

# **Presentation To NB Select Committee On Wood Supply**

**John Lockerbie, Regional Director for Maritime Canada  
The Ruffed Grouse Society**

## **Introduction:**

The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) is a non-profit, international organization of conservationists dedicated to improving the environment for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, deer and many other species of both game and non-game forest wildlife. The Society is pursuing its goals by supporting major scientific research into habitat improvement methods as well as through an expanding commitment to a variety of wildlife habitat education projects. The Canadian Branch of the Society ( RGS Canada) is a non-profit registered charity, under Canadian law.

In most jurisdictions, in cooperation with local agencies the Society sponsors habitat improvement workshops. These workshops have the flexibility of being tailored to the needs of professional foresters and wildlife biologists who are seeking the latest information available on habitat improvement and maintenance. They can also answer the needs of forest owners and sportsmen interested in what the layman can do to enhance the environment for forest wildlife.

Additionally, the Society is acting in partnership with conservation professionals in many key grouse regions to develop on-going habitat education projects. Through the use of publications, films, demonstration areas and several other teaching aids, these projects bring habitat improvement methods to the widest possible audience of interested landowners.

The society also works on an individual basis with private or corporate landowners interested in improving habitat for forest wildlife. The Society's regional directors are schooled in the latest forest habitat improvement techniques and help woodland owners create the best possible method to enhance wildlife habitat in a particular forested area.

The Society has had a presence in New Brunswick for more than twelve years, with wildlife enhancement projects at Tintamarre National Reserve near Sackville, Shepody in Albert County and our most recent "Devils Elbow" project near Stanley. In the past five years, we have assisted more than thirty woodland owners including JD Irving with a grouse/woodcock project with on the Miramichi "alder grounds" near Juniper.

In light of the very nature of our organization, our comments will be, for the most part directed to the impact that this proposal will have on wildlife in New Brunswick.

### **Yaakko Poyry:**

We have had some difficulty during our examination of the Yaakko Poyry Report. On the one hand, it can be explicit when dealing with wood supply objectives, but at the same time, is wrought with vague references to the well being of wildlife and its habitat.

We are all dependent on the bounty of products and benefits from the forest. Our forests help clean the air we breathe. It filters and cleans the water of our streams and rivers. It offers employment and recreation for our citizens. Our forest related industry runs the whole gambit from pulp and paper mills to Christmas tree production and even Taxol from ground hemlock. New Brunswick is blessed with one of the most fertile soil areas in North America. Our Acadian forest continues to flourish with over 35 tree and perhaps as many as 30,000 wildlife species living here. For example, we have possibly the highest diversity of songbirds of any temperate forest region east of the Rocky Mountains.

Many of our wildlife species are dependant on the early seccessional forests that follow a forest disturbance such as fire or forest harvesting. The wildlife or fauna associated with the forest, changes as succession proceeds. The sun-loving plants of early succession, produces the greatest quantity of forage available for herbivores and other typical tetraonids such as grouse. Since most of these animals tend to be large, such as deer, moose, bear, and beaver, this stage of forest succession supports the greatest biomass of animal life.

Most forms of wildlife are fairly specific in their habitat needs with a narrow range of tolerance. So whatever is done in the forest (even leaving it undisturbed) will benefit some species and hurt others. Choices must be made, and tradeoffs considered. The proper mix of old and young diversified forests is most likely to provide benefits for the greatest number of animals, and displace only a few intolerant forms.

The Yaakko Poyry Report suggests that a doubling of the allowable of harvest on New Brunswick's Crown lands can be accomplished by turning 42% of our public forest into plantation consisting of several species of softwood. In addition to this, 18% would be pre commercially thinned (PCT). Add to this 60%, the fact that according to DNR approximately 33% of our forested Crown lands are under 25 years of age with up to 15% being now in plantation and 13% PCT.

The combination of this amount of plantation and thinning will have a devastating effect on the carrying capacity for all wildlife on our Crown lands, specifically removing early seccessional forest so necessary for wildlife.

As part of their vague reference to wildlife, Yaakko Poyry cites higher deer harvesting rates in Norway, Finland and Sweden as an example of how well wildlife can do in an intensively managed forest. What it does not disclose is that, in most situations, hunting takes place on private land where poor deer browse is supplemented with commercial feed with license fees going to the state and hunting fees to the landowner.

Also Yaakko Poyry does not mention that in Finland over 700 wildlife species including bear, lynx, otter and forest reindeer are endangered as a direct result of this style of intensively managing forests. (<http://eecs.org/articles>)

YP states that “while there are no established tests for what is appropriate in terms of making provision for habitat protection, wildlife, water protection and biodiversity, the situation in New Brunswick appears to favor meeting these objectives at the expense of wood production.”

The existing DNR habitat guidelines that deal with the maintenance of habitat and requirements for minimum buffers are for the most part superior to many other jurisdictions, yet streamside buffers continue to be encroached upon by forest harvesting operators, as evidenced by the number of fines that continue to be levied yearly. In fact, currently, there are questions being raised by provincial conservation organizations as to the quality and practicability of our existing wildlife programs.

We disagree that doubling the available wood supply is an essential objective in NB Crown forests. The models proposed by Yaakko Poyry cannot be taken as sound as they do not provide the necessary analytical information to warrant such large changes to the way we manage our Crown forest. A desire for such sweeping change in our forest management policy must require quantifiable analysis of all alternatives before any decision should be made. Extensive evaluation of impact on diversification of tree species, forest age, water quality and fish and wildlife habitat must take place. Precise goals need to be established to insure maintenance of a maximum amount of all natural forest types.

Any approved increase of wood supply from Crown land must come only after exhaustive analysis of all factors including wildlife and environmental, and only be managed by DNR. The Crown forests of New Brunswick are held in trust by the Government of New Brunswick for the citizens of New Brunswick and must remain so.

## **Observations/Recommendations:**

Reference has been made by the proponents of this plan before you, to that current values assigned to habitat be maintained at present levels. It should be noted that, for the most part, the conservation organizations of this province have begun to question these current values as to whether or not they are appropriate, and in truth believe them to be lacking. Indeed it is a commonly held view that fish and wildlife habitat is at present managed to the minimum, rather to our maximum values. We recommend that Government establish a community based vehicle so that the public could have meaningful input into forestry and wildlife habitat decisions.

It is somewhat confusing, that for some past months the NBFPA has been complaining that mills were closing because of unfair US tariffs on soft wood lumber. Now it is touted that some of these same mills are closing because of a lack of wood supply?

## **Conclusion:**

The model proposed by Yaakko Poyry offers no guarantees other than to produce fiber. Are there inherent mistakes to this form of intensive forest management that will be left for our future generations to deal with? Evidence, suggests that environmental mistakes made in Finland from this kind of intensive forestry might take up to 100 years to correct.

Yaakko Poyry leaves us with no guarantees of sustainability of traditional values of wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Yaakko Poyry leaves no guarantees of sustainability of traditional values of biodiversity for future generations of New Brunswickers.

Under the Yaakko Poyry plan we will see many songbird species disappear on Crown land.

Under the Yaakko plan we will see our deer populations plummet, without hope of recovery on Crown land.

Under Yaakko Poyry we will see our black bear population all but disappear on Crown land.

Under Yaakko Poyry we will see our Moose population all but disappear on Crown land.

Under Yaakko Poyry we may see our beautiful watersheds turned into a series of little more than warm spate rivers and streams devoid of many of our traditionally valued fish species.

Under Yaakko Poyry we will see 60+% of the carrying capacity for wildlife in this province disappear.

Under Yaakko Poyry we will see beautiful neat plantations with row upon row of nice, fluffy green softwood trees with nary a broadleaf within.

Ultimately the Government of New Brunswick is charged as being the trustee of our Crown lands and waters (NOT THE OWNER) and it is for them to manage these lands and resources for the benefit of our citizens, without diminishing their intrinsic value.

In closing, I might add that I was astonished to receive several telephone calls from people who professed to be representatives speaking on behalf of the Forest industry. The callers suggested that Yaakko Poyry was important for jobs and the future of New Brunswick's forest industry. They recommended that The Ruffed Grouse Society not get involved in this debate, stating that if indeed we did publicly oppose the proposed changes by YP, it would, in all likelihood, affect the future level of support we receive from industry. I do not know if these unidentified callers were directed to contact us or if they were doing this without the knowledge of their superiors and out of passion for their cause. Suffice to say that we are here and as the callers were told "The Ruffed Grouse Society is not for sale". By design we are a relatively small organization, largely supported by sportsmen and women. We are a hunting organization, which puts conservation first. We are supported by hunters who are dedicated to the resource and, by in large, donate far more to wildlife than they take. We will stand for what we believe to be right.