

New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Provincial Advisory Committee

c/o Roberta Clowater, Chair

180 St. John Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9; phone: 506-452-9902; email: cpawnsb@nb.sympatico.ca

October 3, 2008

Hon. Donald Arseneault
Minister of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Re: Comments on Reports “*Management Alternatives for New Brunswick’s Public Forest*”
and “*Future Opportunities for the Forest Products Industry in New Brunswick*”

Dear Hon. Mr. Arseneault,

As you requested, I am pleased to forward these comments regarding the above reports, on behalf of the Protected Natural Areas Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC). The members of the PAC were sent a notice about the reports, and links to the online version, on September 2. The committee met on September 29 to discuss the reports, and receive input from the Science Advisory Committee (SAC).

In general, the PAC supports the 10 principles that have been described by the SAC in a separate letter to you. These principles are as follows:

1. Conservation forest in NB must be established on the basis of ecosystem need, using scientific principles. The current area of conservation forest in NB was established on this basis. The total area currently managed for conservation cannot be reduced without jeopardizing biodiversity.

2. There must be a mix of PNAs and conservation forest areas of varying sizes, meeting different objectives in terms of form and function. Although relatively small habitat patches may be sufficient to maintain populations of some species of concern under some circumstances, it is important that a significant proportion of the protected areas be large to meet the needs of many species and to maintain ecological processes.

3. Protecting natural areas is not necessarily favoured over other conservation measures. Where more protected area is provided at the expense of connectivity and other conservation objectives, the overall biodiversity impact on the greater landscape will be negative.

4. Conservation of old forest, especially tolerant mixed wood representative of the declining Acadian Forest must be a priority for conservation. Tolerant mixed wood typical of the Acadian Forest is declining in abundance and requires special conservation objectives, especially old (uneven aged) forests.

5. Spatial/temporal analysis is important. From the perspective of biodiversity, forest management planning should take into account spatial and spatio-temporal dimensions because

biodiversity reflects not only absolute area of habitat, but also its configuration, and variations in this configuration through time.

6. *Habitat fragmentation leads to biodiversity loss.* Fragmentation can be manifest on the landscape via the reduction in patch size and increased isolation of these patches resulting in a loss of habitat and species diversity.

7. *Size and extent of clearcuts are more important than absolute area.* Emulating natural disturbance is a valuable objective because it will result in a variety of forest-opening sizes and shapes with many residual clumps of standing trees.

8. *Lower road density is favourable for maintaining biodiversity.* Roads are barriers to movement of some small mammal, amphibian, and invertebrate species, they provide access for invasive species, and other disturbance factors, and can alter water regime.

9. *Coarse woody debris, including snags is critical for nutrient cycling in forests and to meet habitat requirements for many species.* Coarse woody debris represents a critical component of forest biodiversity, supporting a significant proportion of species in the forest ecosystem; it tends to decrease with intensity of forest management.

10. *Management of the forest should incorporate climate change expectations.* Management should favour temperate over boreal species (this will favour late successional species as most boreal species are early successional); black spruce and jack pine are not compatible with predicted climate change scenarios.

In addition, the committee discussed the following issues that they believe should also be considered (in random order):

- Having some proportion of Crown land managed intensively as plantations, located near mills (to reduce transportation costs and lower emissions), can be beneficial if it removes pressure to harvest remote and relatively undisturbed forests;
- Given the increasing importance of water quality and water flow regimes, there should not be any reduction in riparian buffers, and they should be designed appropriate to the terrain of the landscape;
- The focus in the reports solely on the economic implications of the wood products economy is very limiting to productive discussions – the PAC believes it is important to consider the sustainability of all economic activities on public lands, and
- That the potential for increasing economic activity related to the protection and conservation of forests cannot be overlooked. For example, if the PNA program received more investment of staff and resources, and there was increased relationship between DNR and Tourism and Parks on issues of marketing, recreational carrying capacity and regional tourism development, it would boost the potential for PNAs to support jobs and regional economic development.

In general, the PAC members believe it is important that when determining the correct forest management direction, government needs to also recognize the social and economic needs of the province's citizens.

The PAC would like to thank the Minister for asking us to provide comments on this important topic. PAC members are concerned the short comment period did not permit many to learn enough about the reports to be able to provide more detailed comments about the alternatives, or to be able to express preferences for or against any of the alternatives. As you move forward, the PAC is available if you or your staff would like to discuss potential implementation paths or receive feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roberta Clowater".

Roberta Clowater
Chair, Protected Natural Areas Provincial Advisory Committee