

# Private Woodlot Management in Cape Breton

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Cape Breton Privateland Partnership

**Kari Easthouse – NSLFFPA; Mike Gillis – BVWP; Clifton Sangster - NIFM**

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NSLFFPA, BVWP and NIFM have agreed to work together on changing how woodlot services are provided in Cape Breton. The following paper presents a draft framework for discussion, and details how woodlot owners and contractors can become involved in the process.

## Private Land Management Today

There is a general feeling among private woodlot owners and contractors on Cape Breton that **there has not been sufficient support provided to meet their business or woodlot objectives**. Since the collapse of the group venture system there has been little or no involvement or assistance provided through the provincial government. Providing silvicultural assistance has become a responsibility of the wood buyers, and this has resulted in a system where only woodlot owners and contractors providing fibre to the mills get access to funding. As well, **funding levels have not changed in many years**, and the total amount available drastically changes from year to year. At the same time, local prices for pulpwood are at an all-time low, and the cost of trucking to distant studwood and log markets have put contractors and landowners on Cape Breton in a disadvantaged position.

The demographics of woodlot owners in Nova Scotia have also seen a significant change over the last 15 years. The majority of woodlot owners no longer are dependent on revenue from their property. Woodlot owner objectives have dramatically shifted from a source of income to being more focussed on forest improvement, ecological benefits and

**Private woodlot owners have been largely ignored in the recent past. This cannot continue if we want to maintain our forest industry.**

recreation.

Poor markets, lack of support and shifting demographics have all led to a **significant reduction in the**

**amount of landowners who are actively participating in the forest industry**. This reduction has very significant implications for the forest industry in Nova Scotia. The problem for government and industry is particularly acute in this region where there has been recent massive investment of public funds in the pulp and paper industry. In a province where the majority of wood comes from private land, it is essential that the level of private contractor and landowner participation be increased if these investments are ever to be recouped.

DNR has recently developed and adopted a new forest strategy Entitled “Natural Resources Strategy – A Framework for Forestry”. This strategy outlines

how the province will reduce the negative ecological footprint of forestry by actions such as reducing clearcutting and implementing Forest Ecosystem

**There is growing recognition that landowners and contractors require support if the province is going to meet its ecological and financial objectives**

Management. However, the province has also recognized that **all of these alternatives have negative effects on the amount of wood supply in the province**. To mitigate this, the province has identified re-engaging private woodlot owners as one of the key measures it needs to take.

Towards this end, DNR has been meeting with various landowner and stakeholder groups across the province to discuss the problem and develop a strategy to address it. Through these discussions the province has developed a ‘very preliminary’ potential approach involving **delivery of woodlot owner programs through**

**service areas** administered by woodlot owner groups. Landowners, who choose to belong to a service area group and assist in funding, would have access to services and incentives that would not be available otherwise. At the same time, delivery costs would be reduced by centralizing program administration and reducing duplication.

The three primary landowner groups on Cape Breton (Nova Scotia Landowners and Forest Fibre Producers, Baddeck Valley Wood Producers and North Inverness Forest Management) have all been a part of the discussions with DNR, and feel that the general

**Landowner groups are working together to develop an improved way of supporting landowners and contractors.**

approach is one that could be very beneficial to landowners and contractors. However, we also feel that action needs to

be taken as soon as possible and that we do not have time to wait for the program to be fully implemented across the province. As a **result these groups have agreed to work together to try to implement the concept here in Cape Breton** as a pilot project for the province.

When discussing these concerns with DNR it became clear that the province would be open to the idea of a pilot project in Cape Breton that would help define how such a program could be implemented across the remainder of the province. We feel this is a very exciting opportunity to help guide and instruct how woodlot owner services should be delivered. At the same time, if successful, we would be able to see the positive results of the project much sooner.

NSLFFPA, NIFM and BVWP have been actively working to develop a proposal to DNR to implement the service area concept here on Cape Breton. It is our goal to develop and present a complete business plan and proposal to government by September of this year. We are confident that the proposal will be accepted if there is general support for the concept and a clear business case can be demonstrated. However, we also recognize that we cannot do this alone. We need both **input and support from contractors and landowners to make the project successful.**

## DNR Vision

The NS Department of Natural Resources has developed a very preliminary vision of how it might see forest management services delivered to landowners in the province. They have been adamant that **this is very preliminary**, and that they intend to seek input from all stakeholders before implementing anything. In the concept they have developed, 'Service Areas' would be established across the province. Within each of these service areas there would be one central service provider responsible for administering services. Provision of services would be done through existing contractors as well as extension staff working out of their communities throughout their service area. **Services available to landowner will depend on their level of participation**, where increasing commitment to forest sustainability will result in increased access to funding and support programs. Services and

**An implementation pilot here in Cape Breton will provide an opportunity to guide provincial policy, and see benefits sooner.**

programs potentially available include extension and technical support, management planning, silviculture and road funding and woodlot infrastructure such as boundary lines and fire ponds. Commitment to sustainable forestry could be demonstrated by participating in landowner groups or forest certification. Landowners who do not wish to participate would continue to receive services through the regular avenues available today, but the level of funding may be less than would be available by participating.

DNR is very clear when articulating their vision that the programs must be delivered in a cost effective manner. **Funding for administration of the program would come from a mixture of direct government funding and funding generated through program membership.** This could include membership fees or a check-off upon sale of forest products. The current private silviculture system dominated by industry would remain in place. However, an incentive would be put in place whereby mills that meet their silviculture obligation through a service area would get extra credit for it (ie reduced cost) than if they administer the silviculture program themselves. Road funding would continue to be administered through FPANS, however program members may have access to more funding than would be available today.

### CB Partnership Vision

NSLFFPA, BVWP and NIFM wish to **implement the service area concept here in Cape Breton as a pilot project.** Doing so will bring needed services here sooner than otherwise and will allow our region to shape the resulting provincial program. We have developed a draft framework that we intend to refine over the

next 4 months into a final proposal to DNR. In order to help develop a system that makes the most sense for both landowners and contractors we will be holding 4 information sessions in May to gather input and feedback on the proposal. An important outcome of these sessions will also be **the formation of an Advisory Committee that will help us refine and implement the proposal.**

In the proposed approach, NSLFFPA would act as a central administration body that would provide technical

support to the landowner groups who would implement the program. Program funding and services would be coordinated by NSLFFPA, and, in areas where there are no landowner groups organized field staff would work for the association. NSLFFPA would also continue to administer its FSC certification program, which would be available to members of the partnership program.

NIFM and BVWP would receive funding to provide extension services to landowners in their areas through the partnership program. These services would include technical support and guidance, management planning and monitoring of harvesting and silviculture operations.

Landowners who wish to participate in the partnership would be expected to agree to a check-

**Extension, management planning, road, infrastructure and silviculture funding would be enhanced for partnership members.**

**Contractors would benefit from reduced administration cost and access to work within the partnership.**

off on any forest products sold. A separate mechanism would also need to be developed for landowners who wish to participate but want to manage their woodlot primarily for non-timber values. **In exchange for membership costs, partnership members would receive management planning, extension and enhanced silviculture and infrastructure funding.**

Both harvesting and silviculture contractors would be encouraged to participate in the partnership by becoming members of the Forest Management Partnership. Participating contractors would be expected to meet minimum standards and would be subject to random audits when working on member woodlots. In exchange, their **services would be promoted within the program, and they would gain access to information about work available through the program.** As well, contractors would benefit from the increased availability of silviculture and road funding within the partnership.

### What's Next?

NSLFFPA, BVWP and NIFM have agreed to work together on the development of **a detailed business plan and proposal that will be presented to DNR by September of this year.** Your support and input will be invaluable, and we encourage both landowners and contractors to participate in the process. We hope you will be able to attend one of the **input sessions in May**, and we would encourage you to consider **participating in the advisory committee** that will be formed. We have developed a draft framework that will be presented in order to initiate discussions; however, we recognize that considerable thought and discussion will need to happen before it is finalized.

### Meeting Schedule

Location	Date
Baddeck Fire Hall	May 14, 7pm
Inverness Fire Hall	May 15, 7pm
St. Peters Fire Hall	May 22, 7pm
East Bay Legion	May 23, 7pm

### Further Information

As the project develops information will be updated at [www.nslffpa.org/CBPartnership](http://www.nslffpa.org/CBPartnership)

### Contact

Name	Group	Phone	Email
Kari Easthouse	NSLFFPA	302-0749	kari@nslffpa.org
Clifton Sangster	NIFM	258-2622	nifm@bellaliant.com
Mike Gillis	BVWP	295-3218	bvwp@ns.sympatico.ca