

**Presentation to Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick -
Select Committee on Wood Supply
December 3, 2003
by Roberta Clowater, Coordinator,
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Mr. Chair and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to address you on such an important issue as the future management of Crown lands.

My name is Roberta Clowater, and today I am here to represent the views of two organizations. The first is the New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition, for whom I work as coordinator. Secondly, I am a national trustee of the Board of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, a charitable organization based in Ottawa.

As some of you know, I have worked for many years in this province to encourage the establishment of protected areas on Crown lands, in support of the goal of biodiversity conservation. New Brunswick, along with every other province in Canada, agreed in 1991 to create a network of protected areas which would represent the entire range of natural ecosystems across the country. Last spring, our province took its first significant step toward that goal with the *Protected Natural Areas Act*. I say "first step", because the ten new areas protected in that act do not constitute a completed network.

New Brunswick's protected areas system is not complete, as it does not yet represent all of New Brunswick's biodiversity, even on Crown land. A protected areas network consists of large, medium and small protected areas, with connective corridors among these areas to allow for the dispersal of animals and plants. There is still much work to be done before we will have such a network here in the province.

Before continuing, I believe it is important to define a protected area. A protected area is a space permanently free of development and industrial activity, where species and natural ecological processes are essentially left to take their own course. Permanent protected areas are important as they not only preserve biodiversity, but also provide us with a scientific control, allowing researchers to compare the natural forest with areas that have been impacted by forestry or other human activities. Currently, deer wintering areas, buffer zones, and mature forest habitat are not protected areas, as wood harvesting is allowed within them. These are special management zones.

The Jaakko Pöyry report's wood supply scenarios and recommendations are based on their opinion that "... conservation measures adopted on New Brunswick Crown Lands are at the high end of the range defined by the benchmarked regions."(p.42) At present, only 3.1% of New Brunswick's land base is permanently protected. This is not enough, and is certainly not considered to be at the high end of the conservation spectrum, using any benchmark available. In fact, as WWF Canada's "The Nature Audit" stated in April, 2003, New Brunswick has the least complete protected areas network of all Canadian jurisdictions. There is virtually no ecologically-justifiable room to intensify our use of forests, given the minimal state of biodiversity conservation measures in our province. We should not even be talking about doubling the wood supply in the absence of a completed Protected Areas network. There is simply not enough of an ecological safety net in place here to justify the risk of going ahead with doubling the wood supply as is being proposed.

Table: Rank of jurisdictions based on the level of ecological representation achieved pre-April 17, 2003 through the establishment of protected areas systems and some interim protected sites.

Ranked Jurisdictions	% of ecological representation targets achieved	% of jurisdiction permanently protected from industrial activity	Area protected (hectares)
1. BC	41	13.0	12,012,617
2. ON	40	9.2	9,142,039
3. NS	36	8.2	465,363
4. PEI	35	2.6	14,780
5. MB	34	8.5	5,402,416
6. AB	33	12.3	8,009,229
7. NF & Labrador	30	4.3	1,701,412
8. NWT	25	12.3	16,318,158
9. YK	25	12	5,678,119
10. NU	25	7.4	15,434,457
11. SK	24	3.5	2,243,230
12. QC	22	3.5	5,217,586
13. NB	21	3.1	233,443
Canada	29	8.4	81,877,848

The Jaakko Pöyry report recommends that one of the conditions that would enable the wood supply targets to be met would be that, "There is no required change to biodiversity objectives from the March 2000 Vision document" (p. 55). In addition, they recommend an immediate intensification of forest management practices within the special management zones, and a re-examination of those zones and the constraints within them. These recommendations, if followed, would appear to result in:

- 1) no new protected areas, and no network of corridors connecting present areas;
- 2) increased pressures on existing protected areas, as their ability to maintain their ecological integrity is lessened when surrounded by less natural habitat;
- and 3) the loss of naturally occurring ecosystems in a significant proportion of the Crown forest, making biodiversity conservation in the province even more challenging.

The report admits that the scenarios Jaakko Pöyry proposes do not address yields of hardwood, white pine, red pine, cedar and hemlock, but that "...maintaining yields of these species is an important outcome of forest management" (p.23). From a biodiversity perspective, it is important to ensure that the natural patterns and composition of the forest, including all of the above mentioned species, is maintained. The organizations I represent are already concerned that we have simplified our naturally rich Acadian forest too much. Measures are not in place to ensure conservation of the diverse habitats we need to sustain populations of barred owl, goshawks, flying squirrels and many other wildlife species that require older mixed-forest or hardwood forest habitats. This proposal to simplify the Crown forests even further moves us further away from ecologically sustainable Crown land management.

In addition to my interest in biodiversity conservation and protected areas, I definitely see the need for a healthy forest industry. The NB Protected Natural Areas Coalition and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society whole-heartedly agree that we need an approach to public land management which will support forest-based jobs for communities, while at the same time preserving values for the future, including biodiversity.

The Jaakko Pöyry report proposes a future for our forests that will increase the risks to biodiversity and the environment. In return, the report offers no guarantees about employment. Silviculture work may be increased in the short-term, falling to 50% over present levels shortly thereafter. No comment is made about other forestry jobs. I don't see that as an acceptable trade-off for placing biodiversity further at risk.

The Jaakko Pöyry report contains no analysis of future trends in the forest products market, nor how New Brunswick is likely to fair in this future market, whether we increase our wood supply or not. The report alludes to economic problems caused by focussing planting on one certain species, then later finding out that markets have changed (as happened in Finland) and that other species and products are now more favoured. This illustrates a need to diversify our forest-based economy, not limit our options.

We do not have an analysis of how the proposed changes to Crown land management will impact non-timber forest product jobs, nor the tourism industry. In fact, most indicators show that the future for employment and a sustainable forest industry is in value-added manufacturing, rather than just increased cutting and shipping of raw products. If the demand for doubling the wood supply is truly about preserving or creating jobs in New Brunswick communities, then we need a better investigation into how this could be done, before decisions are made which will limit other economic opportunities in the future.

Forestry has been labelled a large-scale ongoing experiment, as we truly do not understand the long-term effects that our system of forestry may have. Now, even without this knowledge, we have before us a proposal for an even bigger experiment. What we don't have is an adequate justification for jeopardizing the future health of our natural world.

The current proposal is simply a way of tinkering around the edges of our current system - which is not working well and is proving itself to be unsustainable. It makes sense that people in the industry are concerned. The Jaakko Pöyry report provides us with a very limited piece of information with respect to a vision for Crown land management. The province of New Brunswick needs to consider a wide range of options, including a detailed consideration of the other values which are not currently on the table.

In recent days, we have learned details of an impressive agreement for conserving the Boreal forest, developed and endorsed by 11 organizations representing conservation groups, industry and First Nations. The agreement calls for the protection of 50% of the Boreal Forest of Canada in an interconnected network of protected areas, and sustainable ecosystem-based management for forestry and other resource industries outside the network. The endorsers of this agreement include the large forestry companies Domtar, Tembec and Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries. This is the wave of the future for public land management, with companies, First Nations, governments and conservationists working together, using public input, to set a vision for the long-term ecological health of forests, while still providing jobs and forest products. We could use this as an example of how to proceed, adapting it to the New Brunswick situation. This is what real progress on sustainable forest management would look like.

I believe that the issue of how to best manage Crown lands needs a real re-think. The organizations I represent propose that government initiate a serious process to evaluate how we can conserve biodiversity on all Crown land (including the completion of a network of functionally connected protected areas), sustain jobs in the forest industry, and increase economic opportunities from the forest. Who might help us find the ways to plan for such a future vision? You have heard from many of them - experts and knowledgeable people from our universities, NGOs, and forest-based industries. Some you might not have heard from, including government foresters, ecologists and economists. The NB Protected Natural Areas Coalition would certainly be interested in assisting in the development of a new strategy for the ecologically, socially and economically sustainable use of our public lands.

To conclude, I would like to offer a concise answer to a major question that the Jaakko Pöyry report was to answer: Can we double the wood supply in New Brunswick without harming the environment? The answer, in our opinion, is "no".