

Executive Summary

New Brunswick Forest Report Card: A Stakeholder Survey of Opinions and Recommendations on Crown Forest Management in New Brunswick in 2017

By Tracy Glynn & Zachary Bourque



August 2017

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick is publishing this New Brunswick Forest Report Card to assess the status of twelve different public values for Crown forest management. The values assessed include: public participation; transparency and monitoring; watershed protection; action on climate change; old growth forest conservation; wildlife conservation; action on threatened species; protected natural areas; silviculture; management for a diversity of forest products, services and users; revenue generation for communities and the province; and honouring treaties and Aboriginal rights.

A stakeholder survey was used to gather the opinions on how well the government of New Brunswick is doing on the twelve public values. Thirty people who have been actively engaged on forest management and conservation in New Brunswick, including researchers at the province's universities and colleges, and representatives of conservation groups, First Nations organizations, forest user groups and private woodlot owners, ranked the status of these values as either thriving, adequate, improving, worsening, inadequate, or uncertain. The respondents were then asked to explain their rankings.

The survey revealed that respondents are largely dissatisfied with the current forest management regime. Many answered "inadequate" or "worsening" for most public values. Based on the rankings and explanations of the survey respondents as well as a review of recent scientific literature on the different values, the Conservation Council has developed specific recommendations that the province should take on forest management. These recommendations include:

1. Implementation of better public participation opportunities and protection of those opportunities in an updated *Crown Lands and Forest Act*;
2. Implementation of more robust transparency and monitoring mechanisms in Crown forest policy, including the return of an annual state of the forest report that contains information that the public has repeatedly demanded, including ecological, economic and social impacts of current forest management activities and an assessment of alternative uses for Crown forest land;
3. A provincial water strategy that recognizes the role healthy forests play in protecting freshwater and forest management that uses watershed-level planning, including placing limits on the amount of forest

to be harvested within a watershed in a given time frame, mapping and protecting ephemeral, intermittent streams and vernal pools, delineating no-harvest zones within riparian buffers for all rivers, lakes, and wetlands, and increasing riparian buffers near steep slopes and in floodplains;

4. Engagement on a coordinated climate change and forest management strategy that includes research and action on climate change;
 5. Province-wide investments using carbon pricing revenue in the form of tax incentives, grants, and/or loan guarantees to generate emissions reductions from various sectors including forestry, as outlined in the Conservation Council's "Climate Action Plan";
 6. Creation of targets and a plan for old growth forest restoration and protection;
 7. Raising the area of Crown forest set aside for conservation objectives such as wildlife habitat protection to above the bottom limit of 31 per cent needed for wildlife while working towards a goal of conserving 40 per cent of the land base;
 8. Better research and monitoring programs for different categories of wildlife in New Brunswick's forest;
 9. Allocation of resources towards research to better understand and protect species-at-risk on our landscape, including the monitoring of populations and implementation of action plans that ensure the conservation and recovery of at-risk species;
 10. Collaboration with scientists, First Nations and environmental organizations on developing a new strategy for increasing the area and function of protected natural areas as part of Crown forest management;
 11. Review of the silviculture practices used in Crown forest management with a goal of modernizing the practices, and the phase out of herbicides in Crown forestry due to their impacts on forest wildlife and biodiversity, potential health impacts, and economic impacts;
 12. Support for more diversity in forest products and services and protection of that diversity in a modernized *Crown Lands and Forest Act*;
 13. Return of primary source of timber supply to the province's mills to the woodlot owners;
 14. Maximize forest-based revenue generation and employment that respects ecological limits by exploring a pilot project for community forestry and allowing different tenure systems in a modernized *Crown Lands and Forest Act*;
 15. Honouring of the Peace and Friendship treaties and Aboriginal rights in forest management.
- Overall, the report card points to a need in the province for modernized forest legislation and regulated practices that are guided by four overarching principles: (1) respect for public trust, public participation and increased transparency; (2) respect for environmental values, including management that respects forested watersheds and better conservation practices for biodiversity in a future of climate change; (3) respect for socio-economic values that encourages a diversity of forest products, services and users, and better supports revenue generation for communities and the province, and (4) honouring of the Peace and Friendship treaties and Aboriginal rights.