

FOREST COMMISSION MONTAGUE PRESENTATION – May 28/2024

Thank you for the invitation and the chance to offer my opinions of our woodland.

Share my Back Ground based on my perspective of our woodlands - Boots on the ground for the last 44 years.

Graduated from the Forest Resources Technology program in 1980.

Worked with the PEI Forest Service from 1980 to 1993 managing Public and Private woodland.

Left government in 1993 and started my own private Company, **Marwood Properties**, managing private woodland and I also acquired my own properties that I manage for **best end use**. We have a number of woodlots that we manage for timber and blueberries. We also owned a value added company, *Royalty Hardwoods* which we expanded into one of the largest specialty value added companies in eastern Canada. We had our own sawmill, dry kilns, flooring plant and custom plant as well as warehousing. Heated the entire facility including kilns with waste wood so familiar with biomass. Utilized every tree species grown on PEI and had markets in the Maritimes, US, Germany, UK and Japan. Sold Kiln dried graded lumber, components, flooring, mouldings, stairs materials, truck box flooring, siding decking, and custom.

So we have had the opportunity to look at our forests and the utilization from many **aspects**.

Too look at **Future direction for the Province on our Forests, we have to look at where we are at now and how we got there.**

Every story has three main parts, the beginning, the middle and the end. I think we are in the middle now and climate change including a couple of recent hurricanes and the growth and development on PEI has forced us to try and write the ending and thus the formation of the Commission.

So let's look at the **beginning** and what some of the events that lead to the situation we are in now with our forests.

In 1775 Samuel Holland surveyed PEI which was under Englands rule and the Province was sliced up into 67 lots approx 20000 acres each. These lots were eventually colonized and subdivided and then deeded over to the renting farmers as part of our deal to enter into the 1873 Confederation with Canada.

The next major survey was done in 1880 and if anyone is familiar with the Meachums atlas, you can see that PEI consisted then of many smaller rectangular 50 to 100 acre farms . The peak amount of land that was cleared for agriculture would have been in the late 1800s, early 1900s and there was approx **75%** of the island that was cleared for agriculture.

One of the reasons for the land clearing was the strong demand and good prices during the US civil war and the 1st world war to grow crops to feed people and horses.

You can go on line and access 1935 aerial photography and you will see a bird's eye view of what the island looked like then with the small rectangular farms and many fields per farm.

There were good times in the 1920s then there was the Great depression in the 30s and world war two in the 40s and during this time the viability of the small farms was poor and there was an exodus of people heading to central Canada and new England for work. A lot of cleared land was abandoned during this period which reverted back to woodland as they were seeded in naturally from the white spruce hedgerows.

Approx **25% of the total land base of PEI grew back into trees and this resulted in 50% of our forested land consisting of we refer to as old field white spruce stands**. These abandoned fields were a major factor for our forest industry as they supplied us with ***rectangular natural plantations*** that had **relatively good access, distinguishable boundaries and high volumes of marketable species** that were in demand for pulpwood, studwood and sawlogs.

With the **availability and maturing** of these old field forest stands, contractors expanded and purchased expensive equipment to chase this profitable, low hanging fruit. **These old field sites had a major impact on our forest industry and perhaps we would not have had much of an industry without them.**

If we look at the ***present***, the majority of the old field sites that were not harvested were now over mature and susceptible to insect and weather and were collapsing. This natural process of these stands collapsing was accelerated by hurricane Dorian and then most were flattened during Fiona. So what would normally take 10 to 15 years for these stands to collapse, happened in one day and now the standing wood on the old field sites are now mostly gone. A percentage will be salvaged but most will not be utilized and I expect this will be the last year to be able to use the damaged trees. Wood is sold by weight and the trees are dry so you getting paid for less than 15 cords on a 20 cord load which affects viability.

So the **old field white spruce will be gone** and the other softwood species, Balsam fir, which was also a significant portion of the softwood industry was also damaged by Fiona and was in decline from climate change prior to the storm. What is left now are stands of low grade hardwoods mostly coppice growth red maple/white birch/poplar that were also damaged during Fiona.

Now for the ***future***. The old field and balsam fir stands are disappearing so the existing harvesting industry will be reduced and as will the areas available to plant trees. When the politicians

announce that they will be increasing the amount of trees they will be growing, where will they be planted??

Population growth and rural development is increasing and will take another slice of our forests. I predict the biggest factor that will affect our woodland be land clearing for agriculture. Farm land on PEI is now averaging \$6000/acre and some properties are selling for \$10,000 ++per acre so clearing woodland is now a viable option. Woodland is only cleared land with trees to be removed and I can foresee heading back to the ratios of clear to wooded that we had 100 years ago. We also have to deal with the effects of fires, insects and weather due to climate change??

Have to consider best end use. Farms land or woodland. Development land. All based on objectives.

Now to look at the Future and what direction should the Province take?

Continue to replant harvested areas with the species they are concentrating on today, White spruce, white pine, and hardwoods, maple, birch and red oak. Look at some additional species such as cedar, large tooth aspen and American cherry.

Wider planting spacing (12 ft) with the promotion of naturals to develop a healthier mixed wood stand.

The promotion of natural seeding with scarification to expose the soil and use manual maintenance vs chemical for better species selection.

Pruning of crop trees to grow clear knot free wood. Veneer log worth significantly more than a saw log.

Site index using soil types (PEI soil classification) to determine what stands we should be spending money on. Leave the poorly drained and dry acidic sites.

Ideally, all woodland should be managed intensively with the goal of producing individual high value trees and I believe if a property is managed properly that the **biological, economic and social needs can all be met.**

How does one do this on a small scale where there is no labor force or limited small equipment to do this type of work and the economic viability is marginal??

Need to be able to predict future markets. black spruce for pulp mills in 1980. White Birch today. Sawlogs, veneer and spool wood.

Need landowner and silvicultural worker education.

Need markets for **low quality/value** wood products. More Biomass and not less. Salvage incentives now. Site reclamation??

Need markets for **small volume high quality** and value wood products?

Woodlot owner cooperatives might be a good option.

The Province needs to manage public land and lead example for the private sector.

And finally, I would like to end with a couple of notes:

Perception is truth and you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Thank you