifestyle. They want a Natural Resources Strategy that recognizes these linkages.

Collaboration: Nova Scotians recognize that there are entrenched, differing viewpoints regarding natural resource management in this province, and want the department to take a leadership role in bringing those views together to find common ground. They also made it clear they want to continue to be part of the decision-making process. The importance of this to Nova Scotians cannot be overstated.

Transparency: Nova Scotians want a more open, clear, and easily understood decision-making process, one that declares its objectives and criteria in advance and provides measurable outcomes. They want to know the rationale behind any decisions that impact their natural resources.

Informed Decision Making: Nova Scotians want the department to use the best available information that incorporates science, economics, citizen values, and locally based community knowledge when making resource management decisions. Where information is lacking, the department should generate and make available research that is timely and useful. Nova Scotians need and want to be kept informed so they can better contribute to the decision-making process. Ideally, information sharing would go both ways: from government to the people and back again.

Other Issues

The committee received extensive feedback on uranium exploration and mining. This feedback revealed that there is strong support for the continuation of the moratorium on uranium mining and exploration. If the government wishes to review this further, we believe this issue is important enough to be considered on its own.

Phase I Complete

This citizen engagement process was the first of three phases in the development of the new Natural Resources Strategy. All findings, comments, and submissions from this phase have been passed on to Phase II, in which panels of expertise, independent of the Department of Natural Resources, will conduct more detailed analyses and prepare recommendations for the third and final phase.



OUR COMMON GROUND INTRODUCTION

This is a time of great change and opportunity in Nova Scotia in relation to the management of our natural resources. Nova Scotia's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) commits the Department of Natural Resources to develop a new Natural Resources Strategy by 2010. The department is committed to build on its past accomplishments, to become more collaborative, and to introduce more citizen-centered policy to inform the development of that new strategy.

At the same time, the province set the ambitious objective of making Nova Scotia a world leader by having one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments by 2020, while achieving economic performance equal to or greater than the national average. The path to this objective is mapped out in EGSPA's 21 goals, which can be viewed at www.gov.ns.ca/EcoNovaScotia/pdf/2020FactSheet.pdf.

With these twin incentives for inspiration, in May 2007 the department announced a three-phase process to develop a new strategy to govern Nova Scotia's natural resources, specifically biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks:

- Phase I (2008) – a citizen-engagement process led by Voluntary Planning (summarized in this report)
- Phase II (2009) – more detailed analysis led by panels of independent expertise
- Phase III (2010) – new strategy development, led by the department using input from the first two phases

Phase I – Citizen Engagement Mandate

The department believes that the citizens of Nova Scotia should play an important role in shaping the new strategy. Voluntary Planning, an organization committed to providing citizen-based advice to government, was asked by the department to compile the values of the citizens of Nova Scotia with respect to natural resources.

In late 2007, Voluntary Planning recruited members for the Citizen Engagement Committee to lead Phase I of the strategy-development process. The committee members were chosen for their objectivity, expertise, and interest.

The Phase I mandate called on the citizens of Nova Scotia to participate and to contribute their values, thoughts, concerns, and opinions on the future management of the four natural resource areas. The committee listened to and read the feedback provided by those who participated in the consultation process, and passed this information on to the next stages of strategy development. The committee prepared this report on the key findings, high-level issues, and values uncovered through the engagement process. These findings act as the groundwork for the detailed, technical recommendations that will come in Phase II.

Phase I Process

Twenty-seven community meetings were held throughout Nova Scotia between May 12 and June 17, 2008. Every county and half of the province's municipalities were included.

About 2,000 people attended and the vast majority of them voiced their thoughts and experiences aloud as part of a sharing circle. Nova Scotians positively responded to the opportunity to help align policy and programs with their values.

Written submissions were also welcomed and over 600 were received. All submissions were reviewed by the committee and considered in their deliberations. All submissions, where permission was given, were posted on the Voluntary Planning website at <http://vp.gov.ns.ca/>. Any information considered important to other government strategies was forwarded to the relevant departments, and all submissions made available to Phase II.

When all the responses from the meetings and submissions were collected, the committee analyzed their content, drew some initial conclusions about overarching values, and shared those thoughts through a Working Paper that was reviewed in a series of three workshops attended by 117 participants. This generated further feedback—some positive, some critical—that was used to clarify and refine the content of the Working Paper to form a final report. The Working Paper and the written feedback it received from over 60 individuals and organizations is available to the public at the Voluntary Planning website: <http://vp.gov.ns.ca/>.

This document, the final report, represents the end of Phase I. The terms “participants,” “citizens,” and “Nova Scotians,” as used throughout the document refer to those who were engaged in the process. The following pages summarize the key concerns, issues, and opinions participants expressed within each of the five values identified. **These points are presented with equal weighting because all are important to Nova Scotians.** The findings within, and all of the comments and submissions collected, will inform the Phase II process, which will work to give these points priority and a place in the strategy.

OUR COMMON GROUND WHAT NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE

Nova Scotians were asked to comment on what they value about the Department of Natural Resources' four main areas of responsibility: biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks.

During the course of the engagement process, citizen concerns emerged in other areas that are interrelated and inform the success of this work. This important additional information is captured at the end of this document. (Appendix page: 33)

Citizens demonstrated confusion about the rights, responsibilities, and ownership attached to what are called Crown lands. It is important for us all to recognize that Crown lands are, in fact, public lands.

The committee also found confusion among participants about what qualifies as "parks." In Nova Scotia, several types of lands are set aside or protected and are administered by departments other than the Department of Natural Resources. These include wilderness areas, nature reserves, national parks, and more. The public tended to see all of these lands as "parks." For the purposes of this report, "parks" refers only to Nova Scotia's provincial park system, which includes campgrounds, day-use parks, and rail corridors. Walking trails, camping, picnicking, and beaches are available on these lands.

The collected responses reveal five key values that Nova Scotians expect to see reflected in the new Natural Resources Strategy: **SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSITY, COLLABORATION, TRANSPARENCY, and INFORMED DECISION MAKING.**

SUSTAINABILITY

The status quo is not an option. Current natural resources practices in Nova Scotia for all uses and all users are not sustainable. Nova Scotians strongly told the committee that those resources, along with the economies and communities that depend on them, are in decline and at further risk.

The word "sustainability" came up frequently in Nova Scotians' responses. However, it was a word whose meaning could change depending on the user's experiences; cultural, economic, and environmental values; and time frame.

For some, it meant: *"Where an activity can be carried out indefinitely without degrading or depleting its surroundings or its supply of raw materials."* For others, it meant: *"Maintaining the rural way of life, which includes keeping jobs in rural communities, protecting local economies, and retaining youth so the unique cultures of the different rural lifestyles in Nova Scotia will not disappear."*

These definitions are not mutually exclusive. Sustaining rural resources is vital to sustaining the rural economy and its way of life. Nova Scotians want to see a new strategy that finds that common ground and addresses it in a way that does not have a negative impact on their culture, society, environment, and economy.

Nova Scotia Government's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) identifies and recognizes those four components (socio-cultural, environment, and economy) so the values Nova Scotians brought forward as part of this process were in alignment with the act. The committee is pleased, therefore, to see that alignment with the act is already built into the terms of reference for Phases II and III of this strategic development process.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

Any decisions made in Phase II must be parallel in content and intent with the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which states that the health of the environment, the health of the economy, and the health of the people of the province are all interconnected.

The government needs to communicate the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act's objectives better to the public. The committee repeatedly heard Nova Scotians asking for objectives that are covered in the act; however, at the same time, the public appeared to be unaware of the existence of the act. EGSPA's objectives are to have one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020 while achieving economic performance equal to or greater than the national average.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE SUSTAINABILITY IN ...

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

- Nova Scotians call for better balance between economic gain and non-economic benefits.
- Nova Scotians want the strategy to include the immediate and long-term needs of biodiversity. The public currently feels that short-term needs are given precedence over long-term needs.
- Nova Scotians feel that biodiversity should be an overarching aspect of the long-term management of all natural resources and development.
- Many references were made to conserving biodiversity by using a precautionary approach: where there are possibilities of damage, decision making should favour the prevention of environmental degradation.
- Nova Scotians see intact biodiversity as an “insurance policy” for a resilient and sustainable Nova Scotia.
- Some participants cautioned that although biodiversity is an important component of natural resource management, it should not be treated as a “holy grail” issue that overrides common sense.
- Many Nova Scotians recognize that the more degraded our ecosystems become, the more important parks and protected areas become for sustaining biodiversity.
- Participants feel that Nova Scotia has underdeveloped economic opportunities based on biodiversity; Nova Scotia should take the lead in developing new “green” technologies that support biodiversity and must further promote international recognition of our province for its biodiversity.
- Participants feel that Nova Scotia should develop and support new ecotourism opportunities, especially related to migratory birds, rare plants, oceans, hiking, and whale watching.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE SUSTAINABILITY IN ...

F O R E S T S

- Nova Scotians want healthy forests and a healthy forest industry.
- Nova Scotians want healthy forests to provide clean soil, water, and air.
- Many participants think that large clear-cuts are neither ecologically nor economically sustainable and that their frequency of practice should be reduced. Others feel that under specific conditions it is a necessary and environmentally appropriate management tool.
- Many Nova Scotians say that they want to see better ways to transfer the passion and skills from current woodlot owners to the next generation. They want to see support for meaningful succession.
- Forests and the forest industry have played a significant role in the culture and history of Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotians want them to continue to play that role.
- Nova Scotians believe that forests and the forest industry are crucial to the economy of Nova Scotia; they are major economic players in many rural communities.
- Nova Scotians want their children and grandchildren to be able to have the same opportunities the forests provided to them; be that recreation, jobs, preservation, or ownership. Long-term forest planning is required to make that happen.
- Participants say that Nova Scotia needs to place more emphasis on “green” forest products, potentially becoming a world leader in this area.
- Nova Scotians say that high fuel and electricity costs are hindering the forest industry.
- Nova Scotians want the province to promote value-added forest products, including timber (softwood and hardwood) and non-timber forest products, to create a more diverse economy that is resilient to climate change, market demand, and economic competition.
- Nova Scotians are concerned that the impact of some federal and provincial tax policies may lead to abandonment of woodlots, leaving them unmanaged or liquidated.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE SUSTAINABILITY IN ...

MINERALS

- Nova Scotians see minerals and the mining industry as providing significant economic benefits and spinoffs to the provincial economy, particularly in rural Nova Scotia; they acknowledge the importance of minerals and mineral products in their daily lives.
- Many Nova Scotians expressed considerable concerns about the negative impacts mining can have on health, water, air quality, wildlife habitat, and property values. They also mentioned current or historic toxic tailings.
- It was repeatedly stated that neither mines nor quarries should be permitted in or near sensitive (e.g., wetlands) or protected habitats (e.g., parks, wilderness areas).
- Nova Scotians call for a strict and consistent environmental assessment process.
- Nova Scotians want a more equitable environmental assessment process.
- Some participants say that there should be an increase in the use of products made from alternative surface materials and investments in sustainable industries, such as renewable energy.

PARKS

- Nova Scotians see parks as a valued connection to the natural world and a necessary recreational and economic resource; parks form an integral component of a healthy environment and healthy lifestyle.
- Nova Scotians see great value in the educational benefits parks provide.
- Nova Scotians feel that the dual role parks play in the protection of biodiversity and as a venue for public recreation requires a long-term balanced approach to management.
- Nova Scotians place great importance on the impact parks and protected areas have on their socio-cultural fabric and livelihoods.
- Nova Scotians desire expanded access to parks where appropriate, along with increased availability and enhanced infrastructure. However, some participants voiced the concern that some existing parks are not being well cared for, or well used, and that new parks should not be added until all current parks are up to standard.
- Nova Scotians call for a review of appropriate usage for all provincial parkland; given that parks are all Crown lands, it is important that they be managed in an exemplary way.

DIVERSITY

Participants spoke of Nova Scotia's great diversity in the forms of landscape, climate, and ecosystems. This diversity of natural elements and resources has allowed for an equally diverse array of activities and industries, which in turn is reflected in the diversity of Nova Scotia's people, their beliefs, backgrounds, and experience.

Diversity is an essential element of a resilient economy, a vibrant ecology, a thriving society, and a healthy lifestyle. Nova Scotians highly value the diversity inherent in their natural surroundings and wish to conserve it.

Throughout this process, participants clearly stated they want a Natural Resources Strategy that

- recognizes and accommodates various views, ranges of input, perspectives, beliefs, and interests
- understands how the combination of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity we have in our province results in Nova Scotians having other essential natural attributes, such as healthy air, water, and soil
- recognizes the immense diversity we enjoy in what is a relatively small province
- appreciates that all natural systems are interwoven and inter-related

Nova Scotians also told the committee that they believe the Department of Natural Resources must have a selection of management and regulatory options, as well as incentives, because of the wide range of land owner and land user objectives. Those land owners included the Crown, small land owners, and industry.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

"One size fits all" policies will not work due to this province's diverse natural, economic, and socio-cultural composition. Policy should reflect the local conditions; the Department of Natural Resources should be prepared to accommodate or customize policies in the context of an overall provincial framework.

Compared to most provinces, Nova Scotia has a higher level of individual land ownership. Policy needs to emphasize the values of good stewardship as a priority. It should inform land owners of the many forms of stewardship that suit individual rights and uses. Education will be key, along with reward, support, and encouragement.

Nova Scotians value being heard. A process should be put in place that allows them to contribute to policy development. At the same time, it must be communicated to Nova Scotians that by demanding such a process, they have a responsibility to participate.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE DIVERSITY IN ...

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

- Nova Scotians believe that it is necessary to take a broader ecosystem perspective on managing natural resources because ecological systems are inherently interconnected and interrelated.
- Nova Scotians believe that long-term ecological services (such as the filtering done by bogs, or the oxygen produced by forests) are more valuable than short-term economic values.
- Nova Scotia has a significant number of rare species; for this reason participants want the unique features of our biodiversity to be recognized and maintained as valuable sources of genetic diversity.
- Nova Scotians feel that the Acadian Mixed Forest requires a different management approach than the boreal forest because of its high species diversity.
- Participants recognize the role that biodiversity plays in their physical and spiritual health, recreation, jobs, and cultural identity, and in the environment's health.
- Non-economic values of biodiversity should be incorporated in decision making. Some Nova Scotians want more effort and funding invested in restoring species and their habitats, including those of the Atlantic salmon and the mainland moose.
- Some Nova Scotians say the province must proceed with caution with endangered species and not endanger them further through excessive handling, disturbance, research, and expanded access.
- Nova Scotians raised the concern that some systems have been too protected and this has not permitted effective management of invasive species.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE DIVERSITY IN ...

F O R E S T S

- Nova Scotians strongly agree that funding for silviculture needs to be increased and available to owners of woodlots of all sizes. Such silviculture should include a variety of alternative approaches that strengthen the diversity of Nova Scotia's woodlands and all aspects of forest management systems; this will require funding, training, and logistical support.
- Participants say that Nova Scotia must recognize and acknowledge all forest uses and values.
- Nova Scotians say the province's great variety of forest types provides enormous opportunities for value-added products and that Nova Scotia should keep moving forward on the development and production of these products.
- Many Nova Scotians want to see reliance on monoculture forests decrease significantly, uneven-aged management promoted, and the biological diversity of natural forests embraced.
- Nova Scotians believe forest diversity is crucial to a diverse and resilient forest economy and ecology.
- Individual woodlot owners want the flexibility to create woodlots tailored to their specific values.
- Some Nova Scotians feel that there is a need for the addition of a Category 8 to the Forest Sustainability Regulations that would support a woodlot investment fund program and a program of carbon credits for the small woodlot owner, and the creation of a streamlined marketing system for all forest products.
- Many Nova Scotians want to see the diversity of the Acadian Forest reflected in the forest industry; the industry should diversify products and associated markets.
- Some Nova Scotians feel that our province relies too heavily on our forests for the production of fibre (e.g., pulp, paper, biomass energy).
- Participants call for the Department of Natural Resources to recognize the enormous diversity of forest industry objectives, given that there are upwards of 30,000 private woodlot owners in the province.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE DIVERSITY IN ...

MINERALS

- Participants say that the province should be taking greater advantage of Nova Scotia's diverse geology, which has a broad variety of metallic, industrial, and energy minerals. This range of minerals can be globally competitive because of mineral quality, location, and proximity to market.
- Nova Scotians believe that mineral exploration and extraction must respect the environment and not hinder the enjoyment of traditional pursuits such as hunting, angling, trapping, and gathering.
- Some participants view the high proportion of privately owned land as an impediment to mineral exploration due to the land access challenges. Others raised concern that mineral claims are being staked without land owner knowledge and would like a notification mechanism to be established and better protection for land owners in mineral laws.
- Nova Scotians feel that the Department of Natural Resources should explore a variety of financial incentives to attract industry to the province.

PARKS

- Nova Scotians feel that parks must accommodate many users with differing needs to maximize utility and enjoyment, but they also understand that some activities are incompatible.
- Nova Scotians would like to see designated parks or areas within parks that allow for different uses where those activities are mutually exclusive.
- Nova Scotians want to see increased accessibility to a variety of ecosystems, for a variety of usages.
- Nova Scotians say that there is a need for an appropriate method to address invasive species in parks and forests.

COLLABORATION

The committee heard a virtually unanimous call for increased collaboration in decision making between government, stakeholder groups, and the public.

Nova Scotians see the province's natural resources as being interconnected and interdependent; they do not function in isolation and what happens to one resource affects the others. These effects go beyond the environment to include our society, economy, and culture as well. That is why the committee frequently heard the suggestion that the Department of Natural Resources needs to come out of its internal silos and work in a more collaborative manner in all directions: within its own department, with other departments provincially, and with municipal and federal levels as well.

Just as importantly, participants want the public to be included in the decision-making process. They see a wealth of collective knowledge existing within Nova Scotia and believe that the department would benefit by tapping into this valuable resource.

Nova Scotians recognize that there are entrenched, differing viewpoints about natural resources management and want to see the department take a leadership role in bringing those views together to find common ground.

Private woodlot owners stated that they felt they had enjoyed more support and collaboration under previous federal/provincial agreement programs. They hope that the new strategy would remedy this situation and foster a renewed spirit of co-operation.

Nova Scotians also expressed concerns that the many roles the department must play often conflict with each other. These roles include educator, enforcer, protector, policy-maker, steward, marketer, revenue, and manager. They believe that increased communication and collaboration is essential for minimizing those conflicts and maintaining the integrity of each role's mandate.

Collaboration is extremely important to Nova Scotians. Their own engagement and participation in this effort, and the appreciation they expressed for the opportunity to do so, speaks volumes. Nova Scotians made it clear they want to continue to work with government, other organizations, and their communities in the future to make decisions related to natural resources. They also said they want any collaborative process to result in timely action.

Building a collaborative process and engaging the public requires new ways of working, and other governments are already proving it can be done. The department will need to allow time for collaboration in their own decision-making process. They also must recognize that industry, stakeholders, and community groups may have differing timelines, cultures, realities, and objectives that need to be accommodated. At the same time, they must recognize that there is a strong desire to move forward. Timely action will maintain, even grow, the goodwill that currently exists in Nova Scotians.

While the committee made every effort to include all groups and communities in this process, not all were heard from or participated. This experience showed that one collaborative process model "will not fit all."

The committee did not hear from as many individuals in the mining industry compared to the forest industry. This will need to be resolved in future engagement initiatives and a key aspect of this will be ensuring the provision of an environment in which people feel comfortable sharing their personal experiences and opinions.

The committee had also hoped to see a higher level of engagement from youth in general.

The committee recognizes that there is a legal obligation for governments to consult with aboriginal groups when decisions being made have the potential to infringe on aboriginal and treaty rights. There remains a need to develop meaningful engagement and consultation opportunities through appropriate protocols in subsequent phases of natural resources strategy development.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

The Department of Natural Resources should build trust by establishing a collaborative planning process that includes all related areas within the department, other departments within the provincial government, other levels of government (both federal and municipal), stakeholder groups, and the public. This model may need to be modified to suit particular sectors. This process must be open and collaborative, and efficiently engage Nova Scotians while preventing any one person or group from dominating the process.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to develop appropriate means to engage youth in order to understand their concerns for the future, capture their contribution, and ensure the future transfer of knowledge.

The Department of Natural Resources should be working with all educational institutions, from the public school system to universities and colleges, to share information, foster understanding, promote research, and hire students.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE COLLABORATION IN ...

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

- Nova Scotians feel that the Departments of Natural Resources and Environment should take a leadership role in collaborating with the Departments of Education, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Energy, Agriculture, and Fisheries and Aquaculture in order to conserve biodiversity.
- Nova Scotians think that the Department of Natural Resources must set an example of how to manage industrial activities (e.g., power lines, roads, mineral exploration) to reduce the impact on biodiversity, especially on Crown lands.
- Nova Scotians want to be more engaged in decision making regarding biodiversity and to encourage government to establish opportunities for knowledge sharing and discussion to improve regulation implementation and the capturing of new ideas.
- Participants feel that all Nova Scotians have a responsibility for promoting and protecting the province's native biodiversity, and that land owners affected by protecting the biodiversity on their lands, such as through riparian zones (stream edges), watercourse buffers, heritage clumps, etc., should be compensated.
- Participants feel that biodiversity cannot effectively be conserved because different departments have jurisdiction over different habitats (e.g., freshwater habitats) or protected areas (e.g., wilderness areas).
- Participants feel that the entire range of biodiversity values must be recognized and included in decision making and that this requires engagement of interest groups.
- Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to develop incentives and other forms of motivation for land owners to adopt biodiversity-friendly practices on private land.
- Nova Scotians believe that industries have to employ biodiversity-friendly management techniques; these industries include the forest, development, agriculture, and hydro-development industries.
- Due to the large proportion of Nova Scotia that is privately owned, participants feel that a diverse range of land owner objectives must be recognized and supported in order to effectively conserve species and their habitats.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE COLLABORATION IN ...

F O R E S T S

- Nova Scotians feel that forest interest groups must be consulted and engaged in forest/forest industry decision making, including consumptive (e.g., loggers) and non-consumptive (e.g., birdwatchers) users.
- Private land owners feel that they are bearing inequitably the cost of protecting the environment through regulations (e.g., watercourse buffers, wildlife clumps) and desire financial assistance and tax incentives, including succession tax incentives, to do so. Some feel they should be compensated by government for the parts of woodlots they set aside to protect the environment, as these are beneficial to society as a whole.
- Nova Scotians believe that the forest industry must respect the environment and not hinder the enjoyment of traditional pursuits such as hunting, angling, trapping, and gathering.
- Some Nova Scotians want less red tape and fewer rules in forest usage.
- Many Nova Scotians feel that there must be more consistent enforcement of existing forest industry and environmental regulations.
- Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to collaborate as a partner, information resource, monitor, enforcer, facilitator, and educator in forest/forest industry decisions.
- Nova Scotians feel that departments must work together, especially the Departments of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Some participants say that Crown land should be “community-controlled” rather than controlled by stakeholders or multinationals. Some say that the public should have a larger voice in the management of Crown lands.
- Private woodland owners are concerned about losing control of their own lands and being forced to adopt outside objectives for forest land, including non-timber forest uses, by special interest groups/urban dwellers.
- Nova Scotians feel that industries should be good corporate stewards.
- Collaboration between land owners and other forest users is seen as essential to mitigate issues surrounding private land access.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE COLLABORATION IN ...

MINERALS

- Communities want to be part of the approval process of mines.
- Industry expressed the need for more public consultation on mining projects.
- Nova Scotians say that there is need for better co-operation and coordination among the provincial government departments and with other levels of government on policies and regulatory processes, including a community review process.
- Many Nova Scotians feel industry should inform the public of their work at an earlier stage of the project, and not just prior to development. There was also a call for industry to respect and gather local knowledge.

PARKS

- Communities, particularly special-interest groups, seek increased support and involvement in the process, decision making, planning, and policy relating to parks.
- Participants want government to play a role in the promotion and facilitation of active community participation in the planning, policy development, and maintenance of trail infrastructure.
- Nova Scotians feel a strong sense of ownership of park resources and have a vested interest in their long-term management.
- Nova Scotians believe that creative solutions are crucial to successful policy and planning, particularly with regard to trail development.
- Communities in Nova Scotia are prepared to work together to promote and enhance the natural experiences available through parkland development.
- Citizens feel that their input is essential to create a trail and park system that reflects the undertones and contexts of community values, ideals, culture, and heritage.

TRANSPARENCY

As with collaboration, the committee heard strong support and agreement for increased transparency in the decision-making process for natural resources.

Currently Nova Scotians perceive that politics play a greater role in determining public policy than it should. They want a more open, clear, and easily understood decision-making process, one that declares its objectives and criteria in advance and has measurable outcomes.

Nova Scotians want to know who the decision-makers are in any decisions that will affect them, and they want the means to be involved in the process. They want to know that government is collecting and sharing credible, verifiable information in order to make sound decisions that ensure the long-term sustainability of Nova Scotia's natural resources, and they want easier access to this information. Finally, they want to know the rationale behind the decisions that are made.

Having a more transparent process would give the public more opportunities to become informed about the issues. It would also instill more confidence in that process itself. Many were optimistic that this change would take place; others were openly cynical about that possibility.

Nova Scotians also currently believe that there is inconsistency in the enforcement of regulation compliance and that everyone should be treated alike.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

Any decisions that come out of Phases II and III of the Natural Resources Strategy development process need to be clearly communicated. Names of all committees and all submissions must be easily accessible—perhaps on a website.

The Department of Natural Resources should clearly state its financial stake in each undertaking and be upfront about any conflicts of interest.

Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to communicate how they are achieving the values expressed in Phase I of this process: Sustainability, Diversity, Transparency, Collaboration, and Informed Decision Making.

Given the confusion Nova Scotians currently experience about the difference between parks and protected areas, the new strategy must clearly define the various designations, regulations, and uses specific for each.

Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to commit to a citizen-engagement process by putting specific structures in place for it.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE TRANSPARENCY IN ...

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

- Nova Scotians need a common understanding of “biodiversity” and all its elements and interconnections.
- Nova Scotians think that the Department of Natural Resources has conflicting interests between natural resource protection and promotion for economic gain; they think that the department typically sides with promotion for economic gain rather than conservation.
- Participants feel that natural resources regulations have disproportionate effects on some user groups (e.g., small businesses) and that application of regulations is not equitable across all user groups.
- Many participants think that there are good regulations, but that they need to be consistently enforced to be effective. Many called for better enforcement of sensitive habitats, such as wetlands, when it came to off-highway vehicles (OHVs).
- Nova Scotians feel that the Department of Natural Resources works in isolation from the public and their concerns and this means that regulations or strategies are ineffective because they do not capture the true breadth and depth of the problem they were intended to resolve.
- Nova Scotia needs monitoring to make sure industries and businesses are complying with specifications outlined in their development proposals.
- Nova Scotians want political leaders to reinforce policies that are in place and to be diligent about enforcing them.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE TRANSPARENCY IN ...

F O R E S T S

- Nova Scotians say regulations are inequitable and do not apply evenly to all users of the land; other industries (e.g., agriculture, development) that alter forests should also be regulated (e.g., leave buffers, wildlife clumps, legacy trees).
- Participants say regulations must be “S.M.A.R.T.” and easily implemented. (Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Timely)
- Nova Scotians say that government needs to show leadership in the forest industry by working in the best interests of Nova Scotians over the long term, in part by using Crown lands for exemplary practices or as demonstration sites for best practices.
- Nova Scotians feel that the Department of Natural Resources should make it clear in their communications that Crown lands are public lands.
- Nova Scotians say that regulations need to be enforced and equally applied to all user groups.
- Nova Scotians say that the strategy must include legislation and regulations for forest inventory, monitoring, protection, and, where appropriate, control of activities in forests.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE TRANSPARENCY IN ...

MINERALS

- There is a need to build public trust to overcome the lack of confidence the public has in the mineral industry based on past practices. Both industry and government have a role to play. Due to mistrust, it is felt that Nova Scotians currently have a “no-no-no” attitude that impedes investment and development.
- Some participants feel that there is a conflict of interest with the Department of Natural Resources promoting mineral resources development and regulating it at the same time. Others see this dual role as beneficial as it permits sharing of in-house expertise and knowledge.
- Participants feel that the stringent enforcement of responsible mining practices/legislation and agreement to these rules and regulations by government, industry, and communities should be addressed as priorities.
- Some citizens view decision making in the way regulations are developed and applied as slow and inconsistent. Nova Scotians feel that all industry proponents should be treated equally, regardless of size, location of head office, or mining activity.
- Participants from the mining industry say that any development project (e.g., housing, agriculture) that interacts with our natural environment should be held to the same environmental standards as the mining industry.
- Nova Scotians say that the Minerals Resources Act and regulations should be reviewed and, where needed, rewritten to address inconsistencies of application and to promote exploration and land access.
- Participants indicated that there is a range of mining operations that vary considerably in size and environmental impact, and that “one size fits all” regulations are not appropriate. This is a particular issue with pit and quarry operations.
- Citizens feel that mineral evaluation needs to be a component of land use analyses for all government departments.

PARKS

- Individuals and communities say that they value the opportunity to participate in the planning and policy process as it relates to park and wilderness management.
- Participants say that inclusive and collaborative discussions related to park policy and planning would do much to promote understanding on behalf of communities and municipalities. Such a process should foster trust and promote synergy between citizens and government as it relates to parks and wilderness in Nova Scotia.

INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Nova Scotians feel that the Department of Natural Resources must consider many factors before determining if a decision is in the common good and must use the best available information in decision making. The decision-making process must use information that incorporates the values of citizens and their communities, along with economics and science. Where information is lacking, the department should take the responsibility to generate it. Nova Scotians further feel that this information should be made available to the public.

Participants told us that they wanted to see community experts involved in decision making to ensure the inclusion of locally based community knowledge. For example, community elders may be used as sources for a community's history.

The committee also heard that it was important to involve youth in the decision-making process. Helping youth develop an engagement process that is meaningful to them could result in their essential contribution. It could also result in policy decisions that help youth continue living and working in their home communities—offsetting the out-migration challenge many Nova Scotian communities face.

People also said that they needed and wanted to be kept informed so they could better contribute their values, knowledge, and solutions, as well as identify potential conflicts. However, this information must not be presented with the agenda of, "I'm a very agreeable fellow as long as people agree with me." In other words, it must not be one-sided with the purpose of convincing others to accept a point of view.

Ideally, there would be a "cross pollination" form of education, with the government sharing whatever information it has researched and collected with the community, and the community sharing the information it has with the government.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

The Department of Natural Resources has existing banks of knowledge that are a significant resource. The department needs to develop a plan to keep this information up-to-date and to increase its accuracy and accessibility for Nova Scotians.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to develop an affordable, efficient, and effective means to distribute information that is of interest to Nova Scotians and that does not require privacy protection.

It is essential that the Department of Natural Resources disperse accurate and timely information so decision making is not delayed.

A call to youth is critical for the future of Nova Scotia and its natural resources. The Department of Natural Resources must develop a means to involve youth in the strategy-development process.

HOW NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE INFORMED DECISION MAKING IN ...

B I O D I V E R S I T Y

- Nova Scotians want decisions to be based on best available information including that which is grounded in peer-reviewed, well-planned scientific study, as well as empirical information and community knowledge.
- Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to work with other organizations and institutions to promote independent, quality research, where information is lacking.
- Participants say that there is a need for more awareness and education about biodiversity within communities and school systems and feel the Department of Natural Resources must provide the leadership to meet that need.
- Nova Scotians believe that the existing rate of biodiversity loss will continue unless we become more connected with species, habitats, and current non-economic values through education.
- Nova Scotians say that there is a need to counteract "Nature Deficit Disorder" through the promotion of field trips and studies of local species in schools. Some felt this was an issue for the Department of Education.
- Private land owners need to know how to assess the health of biodiversity on their own land.

How NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE INFORMED DECISION MAKING IN ...

F O R E S T S

- Nova Scotians say that there is a need to counteract “Nature Deficit Disorder” through the promotion of field trips to forests and studies of modern forest industry practices in schools. Some feel that this is an issue for the Department of Education.
- Nova Scotians want decisions to be based on current, best available information that is grounded in peer-reviewed, well-planned scientific study combined with local research initiatives.
- Nova Scotians feel that a lack of knowledge in the general public about forestry practices is a barrier for the forest industry.
- Nova Scotians want accurate forest inventory data for use in good management, policy, and informed decision making.
- Nova Scotians want policy to be determined by people well-versed in forests and the forest industry, including forest land owners, community experts, ecologists, and those with recreational interests.
- Participants feel that the Department of Natural Resources needs to support and facilitate forest/forest industry education for Nova Scotians. The objectives of this must include re-engagement of youth in outdoor activities and fostering of stewardship among land owners.

How Nova Scotians Value Informed Decision Making in ...

MINERALS

- Nova Scotians feel that poor performance by industries in the past has left a legacy of mistrust. Industry and the Department of Natural Resources have a role in building public awareness about minerals and current mining practices.
- A significant body of geoscience data already exists but needs to be more accessible. Nova Scotians expressed the desire to have easier and complete access to this information through modern computer technology. An inventory of the presence and availability of each mineral in Nova Scotia should be made public.
- Participants feel that the Department of Natural Resources needs to continue collecting and generating good scientific geological information for decision making and management.
- Nova Scotians say that decisions need to be based on best available information. Some feel those decisions need to be based on science and economics, with community involvement as only one piece of the many factors that contribute to decisions. However, many others say that decisions on development must make community concerns a priority.

PARKS

- Nova Scotians value park resources for their contribution to the understanding and enjoyment of the natural world for all ages and user types.
- Citizens feel that their input is essential in order to create a trail and park system that reflects the undertones and contexts of local community values, ideals, culture, and heritage.

OTHER ISSUES

URANIUM MINING

Uranium mining is an issue that often threatened to take over all others, especially other types of mining, in the citizen engagement process.

The committee received extensive feedback on uranium exploration and mining. Many voices were heard on the topic at community meetings and workshops. Almost half of all submissions made reference to it, including two petitions.

A moratorium on uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia has been in effect since 1982 and became a forefront issue in public debate in 2008. The Citizen Engagement Committee and the processes it developed were never structured to fully address the technical aspects of an issue such as this. However, the topic clearly fell within one of the four major categories that the committee was tasked to deal with: minerals.

While the committee heard several calls for lifting the moratorium, overall the public input received through this process overwhelmingly indicated a desire to see the moratorium maintained and legislated.

In the committee's Working Paper published in October 2008, it was concluded that the issue of uranium exploration and mining was of such importance to Nova Scotians that it deserved to be fully considered on its own, independent of other topics. There has been disappointment in the way this topic was treated but, ultimately, the Citizen Engagement Committee's mandate was not to convene a forum on the moratorium.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy:

From this public engagement process, the committee heard strong support for the continuation of the moratorium on uranium mining and exploration. If the government wishes to review this further, we believe this issue is important enough to be considered on its own.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Participants in the October and November 2008 workshops were asked what a new Natural Resources Strategy would contain if it had successfully incorporated the values specified by Nova Scotians in Phase I. The following suggestions are taken from the workshop participants' discussions:

The Natural Resources Strategy would

- clearly define the mandate, goals, and objectives of the strategy
- display evidence of the five guiding values identified in Phase I
- incorporate both an ecological and economic approach
- define how the word "sustainability"¹ is being used in the strategy
- recognize the multiple roles of the Department of Natural Resources (e.g., steward, enforcer, marketer) and clearly communicate the department's objectives for each activity

All supporting provincial policies and legislation would incorporate

- clear definitions of words such as "best practices," and clear descriptions
- flexibility within regulations to recognize differences among regions and sizes of operations
- equal weighting of factors that reflect the values of Nova Scotians (i.e., cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors)
- a variety of management and regulatory tools with the flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs and objectives of Nova Scotians and their natural environment
- effective enforcement regimes and consistent consequences, where needed
- incentives and rewards to promote the use of best practices, with current disincentives to good practices removed

The strategy would have a transparent monitoring system to evaluate and report on progress in achieving its goals and objectives that includes

- baselines/benchmarks from which to work and to measure progress—in many cases, this would require natural resource inventories (e.g., rare plants, minerals, forests)
- regular targets to track progress
- measurable outcomes that will be audited by an independent party
- a conflict-resolution process that operates in a timely manner
- an adaptive-management approach that allows flexibility to incorporate new knowledge into tools, decisions, and regulations
- a reporting mechanism that articulates the factors/rationale leading to decisions

The strategy would commit to

- basing natural resources planning and decision making on science, research, local knowledge, and experience
- enabling multi-stakeholder involvement in decision making
- maintaining citizen engagement as part of its ongoing process and clearly identifying how people will be involved:
 - Opportunities will be created for the public to play a more active role in shaping ongoing policy.
 - Capacity building will be facilitated so citizens can be engaged.
 - Unbiased, up-to-date information will be easily accessible, thus empowering citizens.
- promoting collaboration and partnerships among government, stakeholders, and citizens

¹ The committee has presented two definitions (page 8), sustainable resources and sustained rural lifestyles, that represent the span of definitions heard. These definitions are not mutually exclusive.

Citizens will know the strategy has integrated their values when

- there is physical evidence of integration and application of the strategy in biodiversity, land use, and services in communities:
 - Nova Scotia would be economically and environmentally viable, with happy citizens.
 - Rural communities would experience economic growth.
 - There would be more emphasis on value-added products within the economy.
 - There would be common-sense adherence to policies, regulations, etc.
- Nova Scotia is looked upon as a model of natural resources management
- the principles of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act are operationalized
- there is consistency between government programs/policies/decisions, within the divisions of the Department of Natural Resources, and with other provincial departments
- regular reassessments of strategy outcomes are done by an independent party and the strategy has the flexibility to incorporate new knowledge into its tools, decisions, and regulations
- there is evidence of broad participation and collaboration in decision making:
 - The interests of multi-stakeholders and multi-sectors are considered and their input in the process is recognizable.
 - Stakeholder groups and citizens have access to resources to assist in decision making, such as in-kind capital, human resources, and research; there is a commitment of fiscal and staff resources evident in the department's budget.
 - Audits and decisions follow a process of collaboration; there is evidence of consensus-based decision making.
 - Stakeholder groups keep citizens informed through means such as annual reports.
 - There is evidence of trust for each other, for professionals, and for Mi'kmaw values.
 - There is active involvement of the aboriginal community and youth.
- there is greater sharing of information among government, stakeholders, and citizens, evidenced by
 - the public having easy access to the information collected by government and this information is complete and unbiased
 - the public having increased awareness of policy goals and intended outcomes; they are involved in making informed decisions and help make regulations achievable and enforceable
 - the department promoting natural resources within school systems

CONCLUSION

**Across Nova Scotia, a resounding call for change has been voiced.
Current natural resource practices for all uses and all users are not sustainable.**

Nova Scotians are passionate about the use, management, and health of their natural resources. The depth of feeling they had for this topic was underscored by the many people who attended community meetings and workshops or expressed their opinions and concerns in writing. Their enthusiasm speaks to Nova Scotians' desire to be involved in the process of developing strategies and policies.

Government has gained a great deal through these consultation exercises by having such an engaged public. The common knowledge, wisdom, experience, ideas, hopes, and concerns that citizens brought forward will add strength and depth to the new strategy by promoting a sense of ownership and commitment to the strategy by Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotians also have much to gain by having a government that has demonstrated its willingness to listen and take direction from an engaged citizenry. Through this citizen engagement process, the Department of Natural Resources has taken meaningful steps to break down the barriers—real and perceived—that existed in the public's mind. They have begun to build a relationship based on trust and open communication. Citizens appreciated this unique process that allowed them to have their voices heard and expect to be included in decision making from this point onward, including in Phases II and III of this strategy.

Now, both the department and Nova Scotians must work to maintain what they started. Nova Scotians have opened their hearts, put their misgivings aside, and shared their values. They must now keep the momentum going by continuing to stay engaged, to keep informed, and to take every opportunity to keep contributing. In turn, the Department of Natural Resources must prove they are sincere about changing by continuing to listen to Nova Scotians and by incorporating their values into the new strategy in ways Nova Scotians can recognize.

Suggested Directions for the Strategy...

...Under the Value of Sustainability

Any decisions made in Phase II must be parallel in content and intent with the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which states that the health of the environment, the health of the economy, and the health of the people of the province are all interconnected.

The government needs to communicate the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act's (EGSPA) objectives better to the public. The committee repeatedly heard Nova Scotians asking for objectives that are covered in the act; however, at the same time, the public appeared to be unaware of the existence of the act. EGSPA's objectives are to have one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020 while achieving economic performance equal to or greater than the national average.

...Under the Value of Diversity

"One size fits all" policies will not work due to this province's diverse natural, economic, and socio-cultural composition. Policy should reflect the local conditions; the Department of Natural Resources should be prepared to accommodate or customize policies in the context of an overall provincial framework.

Compared to most provinces, Nova Scotia has a higher level of individual land ownership. Policy needs to emphasize the values of good stewardship as a priority. It should inform land owners of the many forms of stewardship that suit individual rights and uses. Education will be key, along with reward, support, and encouragement.

Nova Scotians value being heard. A process should be put in place that allows them to contribute to policy development. At the same time, it must be communicated to Nova Scotians that by demanding such a process, they have a responsibility to participate.

... Under the Value of Collaboration

The Department of Natural Resources should build trust by establishing a collaborative planning process that includes all related areas within the department, other departments within the provincial government, other levels of government (both federal and municipal), stakeholder groups, and the public. This model may need to be modified to suit particular sectors. This process must be open and collaborative, and efficiently engage Nova Scotians while preventing any one person or group from dominating the process.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to develop appropriate means to engage youth in order to understand their concerns for the future, capture their contribution, and ensure the future transfer of knowledge.

The Department of Natural Resources should be working with all educational institutions, from the public school system to universities and colleges, to share information, foster understanding, promote research, and hire students.

... Under the Value of Transparency

Any decisions that come out of Phases II and III of the Natural Resources Strategy development process need to be clearly communicated. Names of all committees and all submissions must be easily accessible—perhaps on a website.

The Department of Natural Resources should clearly state its financial stake in each undertaking and be upfront about any conflicts of interest.

Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to communicate how they are achieving the values expressed in Phase I of this process: Sustainability, Diversity, Transparency, Collaboration, and Informed Decision Making.

Given the confusion Nova Scotians currently experience about the difference between parks and protected areas, the new strategy must clearly define the various designations, regulations, and uses specific for each.

Nova Scotians want the Department of Natural Resources to commit to a citizen-engagement process by putting specific structures in place for it.

... Under the Value of Informed Decision Making

The Department of Natural Resources has existing banks of knowledge that are a significant resource. The department needs to develop a plan to keep this information up-to-date, and to increase its accuracy and accessibility for Nova Scotians.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to develop an affordable, efficient, and effective means to distribute information that is of interest to Nova Scotians and that does not require privacy protection.

It is essential the Department of Natural Resources disperse accurate and timely information so decision making is not delayed.

A call to youth is critical for the future of Nova Scotia and its natural resources. The Department of Natural Resources must develop a means to involve youth in the strategy-development process.

... Under Other Issues

From this public engagement process, the committee heard strong support for the continuation of the moratorium on uranium mining and exploration. If the government wishes to review this further, we believe this issue is important enough to be considered on its own.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The following is a list of community meetings held by the volunteer Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee, by date and location:

Monday, May 12

Pugwash Saint Thomas More Church Hall, 79 Church Street

Tuesday, May 13

Blockhouse Blockhouse Fire Hall, 510 Highway 325
Parrsboro Parrsboro Fire Hall, 235 Willow Street
Port Hawkesbury Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre,
606 Reeves Street

Wednesday, May 14

Middleton NSCC Annapolis Valley Campus,
295 Commercial Street

Tuesday, May 20

Tusket* École secondaire de Par-en-Bas,
360 Highway 308 North
Dartmouth Black Cultural Centre, 1149 Main Street
Inverness Inverness County Centre for the Arts,
16080 Highway 19

Wednesday, May 21

Saulnierville* Royal Canadian Legion, 9938 Highway 1
Middle Musquodoboit Musquodoboit Valley
Education Centre, 12014 Highway 224
St. Ann's Gaelic College, 51779 Cabot Trail

Thursday, May 22

Debert Debert Hospitality Centre, 130 Ventura Drive
New Minas New Minas Civic Centre,
9209 Commercial Street

Monday, May 26

Shelburne Shelburne Fire Hall and Community Centre,
63 King Street

Tuesday, May 27

Cheticamp* Centre Acadien, 35 Baron Road
Windsor Hants County War Memorial Community Centre,
78 Thomas Street

Wednesday, May 28

St. Peter's St. Peter's & Area Lion's Hall, 82 Lion's Avenue

Tuesday, June 3

Sherbrooke St. Mary's Lions Club, Highway 7
Sheet Harbour Masonic Hall, 42 Sprott Lane
Weymouth Royal Canadian Legion, 24 Back Street

Wednesday, June 4

Membertou Membertou Trade and Convention Centre,
50 Maillard Street
Yarmouth Royal Canadian Legion, 75 Parade Street

Monday, June 9

Halifax Halifax Holiday Inn, 1980 Robie Street

Wednesday, June 11

Liverpool Liverpool Fire Hall, 520 Main Street
Stellarton Nova Scotia Museum of Industry,
147 North Foord Street

Thursday, June 12

Antigonish St. Ninian's Place, 120 Ninian Street

Tuesday, June 17

Guysborough Guysborough Academy-Chedabucto
Education Centre, 27 Green St

**These meetings were held in French.*

WORKSHOPS

Saturday, October 25

Truro Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Jenkins Hall
40 Horseshoe Crescent

Saturday, November 1

Cornwallis Annapolis Basin Conference Centre
Rear Admiral Desmond Piers Memorial Hall,
761 Broadway Ave.

Saturday, November 1

Baddeck Inverary Resort, 368 Shore Road

Appendix 2

QUESTIONS ASKED OF PARTICIPANTS

The following questions were provided to those attending community meetings or making submissions as a framework to help participants share their ideas:

1. What is your vision for biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks in Nova Scotia?
2. What are the strengths of these four areas of natural resources?
3. What barriers or issues affect these resources?
4. What do you see as your community's priorities for the future in these four areas?
5. What values are essential to guide the health and sustainability of these four areas?

The following questions guided all workshop discussions:

1. Based on the emerging themes (values), what is important to be carried on to the next phases of strategy development? (Themes presented: Sustainability, Diversity, Balance, Collaboration, Transparency)
2. What would you look for in policy, programs, regulations, or decisions that embrace/ recognize these themes?
3. What are your expectations – how will you know that these themes have been integrated?

Appendix 3

WHAT WE HEARD

This section provides an overview of what the Citizen Engagement Committee heard through 27 community meetings and over 600 written submissions.

A "What We Heard" Working Paper was produced in October 2008 using the original raw data from the meetings and submissions. That paper was used to stimulate more discussion and feedback in a series of workshops and in writing.

What follows is a distillation of all comments gathered. It is presented under the individual topic headings Biodiversity, Forests, Minerals, and Parks.

What We Heard About BIODIVERSITY**Sustainability*****Biodiversity as Insurance***

Biodiversity is an "insurance policy" for a resilient and sustainable Nova Scotia and needs to be conserved using a precautionary approach. Many participants saw the management of biodiversity as an overarching aspect of natural resource management that needs to be supported in all natural resources and other provincial policies.

In many cases, the public expressed urgency about reversing or slowing the biodiversity loss for future generations and opportunities. However, some also cautioned that although biodiversity is important, it should not be treated as a "holy grail" issue that overrides common sense and prevents new economic opportunities from being developed. Many recognized that the more degraded our ecosystems become, the more important parks and protected areas will become for sustaining biodiversity.

Investment in New Opportunities

Nova Scotia is thought to have underdeveloped economic opportunities based on biodiversity. Some believe that our province could be the lead in developing new "green" technologies that support biodiversity. Others indicate that we need to further promote the international recognition of our province for its biodiversity and develop new ecotourism opportunities related to our unique biodiversity features, including migratory birds, rare plants, oceans, hiking, and whale watching.

Diversity

Significance of Biodiversity

Nova Scotians recognized the significance of biodiversity for multiple facets of their lives, including physical and spiritual health, recreation, jobs, cultural identity, and a healthy environment that provides ecosystem goods and services.

Ecosystem Perspective

Participants called for a broader perspective on managing natural resources because ecological systems are inherently interconnected and interrelated. They believe that a holistic view should be taken and natural resources should be managed at the ecosystem level.

Habitat Enhancement and Species Recovery

Nova Scotians expressed concerns about the loss of species and the destruction and/or loss of habitats, including reduction in the quality of fresh water. Much of that habitat loss was attributed to industrial activity. Nova Scotians want more effort and funding invested in restoring species and their habitats, including those of the Atlantic salmon and the Nova Scotia mainland moose. However, there was also a call to proceed with caution with endangered species and not to endanger them further through excessive handling, disturbance, and research. Further, some systems have become so protected that effective management of invasive species has not been permitted.

Non-economic Values

Views were expressed about the need to use our resources more wisely and recognize the wide range of values and services Nova Scotia's biodiversity provides. It was indicated that long-term environmental services of biodiversity were more valuable than short-term economic uses. Non-economic values must be incorporated into decision-making processes that include the values of different stakeholders or land users. Many Nova Scotians also do not recognize the non-economic values of biodiversity and need education programs.

Unique Attributes

Nova Scotia's biodiversity has some unique attributes that need to be recognized and specifically managed and conserved. It was expressed that Nova Scotia has an abundance of rare species found in few other locations within Canada or the world. These populations need to be recognized and promoted as unique features of our biodiversity and be maintained as valuable sources of genetic diversity. Nova Scotia also hosts unique habitats worthy of more consideration. The Acadian Mixed Forest, for example, is characterized by high-species

diversity relative to the boreal forest and, as a result, requires a different management approach than the boreal forest.

Collaboration

Cross-Department Co-operation and Collaboration

Nova Scotians believe that the management of biodiversity has suffered because multiple provincial departments are responsible for species and habitats, such as fish, freshwater, and protected areas (i.e. wilderness areas). Additionally, there are multiple departments that make decisions that may impact biodiversity, although biodiversity conservation is not an integral aspect of their decision making. Nova Scotians believe that better management of biodiversity will be achieved if the Department of Natural Resources' biodiversity division works more closely or merges with related divisions in the Department of Environment, and also if the Department of Natural Resources works more closely with other departments whose activities may infringe on species or their habitats (e.g., Energy, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and Agriculture).

Role of Communities and Citizens

It was felt that, traditionally, the department worked in isolation from the public and their concerns. By failing to incorporate citizen knowledge and concerns in decision making, the resulting regulatory changes or strategies were ineffective because they did not capture the true breadth and depth of the problem they were intended to resolve. The public wants to be more involved in decision making regarding biodiversity and encourages government to establish opportunities for knowledge sharing and discussion to improve regulation implementation and to capture new ideas or community-specific solutions to problems.

A high proportion of the land base of Nova Scotia is privately owned; land owners must be educated and become willing partners in the conservation and restoration of species and habitats. It was felt that the department must recognize and support a diverse range of objectives to effectively meet the goals of private land owners and the needs of species and their habitats. Although woodlot owners in particular desire to retain control over their land, generally it was felt that all Nova Scotians share a role in the enhancement and conservation of Nova Scotia's biodiversity.

It was suggested that Nova Scotia should develop better land-use planning and zoning to strategically allow for different land uses and values, including recreation (e.g., off-highway vehicles) and protected areas void of human disturbance and activity.

Reduction of Impacts

Many participants believe that Nova Scotia could manage our industrial activities in better ways to reduce the impact on biodiversity, especially on Crown lands. Considerable concern was expressed about the prevalence of clear-cutting in Nova Scotia and its impact on biodiversity; there was a desire to reduce our reliance on this forest-harvest method. Nova Scotians feel that the department should be setting an example of how to reduce the impacts of human activity on biodiversity on Crown lands. Many suggested that the province should develop incentives for private land owners to adopt biodiversity-friendly management or harvest techniques on their land. The province should also require that all industries, including forestry, agriculture, and hydro-development, employ biodiversity-friendly management techniques.

Transparency

Definition of Biodiversity

The term biodiversity and its associated elements are poorly understood by many Nova Scotians. There was a resounding call for a concise, easily understood definition so that all participants in natural resource decision making can be assured of a common language and understanding. Many acknowledged that Nova Scotians do not recognize the existence of biodiversity, its values, or all of its goods and services. Some individuals exclude humans from the definition of biodiversity; others see humans as being an integral component of it.

Conflict of Interest

Nova Scotians perceived that the department has had conflicting responsibilities between natural resource protection and promotion for economic gain, and that the department has typically sided with promotion for economic gain, supporting the protection aspects of its mandate less. Many Nova Scotians requested a better balance between resource protection and economic promotion; yet others desire that all land users and values be accommodated to the extent possible. The vast majority of workshop participants agreed that consistent and transparent decisions by the department are desired.

Legislation and Enforcement

Participants felt that the regulations related to biodiversity have had disproportionate effects on some user groups. Many felt that regulations were geared to accommodate the needs of large industry and that smaller businesses suffered

because they could not afford the time or money to do things according to regulation while others thought Nova Scotia had good regulations, but that these were not effective because they were not consistently enforced. Many called for better enforcement of sensitive habitats, such as wetlands, when it came to off-highway vehicles (OHVs), the forest industry, road development, and agriculture. Political leaders must reinforce policies that are in place and be diligent about implementing and/or enforcing them.

Many called for government to monitor industry and business to ensure that they were complying with development specifications, especially in environmental assessments.

Informed Decision Making

Use of Best Available Information and Research

Nova Scotians asked for decisions based on the best available information that is grounded in peer-reviewed, well-planned scientific study from multiple jurisdictions and sources, empirical evidence, and community knowledge. Some expressed fear of the inappropriate use of science to justify decisions. It was suggested that the department is not using all of the available information to make decisions and should look to other provinces or countries for guidance.

In many cases, there is limited knowledge or sparse, short-term data about some of Nova Scotia's species or habitats. Workshop participants felt that there was a need for biodiversity inventories and long-term monitoring and that the department is responsible for providing funding to support these actions, potentially as long-term core funding to research and monitoring institutions.

Education and Awareness

Participants expressed a desire for more awareness and education about biodiversity within communities and school systems and felt that the department must provide the leadership to meet that need. It is thought that the current rate of biodiversity loss will continue unless Nova Scotians, especially youth, become more connected with species and their habitats and develop an ethic to change our ways and leave things "better than we found them." It is felt that education can help accomplish this goal and counteract "Natural Deficit Disorder" through the promotion of field trips and studies of local species in schools. Private land owners need appropriate training to assess the health of biodiversity and the impacts of management on their land.

What We Heard About FORESTS

The history and culture of Nova Scotia has long been closely linked to the forests and forest industry. Many of our communities are “in the forest” and “of the forest.” As a result, the passion and knowledge brought forth in forest-related discussions by the Nova Scotians who took part in this citizen engagement process was remarkable.

Issues about clear-cutting, and how the resulting impacts affect the sustainability of what Nova Scotians value about forests, were widely heard. Many Nova Scotians recognize that our natural Acadian forest possesses a unique array of species, ecosystems, and microclimates that should be managed with knowledge and sensitivity. The retention and restoration of the Acadian forest was spoken of often with diverse views expressed on how best to ensure this outcome. Participants expressed a range of preferences for management approaches, from large-scale intensive plantations to absolute preservation with no human interference. However, a common understanding shared by the vast majority of participants was the link between environmental and economic health, a belief summed up by the quote: “The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.” Most importantly, participants expressed a willingness to work together to find solutions to forest-related issues that will benefit everyone who lives, works, or plays in the forests of this province.

Sustainability

Sustaining What We Value

Participants felt urgent action was needed on several issues, including the need to: address the current crisis in the forest industry, protect biodiversity, preserve access to the forest, retain the forest, and ensure the survival of rural communities.

Nova Scotians love where they live and want their children and grandchildren to have the same opportunities that the forests provided them. While the maintenance of forestry-related jobs was a key issue, so was the preservation of non-economic forest values related to a healthy environment, recreation, and traditional pursuits such as hunting, fishing, and trapping.

The vast majority of contributors recognized that a healthy environment and healthy forests that support clean soil, water, and air would be supportive of a healthy forest industry over the long term. But those voices also stated frequently that both the resources and the communities that depend on them are under multiple threats and are in decline. Participants said that one of the changes necessary to achieve sustainability of

our forest resources was a monitoring process to identify that goals are being achieved, one that would also measure the true socio-economic and environmental costs of forest-related activities (e.g., true cost accounting or a Genuine Progress Index).

Forest resources must continue to play a significant role in Nova Scotia’s culture, supporting rural communities for the foreseeable future. There was great value placed on a strategy that would ensure the long-term health of the forest resource base because it would also ensure the viability of the communities that are supported by it.

Management Approaches That Lead to More Sustainability

Forest management generated a great deal of discussion. There was a call for greater diversity in harvesting techniques and silviculture. The topic of clear-cutting was frequently raised during the community meetings, workshops, and written submission. Substantially divergent and passionate views were voiced both for and against the practice, although it was also evident that the term held differing meanings for different participants.

Many Nova Scotians expressed concern about clear-cutting and its role in forest management, indicating that the practice should be banned or its use greatly restricted. Most of these views were related to the impact clear-cutting has on overall forest and ecosystem health, but extended into other areas such as tourism. Clear-cutting was often identified as an over-used technique and a leading cause for reduced forest diversity. Reference was made to the scale of clear-cutting both in size and frequency of occurrence. A number of participants also called for a ban on herbicide and pesticide spraying, expressing their concerns for the impact on habitats and the health of communities.

Alternatively, there were some who identified both clear-cutting and herbicide use as necessary, sound forest management tools for use where environmentally and/or economically viable options were limited. Others stated that intensive forest management practices were crucial in order for the industry to be cost-effective with a shrinking forest resource base.

There was, however, general consensus that Nova Scotians should reduce their reliance on clear-cutting as a dominant form of forest harvest and that regulations pertaining to clear-cutting should be consistently enforced. Thus it was felt that the new forest strategy must include a transition away from clear-cutting and toward less environmentally disruptive harvesting methods.

Succession In All of its Forms

Looking to the future, it was recognized that the forest industry is facing a skills shortage and ownership crisis. Many participants commented on the need to attract youth to the industry and to have more young people choosing the forestry profession as a career. We heard serious concerns from participants that there were few younger people invested enough in forests to be prepared to accept responsibility for family-owned woodlots. Many forest workers and woodlot owners described silviculture as the point where they first developed their passion for the forests.

Fewer and fewer of Nova Scotia's woodlot owners continue to live near their woodlots or take the active interest required to be good stewards. Land use regulations and tax policies were said to be leading to woodlot abandonment resulting in unmanaged or liquidated forest land. To maintain forested land, it was stated that Nova Scotians need to place a higher value on the forests themselves, along with those who work them and practice good stewardship.

Overall, it was felt that the Department of Natural Resources was in an excellent position to play a key role in providing support in the transfer of knowledge and passion about the forests from one generation of Nova Scotians to the next. A long-term management approach that supports both the health of the forests and the forest industry is of great value to those contributing to this process.

Creating New Opportunities

Many participants felt that there should be an emphasis placed on "green" forest products and to move toward producing higher valued-added timber and non-timber forest goods. This was identified as necessary to move toward a healthier forest industry and an economy that is resilient to the impacts of climate change, changing market demands, and economic competition. Again, the department was identified as needing to play a lead role in support of this shift toward sustainability in the industry.

Diversity

Importance of Diverse Forests for Economic Resilience

Diverse forests and the opportunities they provide make Nova Scotia a wonderful place to live and work. Nova Scotians felt the province should focus more on adding value to what naturally grows in our forests. By marketing a greater variety of higher value timber and non-timber forest products, Nova Scotia could create job opportunities, diversify our markets, decrease our reliance on clear-cutting, promote biodiversity, and allow nature to adapt to climate change. It was also stated that Nova

Scotia could become a world leader with respect to green forest products. The current downturn in the forest industry was identified as an opportunity to implement new approaches such as woodlot certification, carbon credits, better wood-products marketing systems, and a woodlot marketing system. There was recognition of: current attempts to diversify the forest industry, interdependence within the forest industry, as well as the need to build on past successes and Nova Scotia's historic strengths. Again, the department was identified as needing to play a lead role in support of this shift toward diversity in the industry.

Diversity of Use and Ownership

There was a strong call to ensure that the current range of forest uses in Nova Scotia be maintained and, if possible, enhanced. The great natural diversity found in Nova Scotia's forests allows for a range of activities such as bird watching, hunting, hiking, Christmas-tree farming, protection of species at risk, OHV use, wildlife management, and timber production. However, with over 30,000 different land owners in Nova Scotia, finding ways for these sometimes conflicting activities to co-exist was identified as a critical issue.

Silviculture Funding

Nova Scotians strongly agreed that silviculture funding needs to be increased and made many references to former silviculture programs under past federal-provincial agreements. Many identified the current silviculture rules as restrictive; they should be revised to allow greater forest diversity and owners of woodlots of all sizes should be eligible for the private silviculture program.

Collaboration

Nova Scotians Want To Be Involved

Participants strongly desire to contribute to and play a meaningful role in forest and forestry-related decision making associated with Crown lands through collaboration with government, the forest industry, forest interest groups and organizations, and communities. Crown lands are public lands and the public expects to be involved in their management. Participants felt that in some cases, Crown lands should be "community-controlled" based on local values, uses, and objectives for forests. Nova Scotians also stated they want any collaborative process to result in timely action.

The Department of Natural Resources must collaborate among its branches and divisions and across other government departments. Nova Scotians see the department as a partner, information resource, monitor, enforcer, facilitator, and educator in forest management and decision making. They want the

department to recognize those multiple roles and engage and consult with Nova Scotians in each.

Inclusion of Forest Users in Decision Making

Participants voiced the desire that forest interest groups be recognized, engaged, and consulted in decision making related to forests and the forest industry. Interest groups include forestry workers and businesses, and those who participate in non-forestry related activities, such as wildlife-watching, tourism, recreation, and hunting, fishing, or trapping. It was suggested that the forest industry has to be more willing to respect environmental health and be more accommodating of non-forest industry interests.

Acknowledgment of Private Land Ownership Rights

Much of Nova Scotia is privately owned and land owners wish for acknowledgement and support of a broader array of management objectives than are currently supported under existing forestry programs. Many participants stressed that the Department of Natural Resources needs to support private property rights and to prevent non-forest owners or urban dwellers from driving forest activities and policy development. Forest owners must be actively engaged in decision-making processes related to forests and forestry.

There was a call for forest owners to recognize their responsibility to society and uphold a better balance between economic benefits and stewardship activities. Woodlot owners frequently requested a means to address the disproportionate share of the cost they feel they are bearing to protect the environment for all of society by adhering to regulation (e.g., the establishment of watercourse buffers and the preservation of wildlife clumps, etc.). However, some felt that woodlot owners sometimes act irresponsibly and destroy large spans of forest without giving consideration to their social responsibility to maintain a healthy environment that continues to provide for the present and future.

Collaboration To Ensure Forest Access

Although forests are a fundamental component to Nova Scotia's culture and heritage, not all Nova Scotians own or can easily access the province's forests. This is further complicated by the large proportion of private ownership of forests within our province. Collaboration between land owners and other forest users is essential to mitigate issues surrounding private land access, including permission requirements; notification of hunting, fishing, and trapping activity; safety and liability; free-roaming pets in wildlife habitat; and respect for ongoing forest industry operations.

Transparency Leadership

The provincial government must demonstrate leadership in forestry by acting in the best interest of all Nova Scotians over the long term. This can be achieved, in part, by using new "green" technologies and allowing only exemplary practices to take place on Crown lands with the outcomes shared with the public.

While participants were pleased to have the opportunity to express their views, many lacked confidence that a new forest policy will take their needs and concerns into account. It was acknowledged that there will be times when the department is involved with issues of conflicting values among forest interests. In making the final decision, the department should work collaboratively with the parties involved to find the best solutions. In general it was stated that the department should be open and transparent about the processes and rationale leading to new policy and regulations.

Equitable and Effective Forest Regulations and Programs

As previously indicated, many woodlot owners felt they were personally bearing the cost of protecting the environment, in making forests more sustainable and felt they should be compensated or provided with other incentives. The establishment of watercourse buffers, preservation of wildlife clumps, and exclusion of some wetland habitats from harvest is reducing the value of woodlots and the income that can be derived from them. There was also concern that some of these regulations are not applied equally to other sectors, such as agriculture or the property development industry.

Many felt that existing legislation was likely appropriate, but that the existing regulations needed to be consistently enforced. Some felt existing regulations need to be simplified so they can be implemented more efficiently to support the viability of a safe, environmentally sound forest industry. There were also concerns that the documentation and processes associated with ensuring good environmental health were cumbersome and had disproportionate impacts or costs for smaller businesses.

It was generally thought that all regulations needed to be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART).

Informed Decision Making

Access to Information

Some participants stated that they had experienced problems accessing current best available information relating to forest resources or policy and that information received was at times inconsistent across departments and from within the

department. This information, including forest inventory data, is of value to Nova Scotians who wish to pursue their own management and decisions for privately held woodlots. They felt that research initiatives applicable to their resource and environmental conditions should be implemented.

Best Available Information and Research

Nova Scotians have indicated that any forest resource policy or management decisions must be based on information that is current, scientifically rigorous, and peer-reviewed. Where information is lacking, effort must be made to support and acquire it. Additionally, participants felt that research must encompass locally developed objectives and should include input from woodlot owners, community experts, ecologists, other resource users, and local citizens well versed in forests and forestry. Participants felt the department needs to take a leadership role in the support and coordination of research and the development of research objectives.

Public Education a Focus

Participants voiced a desire that the Department of Natural Resources support opportunities to educate all Nova Scotians about forests and the forest industry including the benefits or tradeoffs associated with various uses. Suggestions were made to counteract "Nature Deficit Disorder" through the promotion of field trips to forests and studies of modern industry practices in schools. Some suggested that Crown lands, including provincial parks, be used as demonstration sites for differing harvest or silviculture methods, with opportunities for the public to become informed about and learn from these demonstrations. There was much value placed on the department using its resources to provide these forms of public education. Many participants felt that the general public was not well informed about modern forest management practices, a fact that creates tension between user groups and inhibits co-operation on forest related issues.

Forest Education For All Users

Many felt that the forest industry has taken the wrong approach to working within the Acadian forest given the high incidence of clear-cutting, monoculture, and even-aged stands. A desire was expressed to create opportunities to bring together forest professionals, practitioners, and other stakeholders to engage in professional forest education and training. That training could highlight and demonstrate best available practices and technologies that promote environmental health and value-added or "green" forest products. Some participants felt that those educational efforts

should promote the non-timber values of forests and the social responsibility of forest owners and workers. There is a need to engage both active woodlot managers and those who are not actively managing their properties, to better support the health of the resource.

Certification

Participants identified the need for various forms of internationally recognized forest certification as being mandatory on all forested Crown lands, as it would help Nova Scotia become and remain competitive in world markets. Some thought that private woodland owners should be encouraged to adopt certification or to use certified resource managers to manage their holdings, while recognizing those who have already achieved certification. However, there was also concern that these programs were prohibitively expensive and had complex auditing requirements. It was thought that costs associated with certification might be better spent on silviculture programs, research, or promotion of value-added products.

What We Heard About MINERALS

Sustainability

Nova Scotians expressed a number of views regarding sustainable mining industry development. Those included the need to strike a balance between social, economic, and environmental aspects as well as the need to consider the risk of creating long-term damage for the sake of short-term economic gain.

Importance to the Economy

While there were differing views on mining practices, Nova Scotians recognized that the public has a demand for minerals and that minerals are necessary for a strong economy. It was stated that the mining industry is directly and indirectly responsible for some 6,300 jobs, mostly in rural Nova Scotia. The province's mining industry today relies heavily on industrial mineral extraction and the processing of materials such as aggregate, salt, gypsum, sand, clay, limestone, coal and others with primary uses in the building, construction and power-generation industries.

Local mining projects allow Nova Scotia to import less of the materials on which the province relies to function in a modern society. Participants also noted that the mining industry adds economic benefits and spin offs to the overall provincial economy, making Nova Scotia more self-sufficient.

Examples of this are: shipments that pass through the Port of Halifax, and infrastructure and common services paid for by royalties.

Impacts of Mining

Many Nova Scotians expressed concerns about the negative impacts mining can have on health, water, air quality, wildlife habitat, and property values. They also mentioned current or historic toxic tailings. Nova Scotians feel that mining decisions should be based on full-cost accounting, including the impacts on ecological systems, not just the economic value of the mineral resource. It was repeatedly stated that neither mines nor quarries should be permitted in or near sensitive (e.g., wetlands) or protected habitats (e.g., parks, wilderness areas). Participants want the mining industry to minimize pollution as much as possible or to eliminate it altogether. They also suggested that all mineral extraction operations should pay bonds and ensure that appropriate remediation and reclamation takes place post-extraction. Others said there was a need for widespread adoption of best practices and certification programs by the mineral industry.

Nova Scotians recognize the Department of Natural Resources' collection of geoscience information as a means of documenting the locations of some potential hazards (including acid-generating bedrock, arsenic in ground water, and radon gas) so that they could be avoided during development.

Reducing the Need for New Extraction

Some participants suggested that by re-using and recycling products already mined, Nova Scotia could reduce the need for further extraction and resource depletion for future generations. There was also a call for an increased use of products made from alternative surface materials and investment in sustainable industries, such as renewable energy, instead of extraction of minerals.

Strict, Consistent and More Equitable Environmental Assessment Process

Nova Scotians call for a strict and consistent environmental assessment process on mining projects. They said there was a need to find ways to allow mineral development while protecting human and environmental health. Some feel that all proposals for exploration and mining should be made public and assessed by an independent body according to strict criteria agreed upon by the public. It was noted that some current reclamation projects have turned into full-scale mining projects without having gone through full assessment

studies. It was also stated that environmental assessments should apply to small, open-pit mines of less than four hectares, which are currently exempt from assessments; however, it was also noted that smaller pits and quarries would suffer disproportionate impacts on company survival if they were subject to full-scale environmental assessments.

Diversity

Variety Provides Opportunity

Participants said the province should be taking greater advantage of Nova Scotia's diverse geology, which has a broad variety of metallic, industrial, and energy minerals. Nova Scotia also has world-class deposits of gypsum and coal and some aspects which have yet to be explored. This range of minerals can be globally competitive because of mineral quality, location, and proximity to shipping routes. There is also opportunity to have value-added industry and develop new, more efficient and less invasive technologies.

Deposition Responsible for Unique Biodiversity

It was noted that Nova Scotia's surface and bedrock geology are integral to this province being home to the globally unique and significant Acadian forest, as well as landforms, surficial deposits, watersheds, and rare species. Considering interconnections between minerals and other resources, Nova Scotians believe mineral exploration and extraction must respect the environment and not hinder the enjoyment of traditional pursuits such as hunting, angling, trapping, and gathering.

Diverse Land Ownership

Some participants view the high proportion of private land ownership in Nova Scotia as an impediment to mineral exploration, especially since minerals only occur where nature put them and are typically not widespread throughout the province. A permit or licence to explore for minerals does not give the right to trespass on private property; licence owners are required to receive permission from all landowners for property access. In some areas of the province, this can present a challenge to the mineral industry due to the number of owners and/or the need to establish who owns the title. Participants are concerned that mineral claims are being staked without land owner knowledge and would like a notification mechanism to be established along with better protection for land owners in mineral laws.

Financial Incentives To Attract Industry

Nova Scotians feel the Department of Natural Resources

should explore a variety of financial incentives to attract industry to the province. Examples noted included the Prospector Grants, drilling assistance, and tax incentives.

Collaboration

Better Consultation and Collaboration

Citizens desire a means to have more input in the mining industry. Communities want to be part of the approval process of mines; it was suggested that the final decision to open any mine should be done by a vote (plebiscite) of community members, and that individual property rights and dispute resolution should be primary considerations in locating mines.

The provincial organization that represents over 100 member companies with 3,000 individuals in all areas of mining (exploration, discovery, development, production, and reclamation) expressed the need for more public consultation on mining projects. A number of comments were heard about the need for better co-operation and coordination among the provincial government departments as well as with other levels of government on mineral and mining policies and regulatory processes, including a community-review process.

Proponents often spend several years preparing for mineral resources development. This preparation includes exploration, evaluation, and actual development. Many Nova Scotians feel industry should inform the public of their work at an earlier stage of the project, and not just prior to development. There was also a call for industry to respect and gather local knowledge.

Transparency

Need To Build Public Trust

There is a need to build public trust to overcome the lack of confidence the public has in the mineral industry based on past industry practices. Both industry and government have a role to play. Due to mistrust, it is felt Nova Scotians currently have a "no-no-no" attitude that impedes investment and development.

Government's Dual Role

Some participants feel there is a conflict of interest with the Department of Natural Resources promoting mineral resources development and regulating it at the same time. For this reason, some suggested that mineral development belonged in a separate government department. Others saw this dual role as beneficial as it permitted sharing of in-house expertise and knowledge within the department, which is

perceived as a positive factor to investors.

Stronger, More Equitable Policy and Legislation

Participants feel that the stringent enforcement of responsible mining practices/legislation and agreement to these rules and regulations by government, industry, and communities should be addressed as priorities. Some citizens view decision making in the way regulations are developed and applied as slow and inconsistent. They feel all industry proponents should be treated equally, regardless of size, location of head office, or mining activity. Participants from the mining industry suggested that any development project (e.g., housing, agriculture) that interacts with our natural environment should be held to the same environmental standards as the mining industry.

Nova Scotians say that the Minerals Resources Act and regulations should be reviewed and, where needed, rewritten to address inconsistencies of application and to promote exploration and land access.

Regulations Tailored to Operation Size

Participants indicated that mining operations vary considerably in size and environmental impact, and that "one size fits all" regulations are not appropriate. This is a particular issue with pit and quarry operations, which tend to be small in footprint and in size of business. Nova Scotians feel regulations should consider the size of the operation and the impact of the project.

Mineral Potential in Land-use Planning

Government is committed to protecting 12 per cent of the province's land mass from development. Nova Scotians feel that all factors, including potential mineral deposits and the economic spinoff from those deposits, need to be considered before any area is designated as protected. Full mineral evaluation by the Department of Natural Resources needs to occur on Crown or private lands that are considered for protection. Generally, mineral evaluation needs to be a component of land use analyses for all government departments.

Informed Decision Making

Citizens Need More Information

Many participants noted they had come to the community meetings with limited knowledge or understanding of mining, but on hearing views expressed by others, wanted to learn more. There was also concern that poor performance by the industry in the past has left a legacy of mistrust.

Generally, all agreed that there were considerable gaps in understanding about the minerals sector and that there is a role for industry and the department to play in building public awareness about minerals and current mining practices.

Geoscience Data Needs To Be More Accessible

Participants are aware that the Department of Natural Resources' Minerals Resources Branch collects and maintains a vast library of geoscientific information generated by in-house staff, industry, universities, and other government institutions. They see this in-house expertise and information as valuable resource that provides Nova Scotia with an opportunity to stimulate exploration and attract investment. Participants feel the department needs to continue collecting and generating good scientific geological information for decision making and management.

Nova Scotians expressed the desire to have easier and complete access to this existing information through modern computer technology. They also feel an inventory of the presence and availability of each mineral in Nova Scotia should be made public. Many participants called for the department to conduct more and better land-use planning using modern computer technology that integrates the many datasets, including mineral claim ownership.

Best Available Information

Nova Scotians said decisions need to be based on the best available information. Some participants feel those decisions need to be based on science and economics, with community involvement just one of the many factors that contribute to decisions. However, many others said decisions on development must make community concerns a priority.

What We Heard About PARKS

The committee found confusion among participants about what qualifies as "parks." In Nova Scotia, several types of lands are set aside or protected and are administered by departments other than the Department of Natural Resources. These include wilderness areas, nature reserves, national parks, and more. The public tended to see all of these lands as "parks." For the purposes of this report, "parks" refers only to Nova Scotia's provincial park system, which includes campgrounds, day-use parks, and rail corridors. Walking trails, camping, picnicking, and beaches are available on these lands.

Sustainability

Parks Are Important for Many Reasons

Many participants spoke of the importance and impact of parks in their lives and livelihoods. Many of those who made comments about parks celebrated government's commitment to the protection of 12 per cent of Nova Scotia's land mass as wilderness areas and nature reserves. Others indicated that this was only a start and shared their vision of an expanded system of parks with recognition of the significant asset that Nova Scotia has in this area. However, a small number of participants were concerned that there are already enough parks, and that no additions should be designated until such time as those in existence become properly managed and adequately maintained.

Parks Play Dual, Even Competing, Roles

Many views were expressed about the dual role parks play, in the protection of biodiversity and as a venue for public recreation. Comments related to parks included a call for the creation of large ecosystem sanctuaries for native flora and fauna, or for biodiversity oases. Others envisioned these areas as a means to promote fitness and to encourage a connection to the natural world. Finally, some highlighted the need to add smaller sites of high-quality natural land to the park system where interpretive trails could be created to promote education and an understanding of ecological systems present in the province.

Multiple Users and Interests

A number of comments were expressed about the challenges to the province's wetlands and marshes created by commercial development and OHV use. While recognizing that OHV operations have improved much in recent years and that the majority of users are very responsible, participants remarked that there remains a lack of understanding and respect for our wetlands and marshes among some OHV users.

Parks Promote Our Economy

At the community level, the economic value of parklands for nature-based tourism was stressed. It was repeatedly indicated that a long-term management and infrastructure plan for parklands is needed so that the economic benefits can be maintained over time. The demographic shift in those accessing the parks for recreational use requires infrastructure enhancement in order to support use and promote tourism in the future. User education and infrastructure enhancement were identified as being necessary in order to reduce the environmental impact of eco-tourism on park resources.

Along these ideals, it was recommended that Nova Scotia Environment manage parks within its Protected Areas Branch. An alternate view suggested that parks' functions should be transferred to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. Others called for a more integrated approach between departments.

Need To Get More for Our Investment

While participants recognized the shortfall in revenues required to maintain the existing park infrastructure and staffing requirements, they were unprepared to accept fee increases for access, day use, or camping. Participants acknowledged the challenge of making parks sustainable financially without degrading the site by having increased public access.

Some participants commented specifically on the need to build on existing assets. They identified problems getting a camping site unless booked well in advance and indicated that there is insufficient access for recreational vehicle users or seniors, and limited access for OHVs to sites that were previously available. Participants expressed the desire for year-round access and indicated that campsites are inadequately modernized, and communication, promotion, and signage all need to be addressed.

Accessibility Is Key

Specific recommendations were made regarding accessibility or equitable treatment of persons with disabilities. These recommendations included raising the level of accessibility in parks to international standards, instituting a formal and binding accessibility review and approval procedure for all capital projects and programs, and committing to remediation of non-complying facilities.

Parks and wild spaces are of significant but differing value to the many users who frequent them. These spaces form part of the fabric of many communities and are integral to the future economic success of many areas of the province. However, they must be managed for the long-term benefit of a diverse array of users and a multiplicity of activities with differing impacts on the resource. While many users identified challenges that impair their and others' access and enjoyment of these wild spaces, few were prepared to accept increased user fees for that privilege.

Diversity

Parks Must Provide for a Range of Uses and User Enjoyment

As previously indicated, a variety of users with a multiplicity of interests highly value the recreational and economic benefits

provided by parks and wild spaces in Nova Scotia. These voices spoke of concerns relating to accessing and using parks and wild spaces for the purpose of exploration and enjoyment. These concerns were focused around what types of activities were permitted and promoted within the parks and where those activities were being restricted. Specifically, activities such as biking, canoeing, and fishing were identified as being restricted. Users identified a need to increase accessibility to aquatic areas to promote an appreciation of coastal ecosystems, beaches, and lakes for swimming. Others highlighted a desire for increased access for uses pertaining to vehicular or equestrian activities, such as trails with campsites along them. A need was identified for connected multi-use trails or specific park spaces for OHV use.

A Shared Management Approach

Participants also commented on the need for ecologically healthy landscapes and are prepared to work together to determine the right balance in land-use activities. The potential for conflict among a range of activities was recognized, and the importance of co-operation was noted. These comments suggest that users are prepared to accommodate competing interests for park resources and the need to balance consumptive and non-consumptive use.

Others called for creation of two types of parks: one that minimizes the impact of human activities, promotes biodiversity and natural succession, and accommodates the impacts of climate change; the other geared toward education and the provision of recreational opportunities. It was noted that collaboration between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environment will be required for this to work well.

Collaboration

Citizens Want To Be Engaged in Management

Individuals and communities have much interest in the evolution of policy relating to parks and wilderness spaces. Further, many citizens and communities hold a strong sense of ownership of these resources and have a vested interest in their long-term management. Although there were some positive comments about the level of existing partnerships between government and communities related to museums, parks, and trails, others stressed the need for increased community consultation and shared decision making. Citizens from communities near parks voiced the need to be consulted regarding improvements and changes to park policy and management strategies. Further, there was a perceived lack of involvement of local citizens in decision making relating

to parks, such that the history of the land use may not be considered. Participants highlighted a need for more funding opportunities and enhanced community partnerships so that the cost of liability insurance related to community maintenance of park sites could be improved.

It was noted that all trail resources should be available (depending on the season) to all Nova Scotians, whether by motorized or non-motorized transportation.

Community Development of Park Resources

Citizens want to co-operate in park and trail development and enhance tolerance and respect for the different activities that this entails. This requires a willingness to share trail use and access. Co-operation among land owners, government, and any other stakeholders was identified as paramount to success in increasing trail infrastructure to the level found in other provinces. Creative solutions were highlighted as being crucial to any success in future trail development, policy, and planning.

Government as a Facilitator of Public Engagement

Communities and individuals envision a role for government in the promotion and facilitation of active community participation in the planning, policy development, and maintenance of park and trail infrastructure. Citizens feel that their input is essential in order to create a park and trail system that reflects the undertones and contexts of local community values, ideals, culture, and heritage.

Transparency

Many participants voiced the desire to be part of the planning and policy process. As mentioned previously, individuals and communities frequently expressed how much they value the opportunity to participate in the planning and policy process for park and wilderness management. Inclusive and collaborative discussions about park policy and planning would do much to promote understanding on behalf of communities and municipalities. Further, such a process would foster trust and promote synergy between citizens and government as it relates to parks and wilderness in Nova Scotia.

Informed Decision Making

Parks Can Be Educational Tools

Many participants commented about the significant educational and health-related roles that parks play for both children and adults. Parks provide residents and visitors alike with a chance to explore, experience, and bond with the natural world. School children were identified as having a large stake in learning about how much we rely on parks for our own well-being,

both spiritually and physically. Opportunities to enhance an understanding of biodiversity, the ecology of the natural flora and fauna of the province, and the role the landscape plays in providing clean air, water, soil, and resources for our survival were identified.

Specific Community Priorities and Issues

In addition to the common themes identified above, a number of local community priorities and issues were brought forward. These were forwarded to the Phase II panel process for consideration.

What We Heard About URANIUM MINING

A moratorium on uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia has been in effect since 1982. The moratorium became a forefront issue in public debate in 2008. The volunteer Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee recruited by Voluntary Planning and the processes it developed were never structured to fully address a technical and focused issue like uranium mining. However, the topic clearly fell within one of the four major categories that the committee was tasked to deal with: minerals.

The committee received extensive feedback on uranium exploration and mining through community meetings, workshops and submissions received in writing or by phone. More than half of all submissions made comment on the uranium moratorium, including two petitions. Many voices were heard on the topic at community meetings and workshops.

While the committee heard several calls for lifting the moratorium, overall the public input received as part of the Voluntary Planning natural resources process overwhelmingly indicated a desire to see the moratorium on uranium exploration and mining maintained and legislated.

In the committee's Working Paper released in October, 2008 it was concluded that the issue of uranium exploration and mining was of such importance to Nova Scotians that it deserved to be fully considered on its own, independent of other topics. Many of those who had already made their viewpoints known, both in writing and through their participation in meetings, expressed their disappointment and frustration that they would need to go through this all again. Others agreed that the issue required special attention in a different type of forum as the Voluntary Planning process did not allow for a rigorous review.

The following is an overview of the specific themes heard on the topic.

About the Moratorium

Those calling for the moratorium on uranium exploration and mining to be maintained were the predominant voices heard by the committee on this topic. They felt that the long-term health and environmental risks outweigh short-term economic benefits.

From the industry perspective, there is a call for government to lift the moratorium on uranium exploration and mining.

There were participants who were in favour of lifting the moratorium to allow for exploration, while retaining the ban on mining of uranium until more is known about the location, extent and concentration of ore bodies, and the type of mine suggested for each area (underground, pit, or ISL). Some believe that the moratorium is a hindrance to exploration in general as it restricts all activity, not just uranium.

Health and Environmental Concerns

The concerns raised most often by those opposed to uranium mining were the effects it would have on Nova Scotians' health and the environment. The committee frequently heard that Nova Scotia is a small province with vulnerable natural watersheds. Participants expressed concern for health risks to miners and residents who live near a mine due to radioactive materials released into water and air as gas or dust. Industry expressed that these concerns can be mitigated through modern technology.

The committee also heard a recommendation that the moratorium on uranium exploration be lifted for reasons of safety. Currently, residential and business developments are allowed to build over uranium-rich lands, increasing the likelihood of long-term exposure to some residents. Lifting the moratorium on exploration would allow builders and residents to be better informed about these risks.

Uranium's positive uses in the health-care field were also raised. Participants noted that many lives have been bettered or even saved through nuclear medicine, which allows non-invasive examination of the human body and treatment for life-threatening diseases.

End Uses

Support was expressed for considering nuclear power technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as other alternative sources of electrical power will not be able to supply the need in the near future. Others commented that nuclear power is unlikely to provide any short-term solution to our energy problems and is less "green" than some alternate technologies, which can also be implemented more quickly. It was felt that investing in conservation and renewable energy (e.g., wind, solar) provides jobs and business development

without the risks, expense, and greenhouse gases associated with uranium mining, processing, and construction, and the decommissioning of nuclear power plants.

Some participants expressed concerns about the threat of Nova Scotia uranium ending up in nuclear weapons programs once it is in international markets.

What We Heard Related to OTHER DEPARTMENTS

A frequent comment at community meetings and through submissions was that humans and all natural systems and resources are interconnected. Nova Scotians believe that when one aspect of natural resources is destroyed the impact will include other natural resources or systems that fall outside the mandate of a particular division or the Department of Natural Resources. For this reason, participants stressed the need for greater integration both within the Department of Natural Resources and between the department and Nova Scotia Environment, as well as other provincial long-term strategies.

In addition to the call for integration, participants brought forward a number of comments on topics relating directly to other provincial departments and strategies. This input is being shared with the appropriate departments and is summarized below. While comments were made on topics affecting a number of other departments, the preponderance was about coastal and water issues.

Coastal Resources

Nova Scotians expressed a strong desire to have their water and coastal communities protected. The Department of Natural Resources strategy will have a great impact on Nova Scotia's coastal area through policy, legislation, and management actions.

Nova Scotians feel too much of their coastline and islands have already been lost to development; they want to see new policy that would protect shorelines, dunes, beaches, coastal wetlands, and salt marshes, as well as freshwater habitats, such as lake frontage. Many stressed that these environments play an important role in protecting other resources and wildlife.

Water

Nova Scotians recognize water as one of this province's most precious resources. Many are concerned that our waterways have already been damaged by the over-harvesting of trees, hydro-development, and by the impact of mineral extraction. They want to see policy and strategy that will keep our water

resources in Nova Scotia and protect them, thus ensuring sufficient future supplies for Nova Scotians.

Energy

Nova Scotians feel fortunate that our province has so many potential sources of renewable energy, including water, wind, tidal, wave, renewable fibre, and ocean temperature differential, and want to see their province become a leader in researching and developing these “green” technologies.

Concerns were expressed about wind-energy generation. Nova Scotians want to see genuine community consultation as part of the development of this process. Others would like to see geothermal energy replace the focus on wind power, as they believe this offers more opportunities for reducing reliance on traditional energy sources, while being more environmentally and human friendly.

Climate Change

Nova Scotians believe climate change is a major threat and that current natural resources practices in this province, specifically those in forests and mining, compound the damaging effects of climate change, especially to forests and fresh water. They say it is crucial that the province develop a response to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This response should result from collaboration between several departments, including Energy, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Agriculture, and Natural Resources, plus the scientific community.

Food and Agriculture

Participants felt that food production should be front-and-centre in the province’s sustainability strategy as it is an issue that affects both rural and urban dwellers. They called for productive agricultural land to be considered a valuable natural resource and provided with long-term protection, including policies to protect such lands from being converted to non-agricultural uses. Participants suggested that incentives and subsidies should be provided for farmers who keep their agricultural land intact and who practice good agricultural stewardship.

It was also suggested that a small tax incentive be provided for anyone planting a functional family food garden, and that where there is potential to grow wild blueberries on Crown lands, that production be encouraged by enabling local farmers to acquire this land by way of a land swap.

Tourism

Nova Scotia’s billion-dollar tourism industry depends on having a healthy environment. Many of the province’s visitors come

here to see an unspoiled coastline, explore natural spaces, and experience wildlife. They expect to breathe fresh air and enjoy clean water. Nova Scotians believe it is in their province’s best interest to care for these environments so we can continue to attract visitors.

Education

As is evident throughout the body of this report, there is an expressed desire for increased education and awareness about all aspects of natural resources use for all user groups. Education is needed at all levels from the public school system to universities and community colleges. There should be a forum for more discussion and sharing of concepts, ideas, and information on methodology between user groups, including the Department of Natural Resources.

Environment

Nova Scotians feel there is a need for a reappraisal of the appropriate departmental home for all provincial Crown lands with some form of protection. There was considerable confusion over parks administered by the Department of Natural Resources and lands that were protected through other provincial and federal departments (e.g., wilderness areas, national parks). They also feel the departmental home for biodiversity should be reconsidered.

Appendix 4

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Voluntary Planning recruited volunteers to form the Natural Resources Citizen Engagement Committee, which was then given the mandate to find out what Nova Scotians value about the future of their natural resources, specifically biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks.

The volunteer committee worked with Voluntary Planning staff and professional facilitators to design and implement a process that would provide the maximum amount of input from citizens using the time and resources that were available.

- The committee members were chosen for their objectivity, expertise, and interest.
- Voluntary Planning staff brought the continuity necessary to lead the committee through operational steps and logistics in planning and executing, as well as governmental background.
- Professional consultants and facilitators brought experience and expertise in citizen-engagement projects to assist in holding to principles and mandate in overall design of the process and roles.

The committee reviewed research on strategies related to biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks, as well as information prepared by the Department of Natural Resources. It also reviewed education presentations from community and industry groups.

Community Meetings

Twenty-seven community meetings were organized and facilitated throughout the province between May 12 and June 17, 2008. Every county and half of the province's municipalities were included.

As part of the process, the committee met with the Offices of Aboriginal Affairs, Acadian Affairs, and African Nova Scotia Affairs to seek advice on involving their respective communities. One of the considerations in the selection of the 27 meeting locations was easy accessibility by these communities. French-language meetings were held in Tusket, Saulnierville, and Cheticamp. Other French-language services provided included translation of communication material.

The community meetings were generally well received.

People stated that they appreciated the committee coming to them. Other comments suggested meetings weighed heavily in favour of citizens who work in the forest industry. It was noted that despite the large turnout in many locations, it was still a small proportion of the overall provincial population who should be concerned about these issues and need to have their voice heard by the department.

It was also commented that there had been limited aboriginal involvement in this first phase of the strategy process and that the youth perspective was not well captured.

Meeting Format

Each community meeting was designed to follow the same outline and last approximately 2.5 hours, or longer in the case of larger turnouts.

The first portion of the meeting was spent with all participants in a sharing or Vision Circle, with each participant having the opportunity to speak to the question: What is your vision for biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks in Nova Scotia? The vast majority of participants shared their thoughts publicly through a microphone as part of this sharing circle.

The remainder of the meeting was spent in smaller group discussions, where each group examined one of the four categories of natural resources (i.e., biodiversity, forests, minerals, and parks). Participants were invited to choose one of these smaller groups to further the conversation, using the following questions as a springboard:

- What are the strengths of (biodiversity, forests, minerals, parks)?
- What barriers or issues affect (biodiversity, forests, minerals, parks)?
- What do you see as your community's priorities for the future in (biodiversity, forests, minerals, parks)?
- What values are essential to guide the health and sustainability of (biodiversity, forests, minerals, parks)?

In larger meetings, the entire group of participants was asked if they wanted to break apart into the smaller circles one hour into the process, or remain as one group. In every case, the community said they wanted everyone to have a chance to be heard aloud and opted to stay in the sharing circle.

The circular seating arrangement of the community meetings was fundamental to the overall process and likely contributed to hearing a large number of individual thoughts and feelings. About 2,000 participants engaged

in community meetings to learn from each other and share with each other their ideas and values for the future of Nova Scotia's natural resources.

The process acknowledged that communities are the experts in their own issues, so a fifth discussion group space was set up for Community Identified Opportunities/Issues where participants could explore a topic (or topics) of their choice. Participants were also invited to move between working groups rather than staying at just one if they preferred.

This process provided a forum in which all individuals could contribute from their own perspectives regardless of their background. It was guided by a fundamental belief in the basic dignity of people and communities to come together and participate in discussing issues and opportunities essential to sustainability. This expectation, and the form of the community meetings, contributed to people coming together in exactly that way.

Many participants expressed that they were pleased with the community-meeting format and said it was a model they would like to try in their own community discussions. Others commented on the positive experience of the workshops where there was an opportunity for a range of interests to work collaboratively. Most participants said that the committee had done a good job of providing a space for individuals to openly and honestly express their opinions.

However, some participants felt the format favoured those who were public speakers and those groups who had the greatest amount of representation in each meeting. Many felt that the ideas and opinions of long-term residents and those involved in the various sectors for their livelihood should have the most weight. Yet others were concerned that because a number of individuals from particular interest groups attended multiple meetings the concerns of those groups would be given more consideration.

There was concern about the second part of the community meetings, in which the meeting was split up into four working groups (each based on one of the four natural resources topics) with participants invited to choose one of the four groups. Some considered this to be inappropriate given that all four topics are connected. They felt that the splitting up would not allow for open public feedback on all topics by all participants. They also felt it was not consistent with the public's desire to see the silos broken down within and among departments that have an impact on natural resources. Some felt that the meeting format was not sufficient enough for the volume of information stakeholders wished to publicly present.

Written Submissions

Written submissions were also welcomed and were a vital part of the information process. To provide a framework for submissions, a *conversation starter* document was made available with a brief background on the four natural resources topic areas and the same questions used in community meetings (see above). One of the conversation starter's goals was to invite citizens to produce their own initiatives out of their conversations. Input was welcomed to be submitted through an online submission form, by email/fax, and by phone.

Over 600 submissions were received. In addition to being used by the committee in their deliberations, submissions were posted (with permission) on the Voluntary Planning website <http://vp.gov.ns.ca>; any information they contained that was important to other government strategies was forwarded to relevant departments, and all written submissions were made available to Phase II of the strategy development process.

The ability to review submissions on the Voluntary Planning website was also appreciated and was seen as a way of building awareness of diverse viewpoints.

Workshops & Further Feedback

The committee felt it was important to provide another opportunity for feedback before presenting its findings to the Phase II panels. When all the responses from the community meetings and submissions were collected, the committee analyzed their content, drew some initial conclusions about overarching values, and shared those thoughts through a Working Paper that was reviewed in a series of three workshops. These workshops generated further feedback—some positive, some critical—that was used to clarify and/or refine the content. The Working Paper and written feedback received from over 60 individuals and organizations is available on the Voluntary Planning website at <http://vp.gov.ns.ca>.

Saturday workshops were organized in October/November 2008 in Truro, Cornwallis, and Baddeck. All those who participated in community meetings or provided a written submission in the spring were invited to take part. One hundred seventeen workshop participants explored the parts of decision making that can provoke conflict, such as criteria, interests, and positions. They applied that learning to the interim values identified by the committee in the Working Paper. Participants then refined and elaborated on the values, and identified what

they felt was missing.

There was an opportunity to address additional overarching values; however, some workshop participants felt constrained by being asked to work with five values already identified by the committee. Concerns were expressed that the Working Paper drew few conclusions, lacked directions and emphasis on specific recommendations for action, and needed to present a weighting of the comments in order to give a sense of how frequently key issues were heard.

It was felt the paper did not adequately reflect the passion of those who took the time to participate. Other concerns heard were that the breadth of views expressed was not fully informed on current practices, that there was an imbalance of views presented, and that the use of quotes reflected divisive stereotypes.

At the same time, a number of those commenting said the process and analysis were comprehensive and inclusive, and that the breadth of views incorporated in the document would provide an excellent base for policy development and be vital for further dialogue.

Youth Engagement

While the committee was successful in engaging some youth, it will be important to hear even more voices of youth as this strategy process proceeds, as it is youth who will be working under the Department of Natural Resources' policies in the future.

The efforts of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and D250 in promoting this citizen engagement project to Nova Scotia youth are directly responsible for many of the youth submissions the committee received and posted to the Voluntary Planning website.

The website also includes written and drawn submissions from grade 1 and 2 students of the Halifax Independent School, who took part in the Halifax community meeting. Youth who belong to GPI Atlantic's youth program also shared their vision for Nova Scotia's natural resources through participation at the Halifax community meeting and written submissions and artwork posted to our website.

Phases II & III

There were several concerns heard about the three-phase strategy process, with some participants seeing it as reluctance on the part of the department to engage in real consultation.

Concern was expressed regarding the length of the overall process and that policies/procedures/regulations will be released over the next two years before recommendations for the same are considered.

Differing views were heard about the makeup of the Phase II panels of expertise and the focus on stakeholder engagement. Transparency was called for in the selection criteria and mandate for the panels. An ongoing role for Voluntary Planning was suggested, as a resource to ensure the citizen voice is carried through the next phases. The panels need to be well informed about all the input received in Phase I.

Appendix 5

NOVA SCOTIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY ACT

Nova Scotia aims to have one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020. This commitment was adopted in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, proclaimed in June 2007. The act sets out 21 far-reaching goals for the province, ranging from reduced air emissions and waste to new energy standards for buildings and increased protection of our land and water.

All 21 goals can be viewed at: www.gov.ns.ca/EcoNovaScotia/pdf/2020FactSheet.pdf

Appendix 6

**VOLUNTARY PLANNING
NATURAL RESOURCES CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEMBERS****Robin Barrett****Beaver Bank**

Robin grew up in (then) rural Nova Scotia and has worked with his family's forestry companies for over thirty years. Currently he is President of Barrett Enterprises and President of HI-Q Developments. From this background Robin has "developed a deep respect for the people who make a living from the forest, for all the living things that abide there and the people who care passionately about both." He has a long-held commitment to helping people create healthier housing, previously through his own company, Healthy Homes Consulting, as a past president of the Allergy and Environmental Health Association-NS, and as a frequent guest speaker. As a dedicated volunteer, he has served on committees reviewing and developing building industry standards, including the R-2000 Program and the National Building Code, and is a member of the boards of directors for the Forest Products Association of NS and the Wood Products Manufacturers Association.

David Duncan**Wolfville**

David graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Geology from Acadia University in 1979 and was involved with the exploration and mining industry on the provincial, national, and international levels until his retirement in 2006. He is a Registered Professional Geoscientist with the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador and a Qualified Person under National Instrument 43-101. David's career has taken him to numerous geological environments around the globe searching for and developing deposits of gold, tin, copper, diamonds, and uranium. In Nova Scotia, David has worked on developing the Meguma gold deposits along the Eastern Shore and defining the potential for tin and tungsten in the South Mountain Batholith. He also discovered the Millett Brook uranium deposits. More recently, he has developed new gold mines in West Africa and diamond mines in South Africa. He has co-authored a number of papers and was a founding member and Director of the Nova Scotia Chamber of Mineral Resources. On the community front, David has volunteered with the local minor hockey association and his service has been recognized by both Hockey Canada and Hockey Nova Scotia.

Jeremy Frith

St. Ann's Bay

Jeremy describes himself as a farmer, self-taught forester, logger, saw miller, woodworker, ecologist, community economic development activist, public speaker, direct marketer of organic farm produce, and proponent of a responsible approach to economic/ecological, integrated land management for rural communities. On his Mountain Meadow Farm in the Highlands of Cape Breton, he grows certified organic vegetables that are sold at the Cape Breton Farmers' Market in Sydney and to local hotels and restaurants. He works tirelessly to restore his 400-acre woodlot to historic Acadia forest cover types and was named the Department of Natural Resources' Woodlot Owner of the Year for the eastern region in 2005. Jeremy has held numerous volunteer leadership positions at the local and provincial level, is the current President of the Farmers' Market of N.S. Co-operative, and is a board member, and past president, of the St. Ann's Bay Development Association. On August 24th, Jeremy and his wife, Sue Browne, were honoured with the first annual Spirit of Nova Scotia Award in the Local Food Producers category for 2008.

Kipling Grasse (Kip)

Halifax

As a graduate of both the Atlantic Veterinary College and the Indiana University School of Environmental and Public Policy, Kip brings to the committee a unique perspective on issues relating to environmental health, biodiversity, and natural resource management. Kip sees great value in resource management plans that balance economic growth and prosperity with overall ecological health and sustainability. Kip is a member of both the Canadian and Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical associations, and has served on the Board of Directors of the Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty.

Donna Hurlburt

Lequille

A conservation biologist whose concentration is on species at risk and environmental decision making, Donna's philosophy is that "there is rarely a perfect solution to an environmental problem, but rather a best solution for the issue at hand and the affected community." As a Mi'kmaw person she actively works with Aboriginal communities, both in the Atlantic region and countrywide, on issues regarding the environment and use of Aboriginal traditional knowledge in decision-making processes. She runs a small consulting business with

experience pertaining to such things as the resilience of social-ecological systems, the status and trends of Canada's eco-systems, and the use of community knowledge in fisheries management. Donna is a visiting professor with the biology department of Acadia University, a member of several subcommittees with the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), and a board member of the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute.

Rick MacDonald

Bedford

Rick is a founder and the chief technology officer of CarteNav Solutions Inc., a company that offers unique products and services in the telematics, security, and surveillance industries. These products have been deployed globally and are used by NATO, coast guards, and U.S. Homeland Security. CarteNav's commercial products are used in the forest industry to manage activities such as fire fighting and crop spraying. They have also been used for such applications as wildlife surveys and airborne power line inspection. Rick has more than 30 years experience in research and development and executive management in technology-intensive industries including nuclear power, intelligent robotics, advanced software development tools, electro-optics, remote sensing, and navigation. He is an active volunteer and has been on the board of directors of Voluntary Planning for six years (currently vice-chair), and is the past-chair of the board of the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax.

Candace Stevenson

Halifax

Candace's career includes 28 years with the Province of Nova Scotia. At the time of her retirement she held the positions of Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Museum and Executive Director of Heritage and Culture. She has continued to be active in the not-for-profit sector as a consultant and a volunteer with several prominent boards and committees. These include United Way of Halifax Region, Clean Nova Scotia, Cultural Capitals of Canada, and VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) Canada. She recently served as a task force member for the Voluntary Planning Heritage Strategy.

The following individuals served with the committee during the initial planning stages. They stepped down due to personal and business commitments.

Ken Pierce

Shelburne

Ken has 35 years of experience in construction and engineering with special emphasis on large projects including petrochemical, oil and gas plants, mineral processing, pulp and paper, and nuclear plants. His experience includes engineering, contract administration, field superintendent, construction management, project engineering, and project management. Ken has worked in four Canadian provinces and on several international project sites. He has witnessed how different governments have dealt with their needs and how local characteristics, which varied from place to place, have allowed solutions unique to each jurisdiction. Each location also meant building a new project team with characteristics unique to the project. Active in his community, Ken's volunteer activities have included serving on the Shelburne County Community Health Board, working with Scouts Canada, chairing the committee to restore the Sandy Point Lighthouse, and serving as a director on the Loyalist Landing 2008 committee.

Clare Robinson

Halifax

Clare has a multidisciplinary educational and professional background in geology (e.g., mine waste assessment, mineral exploration, contaminated site assessment) and conservation biology (e.g., protected areas research and advocacy, restoration and wildlife ecology). Clare's passion is land conservation and sustainable communities and she holds Masters' degrees in geology from Queens University and in environmental studies from Dalhousie University. She grew up in Mosher's Corner, Annapolis County, and spent several years on land reclamation projects in the Arctic. Her shared appreciation for conservation and natural resource management helps promote efficient collaboration wherever possible. Clare currently works as a Protected Areas Planner with Nova Scotia Environment.



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