

September 21, 2020

To: Naomi Arron
Senior Strategist, Stakeholder Relations and Issues Management
Nova Scotia Land & Forestry

From: David Patriquin, PhD, Prof of Biology, Dalhousie University (retired) &
Donna Crossland, MScF, HWA Project Coordinator, Kejimikujik NPNHS

Dear Naomi,

We are writing to express our concern about the lack of stakeholder engagement to date in relation to the Natural Disturbance Regimes Project, a component of L&F's response to the Lahey Report. We appeal to you/L&F to involve stakeholders in the current second phase of this project; in particular we ask you to involve as a stakeholder group the critics of DNR Natural Disturbance Regime science (the "NDR critics") who brought their concerns to the attention of Prof. Lahey/the Independent Review.

We were two of a half dozen or so environmental, ecological or forestry professionals who raised these concerns prior to the Lahey process and during the Lahey process.

Prof. Lahey highlighted the issues in his report and recommended that there be a review of the Natural Disturbance Regimes.

7. DNR should

a. transparently acknowledge and address, with peer-reviewed science, the concerns and critiques that have been raised with DNR's mapping of natural disturbance regimes in Nova Scotia and align its ecosystem-based management framework for forestry on Crown lands with its revised and peer-reviewed mapping of Nova Scotia's natural disturbance regimes.

b. align its ecosystem-based management framework for forestry on Crown lands with its revised and peer-reviewed mapping of Nova Scotia's natural disturbance regimes.

Another issue that a number of people raised during the Lahey process was the general lack of open communication of the forestry researcher within DNR with the larger community and Prof. Lahey commented:

The Report also emphasizes the critical need for the embrace of openness, transparency, collaboration, and accountability by DNR (now the Department of Lands and Forestry), including in the area of research and applying the results of research to policy and management...

So given the constructive involvement of the NDR critics during the Independent Review process, and given the recommendations to increase communication and interaction with the outside community related to the science conducted within DNR/L&F, it was both surprising and disappointing that there has been no Stakeholder Input to date in relation to the Natural Disturbance Regimes project, and it seems there is none planned – at least none is cited on the current L&F document describing the NDR project.

We believe that had the NDR critics been given a draft of the paper followed by an open discussion of it with the authors, it would have been a stronger paper.

Such a process is part and parcel of good science and would only have made the paper stronger and more widely accessible and acceptable, as well to quiet potential concerns about the paper after it was published.

That opportunity has passed. However, the next phase is of critical importance. From Taylor et al., 2020 (bolding ours):

Although application of natural disturbance regime information to forest management planning (e.g., how to derive harvest rotations and target age structures by ecoregion, and what residual stand structures reflect natural disturbance regimes) is beyond the scope of this review, **a follow-up paper on methods of application is currently being prepared that focuses on translating disturbance parameters presented in Table 5 into practical forest management guidelines.**

There is an opportunity to make the process and the second paper more robust and more widely acceptable: We propose to you that the NDR critics review a first draft of the paper and then hold an online discussion forum with the senior authors to discuss it.

We formally request such stakeholder involvement in this the ongoing, second phase of the NDR project.

Respectfully,

David Patriquin
Donna Crossland

Cc:

Prof. Bill Lahey, Chair of the Independent Review

Dr. Bob Seymour, Expert Adviser to the Independent Review

Julie Towers, Deputy Minister, L&F

Mark Pulsifer, Project Manager for NDR Project

Dr. David MacLean, emeritus professor, Forestry and Environmental Management, University of New Brunswick and Expert Adviser to the NDR Project

Dr. Anthony Taylor, Forest Ecologist, Atlantic Forestry Centre, New Brunswick and Expert Adviser to the NDR Project

On Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 08:42:27 a.m. ADT, Arron, Naomi J <naomi.aron@novascotia.ca> wrote David G. Patriquin

Subject: Re: Stakeholder engagement in the Natural Disturbance Regimes Project

Good morning,

Thank you for your email and letter dated September 21, 2020 to express your concern about the lack of stakeholder engagement to date in relation to the Natural Disturbance Regimes (NDR) project.

Our department has committed to improve and enhance a culture of openness, transparency, collaboration and accountability. Stakeholder engagement is an integral part of that commitment, including as it relates to implementing recommendations in Professor Lahey's Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia.

In response to Recommendation #7 in Professor Lahey's report, we commissioned recognized experts in the field of natural disturbance ecology to review and develop two research papers for publication on the science and mapping of natural disturbance regimes in Nova Scotia. We are requiring publication to ensure the research will be vetted through the rigorous peer-review processes required by the esteemed journals to which the papers will be submitted. We are confident that this process will verify the scientific validity of the commissioned research.

Following validation and publication of the two papers, we will use the research as the basis to develop policy and programs to align the updated NDR science with our ecosystem-based management framework for forestry on Crown lands, as recommended by Professor Lahey. Stakeholder engagement will play an integral role in the policy and program development process, and will include environmental, ecological and forestry professionals as referenced in your letter. As we get closer to doing so, more information will be shared publicly and with our stakeholders.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me. I am back at work full time now after being unexpectedly on leave for a few weeks and will be able to respond to you in a more timely manner going forward.

Naomi Arron

Senior Strategist

Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry

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Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 09:10:39 a.m. ADT

From: David Patriquin

To: Arron, Naomi J

Cc: Prof. Bill Lahey, Chair of the Independent Review

Dr. Bob Seymour, Expert Adviser to the Independent Review

Julie Towers, Deputy Minister, L&F

Mark Pulsifer, Project Manager for NDR Project

Dr. David MacLean, emeritus professor, Forestry and Environmental Management, University of New Brunswick and Expert Adviser to the NDR Project

Dr. Anthony Taylor, Forest Ecologist, Atlantic Forestry Centre, New Brunswick and Expert

Adviser to the NDR Project

Subject: Re: Stakeholder engagement in the Natural Disturbance Regimes Project

Naomi,

Thanks for your efforts.

As a well published academic, I am obviously disappointed with this response.

In an academic setting, at least in departments with a high level of publication of basic research, giving seminars and discussing and vetting new research with peers prior to submitting documents for publication, often in the form of theses, thesis defences etc., is an important part of the scientific process; it often involves significant controversy which is valuable for the researchers as they prepare for publication and its valuable for science more generally. I had thought Prof Lahey was pushing L&F in that general direction.

This particular area of research has been highly controversial within NS, and has significant implications for how forestry is practiced here - and how the government driven processes are accepted. I do not see the logic of having stakeholder sessions for the Old Forest Project (still to be held) for example, and not for the NDR project, where the critics who raised the issue with the Lahey process and participated constructively in that process are the logical stakeholders or at least one set of them.

I see this response, which I realize is not yours, as a continuation of the the kind of internal politics that led to the first version of DNR's Natural Disturbance Regime being so flawed, and as unfortunate.

Regards,

David P

David G Patriquin
Professor of Biology (retired)
Dalhousie University

Web Stuff at versicolor.ca
Forest Blog at nsforestnotes.ca
[Google Scholar](#)