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Northern Light

## Belledune mayor has concerns about province's new plan for forestry

*James Mallory*

The mayor of Belledune is among those concerned about the province's latest forestry project.

"Conservation areas have been identified by previous governments, and I believe those boundaries should be respected," said Nick Duivenvoorden.

On Jan. 30, Premier Shawn Graham unveiled his Liberal government's new forest management plan. The plan expands the area available for plantations and slashes the proportion allotted for conservation.

Mayor Duivenvoorden said the latter aspect of the plan concerns him, because conservation areas in his village are an important aspect of the community.

"I'm just concerned and hoping whatever measures are taken with respect to the forestry industry, in its current state or by way of new products, that the forests are always managed in a sustainable fashion. You need to give me a really good reason why the areas that were targeted as conservation areas should be penetrated for wood harvest."

Others have also expressed concern about the plan, which is to be implemented in 2012. Megan de Graaf, a forest ecologist with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, said the plan does not do enough to protect the environment.

"Although this plan was touted as being a 'balanced approach', only industry representatives were smiling," said Ms. de Graaf, in a news release.

"The new plan will nearly triple the area available for plantations (from the present 10% to 28%). Reputable N.B. scientists recommend that plantations not exceed 15% of the land base.

"This necessarily means that herbicide applications will also increase almost three-fold.

The new plan will decrease the amount of old forest (currently 45%) to 31%, at a time when scientists tell us that 40% old forest is the survival threshold for species that depend on old forest habitats. The new plan will also reduce the area of conservation forest. This means the area of special wildlife habitat zones will be cut by at least half."

Mayor Duivenvoorden said the government must be very careful with this natural resource so that future generations don't suffer the consequences.

"I'm always concerned that maybe we're harvesting beyond what's sustainable. Are we some day going to look out our windows and just see wide open spaces and nothing more.