



**A Review of the 2014
Forest Management
Strategy**



New  Nouveau
Brunswick

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Minister's message

The forest industry is vital to New Brunswick. It is one of the province's largest economic industries, sustaining 24,000 direct and indirect jobs. Last year, forest product exports totalled \$1.9 billion. The forest also contributes greatly to the quality of life in New Brunswick.

This document, *A Review of the 2014 Forest Management Strategy*, as its name indicates, is a review of the *Putting our Resources to Work: A Strategy For Crown Lands Forest Management*, released in 2014, and provides a set of actions to modify and improve this strategy within the constraints this strategy had provided. Your government is committed to the responsible, sustainable development of our forests for the benefit of all New Brunswickers for generations to come.

A Review of the 2014 Forest Management Strategy was compiled from meetings with individuals and groups throughout New Brunswick as well as through our ongoing dialogue with New Brunswick First Nations. In addition to these meetings, an Opportunities Summit for the Forestry Sector was held in Atholville on April 19, 2016. It was attended by more than 70 people representing industry, environmental organizations, universities, municipalities and other sectors. Some of the ideas brought forward helped shape this document. Others, such as the need to explore new markets and greater use for under-used timber products, will continue to be explored. The provincial government has published a detailed report on the issues discussed at the summit which can be viewed online at: [Forestry Opportunities Summit - Summary Report](#).

The path forward as a result of our review will accomplish the following:

- *ensure greater transparency;*
- *increase the area designated for conservation on Crown land by 5 per cent;*
- *support efficient and competitive industries while providing sustainability, certainty and security for all that we value in the forest; and*
- *set a path toward improving dialogue with and involvement of First Nations with forest activities in the province and ensure the government continues to respect Aboriginal and treaty rights.*

Your government will continue to listen and improve forest management efforts as industry practices evolve.

The review of the forestry strategy and its improvements will ensure that the sector will remain a cornerstone of the New Brunswick economy while continuing to be important to our province from an ecological and recreational standpoint.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Doucet', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Honourable Rick Doucet
Minister of Energy and Resource Development

Where we are today

In the fall of 2014, the provincial government made the following commitment as part of *Moving New Brunswick Forward*: "Immediately moving to evaluate options under the current forestry plan and submit the sustainability provisions in the plan to a proper review." This commitment was referring to *Putting our Resources to Work: A Strategy For Crown Lands Forest Management*, released in March of that year. The forest management strategy focused on securing the competitiveness of the province's forest sector through private infrastructure investment in return for an increased wood supply.

The strategy, which is being implemented through Crown forest management plans, lacked transparency. The investment commitments were secured through Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with selected forest sector companies. Acting on its commitment to transparency, the provincial government made the agreements public on Dec. 10, 2014. The provincial government also released the Forest Management Agreements as well as an online map of the conservation forest areas and undertook the review of the forest strategy.

The government has an ongoing dialogue with First Nations and has heard a number of concerns about the strategy from their leadership and representatives.

Today, Crown timber licensees and sub-licensees have completed their fourth year of operating under the strategy. It is clear, however, that many New Brunswickers would like improvements to the government's approach to sustainable forest management on Crown lands. The government has heard several other issues, including: respecting the rights and customs of First Nations people; fairness for private woodlot owners; and transparency in how Crown forests are managed. Meaningful steps can be taken to address many of these concerns and build on the strengths of New Brunswick's approach to forest management. The government plans to make improvements across five themes:

- *improving long-term conservation of forest biodiversity;*

- *respecting the rights and developing the interests of First Nations;*
- *creating a vibrant and competitive forest sector;*
- *growing a healthy and productive forest; and*
- *maintaining transparency and accountability for Crown forest management.*

Improving long-term conservation of forest biodiversity

New Brunswick's forest is diverse, providing a home to thousands of species of plants, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals. Each part of the forest plays a role. The province's native biodiversity has adapted to the conditions present in the forest. Some species are widespread, and others are less common. Some are specialists, needing certain structural elements in a forest (such as large trees, proximity to waterbodies) to feed, reproduce or find shelter. The structural elements associated uniquely with forests containing old trees are important to a number of species.



Old forests are found throughout the province today: on Crown lands, in national parks, in private conservation areas, woodlots and even industrially managed landscapes. Nevertheless, there is room to improve the forest management strategy by making some measured changes in order to improve biodiversity outcomes in the long-term. First Nations, scientists, environmental organizations and individuals have raised this point on many occasions during the past months. The government has heard these concerns.

As a result the government will:

- *over the next five years, designate an additional 150,000 hectares of Conservation forest where a rich range of Acadian forest species exist. Where possible, these sites will be located near existing parks and protected areas or other large patches of old forest habitat in order to increase the benefit of the existing areas and to support greater connectivity among areas. This will increase the areas reserved for conservation and will achieve approximately 28 per cent of conservation area within Crown forest;*
- *work to identify projects to improve, monitor and conduct research into important and sensitive wildlife populations;*
- *work with partnering organizations and private woodlot representatives to better understand the contribution private forests make toward conservation objectives by identifying and removing any barriers so that private lands can be formally recognized for the positive biodiversity they provide;*
- *continue to protect water quality and aquatic habitats through sound forest management;*
- *ensure operational compliance to clean water legislation and ensure any policy advancements and best practices for the protection of water are quickly adopted;*
- *work to better map and understand how water flows through the forested landscape; and*
- *adapt forest management as appropriate to ensure the forests continue to function as buffers to run-off during extreme weather.*



Creating a vibrant and competitive forest sector

The forest sector is one of the cornerstones of New Brunswick's economy and is a way of life for many. The sector employs 24,000 people either directly or indirectly. Twenty per cent of the population lives in forest-dependent communities. The sector generated \$1.9 billion in exports in 2017.

In 2017, timber royalties from the Crown forest generated \$72.9 million in revenues to the provincial government. The government invested \$18 million in licence management and re-invested \$27.6 million in silviculture on Crown land and private woodlots.

The forest management strategy focused on creating the conditions for significant capital investment in the forest sector to ensure modern and resilient forestry operations. The government signed MOAs with three New Brunswick forest companies to secure and formalize the necessary investments.

Recently, the government announced measures to manage unfair trade actions undertaken by the United States government against New Brunswick's softwood lumber sector. Several of those actions are also reiterated as part of this report.

The government remains committed to creating the conditions for continued investment within this sector, a necessity for a bright future.

As a result, the government will:

- *maintain the current Crown timber supplies;*
- *work with all parties to understand and potentially mitigate any annual allowable cut impacts that enhanced conservation initiatives may bring;*
- *continue work to create favourable conditions for future private forest sector investments, including improving trade through co-operation with industry and the federal government, to ensure New Brunswick's position with international trade partners is secured;*
- *provide the right tools for the forest sector to*



Growing a healthy and productive forest

New Brunswick's forest is healthy and productive. It provides habitat for wildlife, wood for industries and a place to enjoy the outdoors. From time to time, forces of nature disturb the growth pattern of the forest. Despite being natural processes, extreme weather, insect and disease outbreaks and forest fires can jeopardize the objectives for which forests are managed and can affect communities. That is why it is critical that the government monitor and respond to threats in the forest.

remain competitive by having a well-trained workforce;

- *ensure the appropriate infrastructure for strategic corridors is in place for the efficient transportation of products from all industries through ports, rails and roads;*
- *investigate opportunities for diversification through new markets; and*
- *explore opportunities for responsible growth and diversification in related sectors. The government will work to improve the understanding of all the benefits that New Brunswickers realize from their Crown lands and natural resources.*

The government recognizes that commercial harvest agreements provide an important economic and employment opportunity for First Nations. These agreements were augmented with an additional 30,000 m³ of softwood and 3,000 m³ of hardwood as a result of the forest management strategy. The government will continue to work with First Nations to explore opportunity for further benefits from these agreements.

The most immediate issue is the threat of an eastern spruce budworm outbreak. Government is engaged in early intervention with the federal government, other Atlantic provinces, universities and industry. Early intervention of the spruce budworm outbreak is working. The government has renewed its partnership with stakeholders to take the necessary steps to protect the forest. It is important that the government continues to protect the forest from other threats through ongoing insect and disease monitoring as well as firefighting.



In the long-term, climate change will represent a potential opportunity for longer-growing seasons but will also bring the threat of drought, extreme weather and more frequent natural disasters. Understanding exactly how a changing climate will affect forests, and the variety of life that inhabits them, will be a challenge for all natural resource professionals in the coming decades.

The government will continue to work with its partners and take a leadership role in keeping this most valuable renewable resource healthy and growing. The government will:

- *monitor and combat the threat of spruce budworm through continued partnerships with industry, academia and the federal government;*
- *integrate the best available science on climate change into forest management plans so that the government is able to capture the opportunities and manage the risks that a changing climate presents;*
- *through the work of the Climate Change Secretariat and other scientists, evaluate vulnerabilities to a changing climate and adapt forest management processes accordingly; and,*
- *explore all avenues to manage forests in New Brunswick in ways that are consistent with the goals set out in Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy: New Brunswick's Climate Change Action Plan.*

Respecting the rights and developing the interests of First Nations

The government recognizes the importance of the forest to First Nations in exercising their rights to hunt, fish and gather. The government also recognizes the importance of the forest to the culture and traditions of First Nations. Accordingly, the government will work to better understand the diverse values that First Nations hold when it comes to the forest and improve the long-term relationship with First Nations in New Brunswick. The government will accomplish this through early engagement, formal consultation processes to protect Aboriginal and treaty rights, improved cultural awareness and building a meaningful government-to-government relationship.

Specifically related to forest management, the government will:

- *begin early engagement and consultation with First Nations during the lead-up to the next Crown forest management plans;*
- *incorporate the First Nations' traditional knowledge of the forest as well as their ability to exercise Aboriginal and treaty rights into decision-making;*
- *support First Nations' interests in economic development and employment opportunities in the forest sector;*
- *work with the Crown timber licensees and the government's archeological services team to improve the manner in which planned forest activities respect with due dignity all known sites of cultural and historical significance to First Nations; and,*
- *continue to train the New Brunswick civil service on the duty to consult and cultural awareness so the recognition for the need to consult occurs earlier and is achieved with more meaningful dialogue.*

Transparency and accountability

Issues of transparency, governance, fairness and accountability for the management of Crown forests have been a prominent part of discussions.

Since the government's release of details of its agreements with industry, New Brunswick's Office of the Auditor General has released a report with findings related to the value generated from investment in Crown forest management. Issues of transparency, fairness and accountability received prominent attention in the report.

The government uses a sophisticated approach to managing the forest for a complex set of economic, environmental and societal values. Ensuring transparency and accountability with regards to the management of our forests is key for achieving their economic and societal benefits.



The government will take specific actions to increase the transparency and accountability for forest management practices. The government will:

- *publish a report each year that will give the public a clear view of how sustainable forest management is being delivered in New Brunswick;*
- *complete the government's forest inventory using state-of-the-art LiDAR technologies;*
- *adopt an open-data policy for all information that enables the public to evaluate the state of public forests;*
- *remain committed to independent third-party sustainable forest management certification for all industrial operations on Crown land and continue to make this a requirement for the forest industry;*
- *wherever possible, participate in the Forest Stewardship Council's development of a Canadian national standard for forestry;*
- *continue to reduce costs to the government and Crown timber licensees through results-based management. All forest management audits resulting from this process will be made public;*
- *evaluate the performance of results-based management at the five-year renewal point. The government will verify and report on management outcomes, licensee accountability and forest management activities. Government will ensure that the renewed Forest management agreements will be based on appropriate performance;*
- *ensure that Crown silviculture is producing a positive return on investment;*

- *continue to work to implement the responses to the 2015 recommendations by the Auditor General;*
- *continue to work with the New Brunswick Forest Products Commission to conduct a market assessment and collect ongoing wood transaction data to ensure the Department of Energy and Resource Development has up-to-date information from the market;*
- *wherever possible, work to make information about the public forest easier to access, be that through publication, online gateways or other means; and*
- *engage an expert firm to conduct a review of the New Brunswick forestry market and, if warranted, make appropriate recommendations for action.*



These represent significant steps to address concerns and to build on our strengths to provide a forest that will continue to benefit the people of New Brunswick for generations to come.