



March 13th, 2014

## OPEN LETTER

David Alward, Premier  
Paul Robichaud, Minister, NB Department of Natural Resources

Dear Sirs;

Nature NB is a provincial nature conservation organization representing over 1000 naturalists with programs ranging from species at risk protection and education to youth education programs and citizen science projects. We are extremely concerned about the announcement made on March 12th regarding New Brunswick's Crown Lands. This is a precedent-setting change to current forest management policy with considerable ramifications.

The management of our crown forest before yesterday's announcement has had many New Brunswickers and scientists concerned over our forests' ability to maintain biodiversity, as changes in recent years have increasingly encroached on conservation areas such as watercourse buffers and deeryards. Scientists have made it very clear that we are at a threshold where if changes such as have been announced are implemented, there will be a negative impact on species and ecosystem viability.

Increasing wood supply by 21% from crown lands is not possible without putting species and habitats in serious danger - scientists have been clear on this all along, there is no wood available unless you let industry access habitat that has been identified as sensitive! And moving land currently under conservation forest management practices into protected areas status does not balance the risk you are accepting in allowing this massive increased cutting elsewhere.

New Brunswick protects 3.1% of land permanently at this time (national and provincial parks, and other legally protected areas). The average in Canada is 10%. New Brunswick is second lowest on this scale. International targets are set for 17% - a number developed based on scientific understanding of how ecosystems work, and what is needed for species survival.

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As a province with so much crown land, New Brunswick should be leading the way to meet national and international targets of protected lands! Instead we appear to be relaxing standards allowing narrow economic interests to take precedence over the health of our forests, watercourses and biodiversity.

In 2012, the then Minister of Natural Resources Bruce Northrop promised that annual allowable cut would be decreased by 21%, protected natural areas on crown lands be increased to 9.4%, that a total of 28% of crown land would be designated conservation forest, and that all 20 conservation objectives would be met in the new forest management plan. Yesterday's announcement demonstrates a complete shift in policy.

This significant change in the management of our crown forests is being implemented without public consultations. Surveys have shown that public opinion is strongly in favour of the protection of forests. Crown forests are important to all of us. In a time of climatic change, maintaining healthy and resilient ecosystems is especially important.

We want to reiterate that the 21% increase in wood supply allocated to the forest industry in this strategy is running counter to all previous policies setting goals and objectives for biodiversity conservation in the province. This strategy is not acceptable and we urge the Minister to undertake a public consultation prior to any changes in the current policy regarding the management of our crown forests. New Brunswickers must have their say!

Sincerely



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cc

Bill Lesvesque, Deputy Minister, NB Department of Natural Resources  
Mike Sullivan, Director, Fish and Wildlife, NB Department of Natural Resources  
Mike Bartlett, Director, Forest Management Branch, NB Department of Natural Resources  
Cade Libby, Acting Director, Crown Lands, NB Department of Natural Resources