

Media Release

Healthy Forest Coalition Determines That Forest Management Guide Does Not Meet Government's Own Commitment

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The Healthy Forest Coalition has responded to the Silvicultural Guide for the Ecological Matrix (3rd Draft – “SGEM”), prepared by Department of Lands and Forestry (DLF). The SGEM is proposed by DLF as the basis for implementing ecological forestry stemming from the “Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia” completed by Dr. William Lahey in 2018 and about which the Government of Nova Scotia stated (December 2018):

“Government accepts Professor Lahey’s Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia and agrees with the spirit and intent of his recommendations.....Nova Scotia will protect and enhance ecosystems and biodiversity as the overarching policy priority, as they are the foundation for other values.....Nova Scotia’s forest policies and operational decision making will be guided by the practice of ecological forestry....”

Mike Lancaster of the Healthy Forest Coalition stated:

“The SGEM, as currently proposed, is not in alignment with the recommendations of Dr. Lahey’s report. This is the third attempt by Department of Lands and Forests to address these issues. HFC requests that the SGEM return for final modifications by a third-party expert review in order to finalize the product, and to assure that they align with what Dr. Lahey recommended and Government has agreed to. It is essential that true ecological forestry is achieved.”

Among the deficiencies of the SGEM, the Healthy Forest Coalition has noted that if it is adopted it will result in continuing heavy removals including up to 80% of trees from some stand types, and particularly on the poorest sites – sites that are in fact in greatest need of ecological restoration, not forest removal. The Coalition also notes the SGEM fails to address the needs of wildlife and the poor health of many forest soils (frequently caused by forestry practices themselves). The Coalition highlights that:

- The SGEM fails to address the loss of carbon from soil that occurs under heavy forest removals in Nova Scotia; given its linkage to global climate change, the Coalition refers to this failure as a “dereliction of duty” on the part of DLF.
- Various of the stand-specific decision-making keys in the SGEM will result in greater – not less – ecological damage than current ecologically-damaging practices, such as producing more plantations on the ecological matrix.

The Coalition recommends that the basis for achieving ecological forestry may be to never exceed more than 30% forest removal using ecologically-preferred harvesting methods with harvests not exceeding 1% over a time frame of 100 years or more, and with biodiversity values, wildlife needs, and broader landscape requirements always favored. The Coalition cites established practices in other provinces that can improve forestry practices in Nova Scotia if adopted in this province.

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The Healthy Forest Coalition is open to all Nova Scotians without preference or discrimination of any kind; members live in rural and urban Nova Scotia. The Coalition supports a forestry industry in Nova Scotia that operates in accordance with Treaty rights and ecological forestry principles, and which is regulated accordingly.