

CONCEPTUAL PROPOSAL
Dedicated Program for Uneven-Aged Forest Management
for the Small Woodlot Sector

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Submitted to:

The Honourable David Morse
Minister
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Submitted by:

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Background

The Ecology Action Centre (EAC), in alliance with the Association for Sustainable Forestry (ASF), is pleased to respond to the invitation from the Minister of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NS DNR) to submit a conceptual proposal for a dedicated funding program for uneven-aged forest management for the small woodlot owner sector in Nova Scotia.

This partnership brings together the Standing Tall campaign of the EAC, Nova Scotia's leading environmental NGO, and the ASF, whose mandate is to provide small private woodland owners with the financial means to implement forest improvement work on their properties. Since 2000, the ASF has allocated and monitored silviculture funds available to small private woodlot owners through the provisions of the Nova Scotia Forests Act. EAC offers over 35 years of public education expertise, and has specific experience delivering permitting programs on behalf of government. EAC holds a seat on the ASF Board of Directors.

Since the beginning of the Forest Sustainability Regulations system, even-aged and plantation management silviculture treatments under Categories 1 through 6 have predominated. Few resources have been allocated to promoting Category 7 treatments, although some effort has been made to designate provincial funding to it.

The need for more uneven-aged management has been extensively discussed since the fall of 2005. In late 2006, a number of amendments to the Forest Sustainability Regulations were proposed, many of which encourage greater uptake of uneven-aged treatments. Shortly thereafter, the EAC received a letter from the Minister, stating:

“The issue of dedicated funding for uneven-aged forest management has not been dealt with in the current proposed amendments to the regulations, and as such, is being considered by the department within our own program planning process. To assist the department, your organization, potentially with other partners, could consider submitting a conceptual proposal for how you would see a dedicated program for uneven-aged forest management working for the small woodlot sector across Nova Scotia.”

The EAC facilitated a half-day workshop of Standing Tall stakeholders at the Nova Forest Alliance's office in Stewiacke in mid-January, bringing together 18 woodlot owners, contractors, hardwood sawmill operators, and representatives of a number of associations involved in uneven-aged management issues. Participants decided that cooperation with the ASF was a practical route for the submission of a proposal to the Department. The ASF board approved the exploration of a joint proposal in late February.

This proposal is the result of the cooperation between the two organizations. Should the concepts outlined be of interest to the province, the parties involved are interested in developing a more detailed proposal in cooperation with NS DNR staff. All the suggestions contained herein depend on the availability of adequate funding from the province.

It is the partners' understanding that NS DNR funding for this program will be independent from and in addition to the existing Sustainable Forestry Fund (SFF). It is also understood that funding will cover the cost of the program without impairing funds required by the ASF to operate its normal Silviculture Funding Program.

Objectives:

- To increase the amount of uneven-aged forest management on small private woodlands across Nova Scotia.
- To increase awareness among small private woodland owners on managing their woodlands on an uneven-aged basis.
- To increase the awareness among silviculture contractors on managing woodlands on an uneven-aged basis.

Approach

The “Uneven-Aged Management on Small Private Woodlands” program is aimed at working directly with woodlot owners who are interested in maintaining or restoring natural, long-lived Acadian Forests on their lands. The emphasis is to deliver resources on the ground that maximize the amount of uneven-aged silviculture targeted towards encouraging and promoting long-lived shade tolerant species.

The program will include provisions for uneven-aged management treatments for all shade-tolerant tree species of the Acadian Forest. The hallmarks of the program will be flexibility, practicality, and innovation. Clear targets will be set based on the amount of funding available for the program.

The program will be overseen by an Ad Hoc Committee co-chaired by a representative of EAC and a representative of ASF, working closely with the Manager of ASF. The program will initially focus on the delivery of Category 7 treatments under the Forest Sustainability Regulations, and standards will adhere to those technical specifications. Once the program has been up and running for a year, an assessment will be carried out to determine if recommendations for new or revised criteria are needed, based on the experience gained on-the-ground with uneven-aged management. A key responsibility of the Ad Hoc committee will be to devise solutions to problems encountered with successfully delivering this program.

The program will include a significant outreach and education component because many Nova Scotian woodlot owners and silviculture contractors are unfamiliar with uneven-aged techniques. This will include:

- Identifying and working with woodlot owners with suitable woodlots;
- Identifying and working with contractors with an interest in delivering uneven-aged silviculture;
- Preparing clear, plain language information;
- Teaching uneven-aged management techniques, e.g., tree marking, appropriate harvesting practices, pruning and spacing for timber value.

Where possible, the program will draw on existing materials, e.g. the directory of uneven-aged resources in Nova Scotia currently in preparation by the Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association, the guide to restoration management in the Acadian Forest nearing completion by the North Mountain Old Forest Society, and silviculture and tree-marking guides from central Ontario.

The “Uneven-Aged Management on Small Private Woodlands” program will initially be a three year pilot project with assessment by the Ad Hoc Committee at the end of that time.

Annual evaluation reports will be prepared by staff and submitted to the Ad Hoc Committee. The Ad Hoc Committee will report its findings/recommendations to NS DNR and to the Boards of the ASF and EAC. Annual evaluations will review:

- Numbers of woodlot owners applying;
- Numbers approved;
- Amount of funding disbursed;
- Types of silviculture completed;
- Reasons for denial of applications;
- Success of educational and outreach activities; and,
- Recommendations for next year’s program.

If NS DNR agrees, program partners could develop one or two demonstration sites on provincial Crown Lands.

Structure

The Ecology Action Centre (EAC) and the Association for Sustainable Forestry (ASF) will be equal managing partners of the uneven-aged management program.

The Ad Hoc Committee, co-chaired by EAC and ASF, will oversee the functioning of the program and advise on its activities. Membership will consist of volunteers representing the hardwood milling sector, the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association, other woodland owners in Nova Scotia, a contractor who carries out uneven-

aged management, and a representative from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NSDNR). The Ad Hoc Committee will consist of seven members as represented in the organizational structure diagram below. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee shall be those who have a strong interest in pursuing an uneven-aged management program.

The Ad Hoc Committee will be responsible for reporting to the respective ASF and EAC Boards of Directors as the founding partners of the program. The Committee will be free to negotiate additional funding from other sources over and above that provided by NS DNR.

The Ad Hoc Committee will receive no reimbursement for time spent on Committee activities. Travel costs for individual volunteers, not those representing organizations, may be covered on a case to case basis, as determined by the Committee.

Delivery of the program may be carried out by the Manager of the ASF, if time permits. If not, sub-contracts to carry out program administration and to develop outreach and educational materials and/or programs will be prepared under the direction of the Ad Hoc Committee. The contractors would be directly under the supervision of the Manager of the ASF reporting to the Ad Hoc Committee.

The program will be delivered out of the ASF office. For logistical and administrative convenience, the Ad Hoc Committee and the Program Manager will work out of the Forest Products Association of Nova Scotia’s office in Hilden, NS.

Organizational Structure

Please note that the Manager of ASF is ultimately responsible to the ASF Board of Directors.

