

**Response to Jaakko Poyry Report on Assessment of Stewardship and Management on the  
Crown Lands of New Brunswick  
For the Select Committee On Wood Supply**

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My name is Mitch Lansky. I am a resident of Wytopitlock, Maine, which is not far from New Brunswick. I have been writing about forestry issues since 1976. My writing includes books, book chapters, reports, and numerous articles, including some published in *Atlantic Forestry Review*. I've participated in forestry forums, including the Northern Forest Lands Council, the Maine Council of Sustainable Forest Management, the Maine Forest Biodiversity Project, and the Legislative Round Table on Forest Economic and Labor Issues. I was also on an advisory committee for the Bureau of Parks and Lands. I am a founder of the Low-Impact Forestry Project and worked for a number of years with the Hancock County Planning Commission to inform people in mid-coast Maine on ways to improve forestry practices. My experiences from this effort resulted in the publication of my most recent book, *Low-Impact Forestry: Forestry as if the Future Mattered*.

**Why would someone from Maine be interested in a forestry debate in New Brunswick?**

New Brunswick and Maine share the same Acadian Forest. Maine also imports significant quantities of New Brunswick wood for its paper mills. Millions of acres of land in Maine are owned by Canadian companies, one of which is based in New Brunswick and which exports Maine wood to its New Brunswick saw mill. Maine land is thus part of the New Brunswick wood base. Because there is regional and global trade in wood, prices in New Brunswick have an influence on prices in Maine. To the degree that there are major subsidies to companies operating on Crown Lands, this could lead to problems with free trade. What happens in New Brunswick, therefore, can have an impact on Maine policy and on Maine prices.

**Contrast with Maine's Public Lands**

The Jaako Poyry report spends a lot of time comparing New Brunswick with Finland. Finland is at a much higher latitude than New Brunswick and has a boreal forest with very different disturbance cycles and much fewer species than is the rule in the Acadian Forest of New Brunswick. The report admits that the Finish approach has led to *drainage of wetlands*, the *elimination of natural forests* in the southern regions, and *shortfalls in hardwoods*. Such problems are an unacceptable tradeoff for increased productivity of softwood pulp on public lands that are supposed to be managed in the public interest.

Maine, which shares the Acadian forest, is a more relevant comparison. In Maine, the Bureau of Parks and Lands manages 525,000 *acres* (not 485,000 *hectares* as mistakenly reported on page 38). The mission for Maine's public lands is to meet multiple objectives for the public benefit. Only 67% of total acreage is considered in the sustainable timber base. One third of this public land is not cut due to reserves, biodiversity, or recreation.

Of the 67% of forest that is "regulated" for timber, 80% is managed for multiple age classes using selection cutting. Of the 20% managed for single-age classes, rotations are from 100-150 years, except for stands that are mostly fir or poplar. *The Bureau does almost no clearcutting* (less than 1% of all cutting). Clearcuts, when they are used, need to be smaller than

20 acres. Single-aged stands are regenerated by the shelterwood system, usually with two thinnings and two regeneration cuts.

The Bureau does almost no plantation establishment, and it has used herbicides rarely. *It is state policy in Maine to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides. Part of the Bureau's mandate is to set an example for other landowners of minimizing pesticide use.*

The Jaakko Poyry report implies that plantation management is "scientific" management. In Maine, the Baxter State Park Scientific Management Area (which is also public land) has, as its mission, to do exemplary scientific-based management. *The SFMA, however does no plantation management at all.* The SFMA also uses no herbicides. The manager, Jensen Bissell, recognizes that *ecology is a science and scientific management needs to incorporate ecological principles, rather than treat the forest as a monoculture farm crop.*

Maine's public lands are managed to grow large trees because these trees are valuable for both wildlife and mills. Both the Bureau of Parks and Lands and the SFMA's economic goal is to maximize *value* (within ecological, recreational, and aesthetic restraints), not just *volume*. The highest value is for sawlogs and veneer, not pulp or utility-grade 2x4s.

### **Long-term economics**

There are a number of ways to improve values of the forest:

- *Increasing rate of growth.* Improved stocking, favoring thrifty trees, minimizing trails and yards.
- *Improving species ratios.* Stop highgrading
- *Improving product mix.* Grow bigger, older trees.
- *Favoring products that increase in value above inflation.* Such as quality sawlogs or veneer.
- *Decreasing risk.* Through diversity in species and structures.
- *Improving stands for wildlife, recreation, and aesthetics.* Which has economic benefits for community.

The approach recommended by Jaako Poyry would, to some extent, go against these common sense economic approaches:

- Companies on Crown Lands would clearcut stands before some of the wood has reached peak economic value. This is at a time when large-diameter spruce is in decline. The best way to grow high-quality large-diameter spruce is on existing trees, not on seedlings.
- Citizens would subsidize plantation establishment and protection--activities that have a very long period between investment and payoff. In the meantime, markets can change and wood values of commodities grown this way are unlikely to increase in value over inflation.
- Crown Lands would have vast areas of monocultures or near monocultures that would be at risk to a variety of insects (such as spruce budworm, spruce cone worm, yellow headed spruce saw fly, or balsam woolly adelgid) and other threats. There would be increased costs for protection, lowered yields than expected, or both.

### **Special management zones**

While waiting for plantations to come on line, managers on Crown Lands, according to the report, would cut more heavily in special management zones. The JP report says that over 32% of New Brunswick's Crown Lands are in some form of protected area or special management zone. The report makes it seem like this figure is excessive. In Maine, the figure is

even higher. For a starter, 33% of the Bureau's land base is in reserves. To this figure one adds the deer yards, riparian zones and other special management areas in the timber base.

A chart from the report on page 34 shows the percentage of total productive forest in protection at around 14% in New Brunswick and around 7% for Maine. According to Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission staff, however, 18% of the LURC jurisdiction is under some form of special management restrictions or protections. LURC regulates over half of the land area of Maine, most of which is privately owned. One wonders where Jaakko Poyry came up with its numbers, since there is no documentation in its report. *Such sloppy research raises questions about the credibility of the report as a whole.*

The report seems to imply that forests in special management zones, such as riparian zones, can not be productive or profitable. The report does not say why this is so, since, in most of these areas, partial cutting is still allowed, even though clearcutting is not. The multiple-age forestry that Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands favors in timber dominant zones can also be done in riparian zones, though extra care must be taken to avoid siltation.

### **Certification**

The report suggests that Crown Lands can reduce employees involved in in-house oversight by relying on the oversight from certification. This suggestion is surprising, since certification involves fairly quick, random, on-ground audits, perhaps years apart. Meeting a passing grade from such an audit is not the same as having adequate daily oversight. Indeed, a number of certified landowners in Maine have violated the State's Forest Practices Act, riparian zone regulations of the Land Use Regulation Commission, and Best Management Practices, but still remained certified.

*If managers want Crown Lands to be certified under FSC (as are Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands and the Baxter State Park Scientific Management Area), they would have to demonstrate how they will reduce reliance on herbicides over time, not double the rate of spraying as recommended by Jaakko Poyry.*

FSC certification for "natural forests" is also supposed to exclude plantations. The SCS certifiers for J.D. Irving called that company's plantations "planted forests," to avoid that provision. It is not clear if such a claim could be used successfully by New Brunswick's Crown Lands, where the certifiers would be under pressure to assure that management meets higher ecological and social criteria than would be used for private ownerships.

### **Licenses and subsidies**

The Jaakko Poyry report recommends allowing the license holders to get the revenues from clearcuts and have the public help pay for plantations, herbicides, and thinning. *This is a subsidy that encourages practices that the public dislikes and that are not economically viable on such a scale in a free market. If they were viable, then there would be no need for subsidies.*

The subsidies are not only a problem for trade between countries, they are also a problem for trade within New Brunswick. *Flooding the market with artificially cheap softwood pulpwood and low-grade lumber may be good for the mills which buy the wood, but it is not good for woodlot owners who will be paid less for their products.*

In Maine, nearly all planting and precommercial thinning are done by Central American Guestworkers. Increasing such practices on industrial lands created no new jobs for Maine people, because Maine workers can not compete with workers coming from some of the poorest

countries in this hemisphere. Since some of the landowners in Maine are also landowners in New Brunswick, it would not be surprising if, eventually, the same trends hit New Brunswick.

### **Sustainable?**

The Jaakko Poyry report suggests that maintaining cut at current levels on Crown Lands is not sufficient; the cut must be increasing every year to keep the forest industry viable. *The report confuses increased cutting and mill capacity with increased public benefits of jobs or taxes.*

In Maine, the cut has greatly increased over the last several decades, but the number of jobs in both the woods and the mills has fallen. *In addition, inflation-adjusted wages for woods workers and truckers have also fallen at a rate worse than for most other industries.* In the mean time, the industry has leveraged lower property taxes in towns with mills.

*So, ironically, even though cut has increased in Maine, jobs, tax revenues, and even wages have decreased over the last several decades.* I would be very surprised if similar trends did not occur in New Brunswick as well.

Spending money to continue these trends may not be the best use of Provincial funds if the goal is economic development. A better long-term strategy would be to grow more value, do more value-added processing in the province, and to diversify the economy so it is not so dependent on a single industry.

The report recommends increasing investments to eventually double the cut, perhaps in 65 or 70 years. The report does not say what will happen to the cut after that. *If, in 70 years, the level of cut is finally stabilized, then how viable can the industry be if it needs to have a continually increasing cut?*

*One thing is for certain, Crown Lands cannot sustain a perpetual increase in cut of 1% a year.* In just one thousand years of such growth in cutting, the annual cut on Crown Lands would have to be nearly 21,000 times greater than it is today. I would suggest that even massive amounts of chemicals and genetically engineered trees could not boost yields to such an extent.

*Given, then, that Crown Lands will have to reach a sustainable level of cut at some point, which would be preferable: having 40% of the province in short-rotation boreal softwood plantations dependent on pesticides and subsidies or having more in natural forest structures?* The people of Maine have chosen the latter for their public lands. Which way do the people of New Brunswick want their public forests to be managed? Unless New Brunswick changes its direction, it will wind up where it is headed.