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To the Select Committee on Wood Supply  
Brief presented at 11:30 in Miramichi  
Presented by Sabine Dietz

My name is Sabine Dietz, and I am the Executive Director of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists.

The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists Inc (NBFN/FNNB Inc) was founded in 1972 with a strong mandate to educate New Brunswick's public about our natural heritage, and to actively engage them in the conservation of our flora, fauna and ecosystems. We have primarily been, in our first 29 years of existence, an organization with federated naturalist clubs throughout the province, working solely on a volunteer basis. Over the last three years, we have not only decided to make our organization stronger and more capable to act in the face of challenges and issues, but we have also decided to become very proactive and commence the development of our own, very unique programs in the province.

There are over 1000 New Brunswickers that are part of our network of naturalists, including federated Clubs, families and individuals. We carry out our mandate through two programs: our Youth and Adult Conservation Education Programs, which includes summer camps, a young naturalist club under development, an adult camp under development, and a partnership in the interpretation program at Mary's Point Shorebird Reserve. Our second program is the Piper Project/Projet Siffleur, a conservation and education program in northeastern NB, focusing on species at risk and coastal ecosystems. We believe education of all New Brunswickers plays a crucial role in taking care of our natural heritage.

Our members and federated clubs from all corners of the province as well as our programs are actively involved in many ecological monitoring projects, such as nocturnal owl surveys, Bicknell's Thrush surveys, shorebirds surveys, or plant inventories for a number of different organizations. Our strong basis in science and education, with our grassroots support, makes us an important facet of New Brunswick's natural history community. We strongly believe that decisions on how we use our natural heritage have to be founded in solid science and knowledge. As a result, we support the precautionary principle: if we don't understand what kind of impact an activity might have on our natural heritage (since we don't even know our natural heritage that well), we should be very cautious in undertaking this activity.

As naturalists we value nature. We also appreciate its associated values, economic, social and cultural. Representing naturalists from all across the province, we also represent their love for, appreciation of and knowledge about nature. We are a network of individuals who care about our natural heritage, often have solidly founded knowledge in species, habitats and ecosystems. We are people who want to ensure that



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future generations of New Brunswickers will be able to enjoy the same natural heritage that we enjoy right now.

Values of our forests that we feel crucial to the current and future well-being of New Brunswickers include the following:

Protected areas, ecological reserves, stream buffers, and areas not under development form the **nodes for biodiversity survival** in our province. We feel that we need to ensure that biodiversity and its maintenance is at the basis of any management decision in regards to the use of our crown forests. It is widely understood that the more diverse the species are, the more stable an ecosystem is.

Our **knowledge base** about our forested areas is limited. Research has been restricted to timber resources or fur-bearing game species. Very little is known of non-game species, or of the herbaceous plants in the forests, or of the birds that use them. We need to, before changing an ecosystem, first clearly establish what species are present and what their present values are to all species that use the resource, not only to humans.

Every year, naturalists discover new species never before seen or heard of in this province. Or they find new occurrences, meaning the species has not been recorded for a specific area before (within the province). This indicates to us as naturalists that we are far from having an accurate assessment of the **species diversity** or **species distribution** on our lands. These discoveries usually happen in easily accessible areas, and by accident while naturalists undertake other endeavors. Many areas in the interior, or even around more populated areas have never been visited by knowledgeable scientists or citizen scientists before. We might be losing species without knowing it, and to us, one species lost is one too many.

The government's own assessment of the **general status of species** in NB states that it was only able to assess the status of 862 species of an estimated 33,000 species present in the province. Of the bird species assessed, 66 species including all birds from songbirds (forests) to shorebirds, were ranked sensitive to at risk. Plants, apart from orchids and ferns, have not even been assessed yet. Yet, we are proposing to increase our forestry efforts without the knowledge to guide wise or sustainable use decisions.

Crown forests belong to New Brunswickers. As such, they need to remain **completely accessible** to us. We use these areas as much as anybody else in this province. They are important to us.

Only 3.1% of public lands in New Brunswick has been set aside to ensure some form of maintenance of biodiversity in the province, meaning that they are protected from industrial activity. Birds fly and migrate. Mammals use large tracks of land to survive. **Islands in a sea of managed and changed landscapes** have proven to be **inadequate** to ensure the survival of many species. Any development or change induced by human activity changes a habitat or ecosystem. Species need habitats. Thus a change in a habitat



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often means displacement of a species. Some species can adapt, and move. Plants don't. Forestry, especially, needs to consider impacts on all species caused by the fragmentation of habitats through road building, the elimination of habitats through forest cutting practices, the change in the physical aspects of habitats as a result of changing soil conditions, the impact of eliminating tree buffers along streams on fish habitat.

We know that when we change a habitat or ecosystem, we change the number or kinds of species of all kinds that use this habitat. We believe that such changes should be made with the appropriate caution, be based on scientific knowledge, and with our children and grandchildren in mind.

In conclusion we suggest the following:

1. All special management areas, including protected areas, stream buffers, ecological reserves, or areas otherwise identified for their ecological value, need to remain under a special management regime, ensuring that biodiversity is maintained in these areas;
2. Research and inventories should be carried out in areas with potentially high ecological value, before any management decisions are taken;
3. The province should support citizen science programs and projects much more to ensure the information on species and species distribution can be gathered quickly and efficiently;
4. The province should complete its evaluation of the status of all species in the province; species that are identified as being somewhat at risk need to receive special attention in future management decisions on our crown lands;
5. Forests have to remain accessible;
6. Revisit the adequacy of the existing protected lands and evaluate their ecological value, and the possibility and necessity to create connections between these islands based on sound scientific knowledge;

I thank the committee for allowing me to speak today.

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