

Colin Stewart Forest Forum Delivers Report to Province

November 20, 2009

In a meeting yesterday with the Hon. Sterling Belliveau, Minister of Environment and the Hon. John MacDonell, Minister of Natural Resources, the Colin Stewart Forest Forum delivered its final report, which presents a suite of high value ecological sites for consideration of inclusion in Nova Scotia's protected areas network.

The Forum, which was established in 2004 by environmental non-government organizations and large forestry companies, and supported by the Province since 2005, is the namesake of Colin Stewart (1953-2004). Mr. Stewart was a conservation leader in Nova Scotia for over three decades, whose environmental vision and belief in respectful dialogue provided the inspiration for the Forum.

In November of 2004, the Nova Forest Alliance hosted the Colin Stewart Forest Forum to realize Mr. Stewart's vision to initiate dialogue between forest industry companies and environmental groups. The result of the Forum was the formation of a Steering Committee, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in which all partners pledged to "work together in good faith to develop a mutually agreeable proposal toward completion of the protected areas network and that mitigates associated wood supply and cost impacts for the forest industry".

The signatories to the 2005 MOU were the Ecology Action Centre, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Bowater Mersey, JD Irving Ltd., Neenah Paper (now Northern Pulp), and StoraEnso Port Hawkesbury (now NewPage Port Hawkesbury), and later the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and Nature Conservancy of Canada. At the most recent meeting on November 19, Forum partners fulfilled their pledge to "jointly carry the proposal forward to the Premier, with a joint recommendation that it be accepted by government".

The final report is the culmination of five years of collaborative work on the part of Forum partners. The high-value ecological sites described in the report are all located on lands which are either owned or managed by the Crown or by Forum partners. The comprehensive suite of sites was arrived at through a rigorous science-based analysis.

Although much of the difficult task of prioritizing areas is completed with the delivery of the final report, Forum partners have committed to assisting and advising government as the Province moves toward its fulfillment of the requirements of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*, which sets a goal of legally protecting 12% of Nova Scotia's land area by 2015. In addition, mitigation details need to be completed for all areas proposed for protection.

As facilitator to the forum, the Nova Forest Alliance is pleased to have played a pivotal role throughout this unique and collaborative process. We extend congratulations to all Forum partners for their achievements and tenacity.

The report indicates that, "By working together, the environmental non-governmental organizations and forestry companies have developed win-win scenarios that bring greater certainty to all parties, will expand the protected areas system, addresses wood supply and cost impacts for the industry, assists government in achieving their environmental goals, and reduces conflict between two groups that traditionally disagree on most forest management issues."

The CSFF partners look forward to receiving feedback on implementation from the government once they have had time to digest the full report.