

1.0 Introduction

The Newfoundland Forest Service has amended the forest management planning requirements under the Forestry Act to make long term planning more efficient in Newfoundland and Labrador. The District level strategy document will no longer be required. However, a Five Year Operating Plan will still have to be prepared for each District/tenure in the province as per a prescribed schedule. Although a strategy document will not be required on a District basis most of the strategic and descriptive sections from this document will be incorporated into the Five Year Operating Plan. Some global type issues, such as global warming and carbon cycling, will be moved to the provincial strategic document. This plan represents the first Five Year Operating Plan for Forest Management District 02 which incorporates the strategic direction for the District. The underlining philosophy behind this document still remains:

“Our goal is to maintain and enhance the long-term health of our ecosystems, for the benefit of all living things both nationally and globally, while providing environmental, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations.” (Canadian Forest Accord - 1992)

Prior to the 1990's, forest management planning in most jurisdictions focussed on sustaining timber supplies and gave basically reactive attention to other values that exist in the forest ecosystem. During the 90's, there were numerous initiatives on the provincial, national and international levels which lead to a change in the focus of planning. These initiatives resulted from the global shift in society's attitude toward the importance of stakeholders having a greater influence in resource planning decision-making and in general awareness of and concern for the environmental impact of resource development activities. Today, forest resource planners must view the ecosystem as a whole and consider other values - economic, environmental, as well as social - which are derived from the forest ecosystem. The Canada Forest Accord, signed by Canada's Forest Ministers in 1992, committed Canadian provinces to engaging an holistic view of natural resource management. The direction in which the country is headed in resource management is further embraced in the vision statements which were developed within that accord.

Vision Statements of the Canada Forest Accord:

- “A strong economic base for forest products, tourism, and recreation will be supported within a framework of sound ecological and environmental principles.”
- “Our forest will be managed on an integrated basis, supporting a full range of uses and values including timber production, habitat for wildlife, and areas allocated for parks and wilderness.”
- “Canadians will, in full knowledge of the environmental, economic, social, and cultural values of the forest, participate in setting objectives for managing the resources.”

In Newfoundland and Labrador, through becoming signatory to the Canada Forest Accord and the Canadian Bio-diversity Strategy, the commitment was made to incorporate holistic resource management in forest ecosystem planning. Current legislation requires that strategic and operational plans within the Province's Forest Management Districts be designed to achieve timber management objectives without abrogating the sustainability of other ecosystem values. Holistic ecosystem management is still very much in its infancy. In principle, this concept is intended to marry scientific knowledge of ecological processes with environmental, economic and social values to develop management activities that will maintain the integrity of the ecosystem in the long term. However, in reality, there are many obstacles that will inhibit the practise of true ecosystem management. Ecological cycles are very complex and are still poorly understood. Baseline information is lacking for many resource values. The impact of global environmental phenomena at the local ecosystem level, such as global warming or pollution drift, is difficult to predict and in most cases, even more difficult to mitigate. (However, through working co-operatively under international agreements, it is possible that collective will and action can have a positive effect on mitigating some negative impacts of global environmental problems.) Ecosystem planners puzzle over the appropriate indicators to use as measures of ecosystem health.

It is because holistic ecosystem management is not an exact science that it is necessary to adopt a management approach that allows for adaptation. Adaptive management focuses on learning while managing forest ecosystems through comparison of forecasts with measurements of various values. This approach predicates the need to develop and implement a monitoring program that will compare forecasted forest conditions with actual forest conditions at predetermined intervals.

Current legislation in this Province also requires that public consultation occur during the development of strategic and operating plans within the Provinces Forest Management Districts. The Environmental Preview Report completed in 1994 outlined the extent to which the public of Newfoundland and Labrador must be involved in forest ecosystem planning to meet the public consultation requirement of the environmental assessment process. The Department of Natural Resources has chosen to establish District stakeholder planning teams to participate in a consensus decision-making process to develop these plans. The District 2 planning team consists of Government and non-government representatives of various interests within the District. This meets or exceeds the requirements of both the Forestry Act and the Environmental legislation in providing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the opportunity to participate in forest ecosystem planning in this province. One of the weaknesses with this process is that participation is voluntary and does not guarantee that representation on the planning team will be balanced or inclusive of all important stakeholders.

A fundamental weakness has been identified which frustrates the success of stakeholder planning teams. The province does not currently have a comprehensive land use planning process which guarantees that the opinions of non-governmental organizations, the general public, or even all government departments or agencies are represented. Yet the District 2 planning process for multiple use forest management, mandated by legislative commitments for public consultation, invites and engages participation from all of these organizations, departments and the general public. Significant effort is marshalled in terms of human resources, the devotion of time and the accompanying financial costs but this effort is restricted by its mandate.

It is a consensus of the District 2 planning team that the provincial government should

acknowledge the need for comprehensive land use planning, and that government should create an expanded process which would specifically acknowledge that the existing commitment for public involvement in forest management planning would be honoured through such an expanded process. Government should advocate the merits of an open, inclusive and comprehensive land use planning process to all land-use stakeholders and tenants. This process should ensure that all identified values are fairly represented and that the resulting plan endeavours to achieve sustainability for all social, economic and ecological values.

The challenge of this planning exercise continues to be to develop strategies which will sustain or enhance economic activities in the forestry sector without abrogating other economic opportunities or environmental/social values. Unlike the last planning period, which began with a significant reduction in AAC's and harvest allocations, the current planning period against a backdrop of a more balanced wood supply scenario. However, balancing wood supply with demand in District 02 is dependent on developing an allocation strategy which will target the more vulnerable stands located within the District's production forest. This approach will require a significant investment in access road infrastructure to open up the oldest stands in the District. It will also depend on the willingness within the harvesting sector to accept a significant proportion of old and damaged stands during the next five-ten year period (and hold for future harvest current harvesting areas that contain younger and/or healthier forest).

The greatest opportunity to expand the forestry sector in this District continues to rest with the forest products segment of the industry. There is still little room to provide for expansion in the harvesting sector. A move to value added forest products by the local forest industry has the potential to provide expansion in the forestry sector without placing additional demand on the resource. It will allow the local industry to provide a greater economic contribution to the local area with less resource. The challenge for the forest industry is to seize value added forest product opportunities and create growth in this sector. The challenge for government is to encourage and promote the value added forest products industry and to help facilitate its growth. The challenge of this planning process is to develop a strategy that will allow government and industry to work together to achieve the potential growth in this sunrise sector of the forest industry.

Forest management and related concerns are not new to the District as historical reports of Wilton & Lewis (1956) identified harvesting problems and research avenues to address these in the late 1950's. The King's Cove Woodlot, which was established in 1951 and ran until 1984 (Wilton 1984) was designed to demonstrate local improvements in forest management. The high spruce budworm populations of the late 70's and early 80's hit the area hard but in the 30 year period the Woodlot growing stock more than doubled which demonstrated that intensive forest management practices are viable on the Bonavista Peninsula.

Various interest groups participated in the forest ecosystem planning process used to create this document, providing strong representation to a range of ecosystem values. A consensus decision making process was used to resolve resource use conflicts. Considering the demand on all our natural resources today and the varied perspectives of values that are contained within the natural world around us, this was a challenging task. However, there was one common thread which connected all the participants involved in this process - and that was the interest in the sustainability of a healthy ecosystem, because in order to sustain that value in the forest which is the most important from any individual perspective, it is fundamental that we sustain a healthy forest ecosystem. This document provides a synthesis of the many perspectives in which planning team

members view the forest blended with the science of the day to provide a strategy to sustain environmental, social, cultural and economic values in the forest ecosystem of the Bonavista Peninsula.

Operational planning continues to take an ecosystem approach in this Province. The result is a plan which presents more than just an harvesting/silviculture/access road schedule. In addition to these basic requirements of an operational forest planning document, this plan also considers other social, economic and ecological values which are important on the landscape - such as recreational trail development; agricultural expansion; and wildlife corridors. The plan is further augmented by outlining efforts and activities aimed at quantifying the level of biodiversity within the District (eg. raptor surveys) and increasing the knowledge about ecological impacts of various forestry/wildlife practises (eg. moose exclosures/stand dynamics study).

This plan discusses some serious resource management and forestry/forest land-base related economic issues in the District. For example, the plan discusses the need for the industry to expand into value added forest products in order to maintain its economic importance in the area. A strategy to promote the value added forest products sector is presented in Section 7.2. The potential for economic expansion through other non-forestry industries, such as new agricultural development and increased tourism attractions, is also discussed in the planning document.

However, all decisions reached and initiatives under-taken have not been a result of the Department of Natural Resources working without regard for or input from those who will be affected. For example, during the current wood supply analysis, local commercial operators were involved in an exercise which established the land-base to be used for calculation of the sustainable harvest level for the District. The knowledge and experience of the commercial harvesters was very helpful in assessing the economic viability and operability of difficult and/or remote terrain within the District. During the previous planning process, the Department accepted recommendations from a committee of commercial operators who asked that access to alienation class III land be made available to the industry to help offset regular allocation reductions. The Department also accepted recommendations from the same group that the first right of refusal be given to commercial operators to harvest stands traditionally used to support silviculture projects through employment creation programs and that an incentive be afforded commercial operators to utilize cull wood (as supplementary volume to a regular permit).

The Department recognizes the need to continue to have, during the planning stage of new initiatives and new programs, dialogue, consultation and involvement with stakeholders who may be affected by the implementation phase of these initiatives and programs. The Department recognizes that considerable knowledge and experience rests with those who are closest to the resource and depend on it for their livelihoods or for some aspect of their cultural richness. There have been past instances where the Department has come up short in its effort to adequately inform and involve local stakeholders. In the future, the Department will strive to make all reasonable efforts to include and consult with stake-holders when considering major decisions regarding resource management. The Department will make its best effort to conduct attitude surveys in the future to better understand public and resource user opinions of resource management issues in the District. This can be an invaluable tool in assisting in the evaluation of performance and in reaching difficult but fair resource management decisions.

However, that said, the Department does have the ultimate responsibility to manage the resource. It has accepted its share of the blame for past mismanagement - it must live up to its

responsibility to more effectively manage in the future. Given that both resources users and administrators acknowledge mismanagement in the past, and at the hands of both parties, then both parties must acknowledge that problems existed in the method of doing business in the past. In order to correct these problems, there has to be acceptance of the continued need for change - by both parties.

This plan has outlined, in particular, some new initiatives in wood allocation in the District (Section 7.1). These changes are not meant to restrict forest operators' ability to make a living or domestic wood cutters' right to acquire firewood and logs for home use. Rather, they are efforts to improve the ability to more effectively manage the resource in the future and to maintain a sustainable supply of forest products from the forest. Ultimately, they are efforts at improving the future viability of individual operators; the long-term stability of the industry as a whole; and the long term ability of the forest to provide sustainable goods to both domestic and commercial users. However, flexibility must be used, to the extent possible, when dealing with resource users. This includes working with individuals who are sincere about working towards wiser use of the forest resource.