

EASTERN CANADA'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE WOODLOT RESOURCE

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Introduction

Eastern Canada is a loose description of the five most Eastern Provinces. Starting from the East they are Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec. In all of these provinces except Newfoundland/Labrador, the woodlot sector plays an important economic role. The percentage of woodlots is 92% in Prince Edward Island, 50% in Nova Scotia, 30% in New Brunswick and 8% in Quebec.

For Canada as a whole only 6% of the forest land is in private ownership. Canada has about 450,000 woodlot owners controlling approximately 18.5 million hectares. The annual contribution to the traditional forest products industry is about 20 - 25 million cubic metres.

Within the Canadian Federation, each province is responsible for its forest resources resulting in different approaches for each province. On the Federal level Natural Resources Canada (Canadian Forest Service) maintains international contacts, conducts research and coordinates federal/provincial programs.

The Province of New Brunswick, which will provide most of the examples for this presentation, has about 35,000 woodlot owners controlling about 2 million ha and producing about 2 million

cubic metres per year in industrial supply (about 25% of the industry needs).

Before I proceed any further I will identify a handful of characteristics which should be kept in mind when comparing woodlot sector activities in Scandinavia, Eastern Canada and New Zealand.

- Eastern Canadian woodlots can be described as "managed natural forests". Natural regeneration is abundant. Forest fires, insects and wind storms play an important role in management decisions.
- There are many commercial species (hardwood and softwood) with varying life spans (rotation periods, 40 - 120 years). Most mature trees are relatively small (similar to Scandinavia).
- Public intervention (legislation) has been limited but federal/provincial subsidy programs have been used extensively.
- Eastern Canada has well established university and technical schools but with limited woodlot content. Vocational training is emerging. Woodlot education systems are in place.

- The woodlot sector is well organized but is undergoing major changes.
- FERIC (Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada) has a small scale group serving the woodlot sector and small scale industrial operations.
- The sector has historically been commodity product oriented but is rapidly changing towards value added approaches.
- A large number of woodlots are not attached to farm enterprises.

Interaction society - woodlot sector

The development of the Eastern Canadian woodlot sector has been greatly influenced by intervention/interaction between the sector and society (see **Historical Perspectives**). To put this intervention/interaction in context, I have divided the activities into three groups.

1. Activities oriented towards owners or group of owners

The purpose is through information/education/advice, to enhance the ability of owners to make rational management decisions. These decisions cover not only traditional forest products, but also any type of special products and any other benefits that can come out of a woodlot.

The activities are basically aimed at helping the owner to help him/herself.

Examples of this type of activity are: woodlot owner magazine, newspaper articles, modular woodlot management courses, field days, displays, workshops, seminars, handbooks,

manuals, pamphlets, posters, videos, etc.

Assisting woodlot owners to organize themselves can also be put under this heading. Working with or through owner organizations facilitates delivery of different programs.

Society's role should normally be that of an educator, catalyst, facilitator and promoter.

2. Activities aimed at improving the woodlot

The woodlot owner is in this case encouraged through grants or other direct economic incentives (free or low-priced seedlings) to do certain improvements on the property. Society's goals are usually social and/or directly linked to securing wood supply for the traditional forest products industry. This type of incentive is usually cost-shared; i.e., the woodlot owner does contribute with money and/or sweat equity. The activities can cover infrastructure (roads, trails, boundary lines, management plans), or silviculture (planting, spacing, thinning).

In Canada over the last decades this type of program has usually been financed through cost shared federal/provincial development agreements.

3. Activities aimed at regulating the woodlot sector

Society, through a variety of regulations as well as administrative and supportive initiatives, is trying to enhance the management and operational environment of the woodlot sector. It is also, at the same time, trying to safeguard the environment and the well being and safety of other sections of society. This dual function can sometimes create substantial problems.

Examples of this type of activity can include developing a legislative and regulatory framework (forestry legislation, land use planning, environmental acts, marketing). It can also include liaison with industry, wood supply analysis, and public studies ("green" papers, etc.).

Historical perspective 1930 - 1996

I will use the development in New Brunswick to provide a historical perspective. The other provinces have undergone similar but not the same development.

- During the 1930 - 1941 period the Federal Dominion Forest Service set up farm demonstration woodlots (owner activities).
- During the 1941 - 1952 period the University of New Brunswick had an Extension Forester on staff (owner activities).
- During the 1952 - 1975 period an independent multi-agency Forest Extension Service was created (owner activities). This period also saw the first federal/provincial agreement ARDA (Agriculture Rural Development Agreement) made available to the woodlot sector (property activities).
- During the 1975 - 1996 period a number of activities took place:
 - The current Forest Extension Service was created within the provincial Department of Natural Resources. (All three types of activities).
 - The woodlot owner sector got organized around the forest products marketing board concept. The group also got

heavily involved in government program management.

- A series of federal/provincial agreements came and went: GDA I and II: 1971-1984 (General Development Agreement)
FRA: 1984 - 1989 (Forest Renewal Agreement)
COOP: 1989 - 1995 (Cooperation Development Agreement).

A quick review of the above four periods reveal some interesting observations which can be stated as follows.

Woodlot sector development using mainly public resources.

- Has existed since the 1930's but under different jurisdictions.
- Has always included an educational/advisory component, i.e., owner oriented activities.
- Has mostly been financed by "outside" (federal) funds.
- Has never been clearly mandated by legislation (i.e., no woodlot management act).
- Has unfortunately often been perceived and treated as social/make work projects.

By 1996 most federal funds have dried up. Efforts are presently underway to find alternative ways of financing silviculture on private woodlots.

Harvesting on woodlots

- Harvesting on woodlots was built up around the skidder and using the tree length system. Farm tractors

were used where available but initially without research and development support similar to what is available to the Scandinavian woodlot sector.

- Today approximately 80% of the woodlot harvest is done by contactors using industrial equipment. The remaining 20% is harvested by the owner/family using everything from industrial equipment, farm tractor based equipment and hobby equipment such as ATV (all terrain vehicle) and snowmobiles.

Marketing/selling woodlot wood

Historically woodlot wood was "the wood of last resort" with industries obtaining their needs from publicly owned forest land. When woodlot wood became a factor in the market place, the woodlot owner originally had three options available:

- Sell the land to a contractor.
- Sell "stumpage" (i.e., cutting rights) to a contractor.
- Harvest the wood himself and sell through a broker (prior to marketing boards) or through his local marketing board often using a ticket system.

The difficulties in the market place led to the establishment of seven (7) forest products marketing boards during the 1962 - 1984 period. The boards were established under provincial legislation. The "teeth" in the system were provided by the "primary source concept", i.e., the industry, in principle, had to sign contracts with the boards prior to getting access to Crown wood.

The marketing legislation was revised in 1995 weakening the power of the marketing boards.

Research and development

The Canadian industrial forestry sector is well served by FERIC. In the early 1980's the woodlot sector needs were recognized when FERIC's Eastern Division created a "Woodlot Section", which today has been renamed "Small Scale Forestry Group"

Initially FERIC recognized three operator categories: hobby, part-time and full-time. The initial efforts were focused of identifying and describing existing equipment. The distribution of FERIC results were normally done by provincial Forest Extension Services.

After a recent reorganization the Small Scale Forestry Group focused its attention on part-time and full-time operators. Two major areas of interest are:

- Harvesting using the farm tractor as a power source.
- Adaptation industrial equipment to small scale operations. An interesting approach here is the increased use of second hand industrial equipment.

Emerging environmental demands for "soft logging methods" has made small scale technology of direct interest to traditional forest industry which has been of benefit to the woodlot sector.

Woodlot forestry education

The situation in Eastern Canada is drastically different to that in Scandinavia.

The public school system has currently rather limited "forestry" content. Efforts are underway to improve this situation.

University and technical curriculums have very limited woodlot content. Vocational courses are available but very seldom used by woodlot owners.

Educational services to the woodlot sector in New Brunswick is mostly provided by the Forest Extension Service (part of the Department of natural Resources & Energy). Services are provided at three levels:

- mass communication (awareness/information)
- Group communication (modular courses)
- One on one (technical advice)

Woodlot owner organizations (marketing boards) are also involved in educational services to their members.

However, with the removal of federal/provincial agreements resources have been reduced and the amount of activities has been substantially diminished.

Facing new realities

The time of easy accessible public funds and resources is gone and the key players are wrestling with how to adapt to this new situation.

Individual woodlot owners and their organizations are reviewing their way of operating. They are actively seeking new alliances, new approaches and new means to improve their economic situation.

Recently in Quebec woodlot owners, industry, municipalities and provincial government struck a deal to finance silviculture on private woodlots.

In New Brunswick the provincial government provides bridge financing for silviculture costs but with rapidly diminishing public input.

The concept "value added" is rapidly replacing the old pulpwood economy. The work proceed along four lines:

- Cost avoidance (example natural regeneration instead of planting).
- Increased owner work input (i.e., keep "salary" in house).
- Improved utilization/preparation of traditional products and increased utilization of all available species.
- Production of special products (example use of portable band sawmills).

The Forest Extension Service has responded to this trend by developing special course modules dealing with value added/improved utilization.

Societies direct involvement is diminishing due to diminishing resources. Increasing environmental pressure results in legislation which in some instances reduces the landowners ability to use his property. Substantial efforts are made to find ways of providing certification of woodlot management and/or products coming from woodlots.

Conclusions

The easy access to public funding has accelerated several positive developments such as education, research and silviculture. However, easy money has also "sort of corrupted" the sector creating a dependency of outside public funding.

The increasing environmental demands have resulted in stricter legislation (example: Clean Water Act). It has also had positive effects creating better awareness and focused research and development on environmentally soft methods and technology.

Reduced educational resources will have to be replaced with new innovative approaches.

I will close with two quotes:

"A successful forest policy requires a comprehensive forestry sector with enlightened owners and managers who can make locally adjusted decisions" (New Directions in Swedish Forest Policy).

and

"Nothing will be the same, not even the future" (statement by Finland's Education Minister in June 1995 to an international workshop "Training for the Work Place").