



June 21st, 2024

Position Statement from PEI Watershed Alliance, Inc.

Forests are an important part of watershed functionality. Healthy forests provide many ecological functions and can also provide services that are of value to humans. These services come in many forms including cleaning and cooling our water, preserving our soils, creating habitat for wildlife, and offsetting the degree and magnitude of impacts and insults to the environment from other land based activities. Forests on PEI have been significantly impacted through anthropogenic and natural disturbance. Forests normally evolve through a successional process where one stage of the forest dies off to be replaced by another stage that provides more complexity and diversity. Activities on PEI have and continue to impact these processes. Given the history of impacts to forests, the intensity of land utilization for both rural and urban developments, and the evolving nature of life and climate on PEI it is necessary to actively assist in the recovery, diversification, climate adaptation, and successional pathways of our forests. Harvesting can be utilized as a tool in these active efforts but must be done in partnership with other efforts including thinning, planting, land preservation, management of other species and ecosystems, improvements to land use practices, adding complexity to the landscape, and adaptive management.

Forests should be managed first to optimize required ecological functions (regeneration, succession, diversification of species and ages), then with provision of desired services all in the context of other activities occurring across the landscape. Anthropogenic disturbances should be managed to minimize impacts on ecological function and attempt to emulate natural disturbance regimes. Lack of forest cover is a major concern and was a key reason for the formation of many of our member watershed groups. Much of our work, and that of our members, is directed towards increasing and diversifying forest cover but these aims are not adequately supported by the legislative and financial climate on PEI.