

August 31st, 2024

Jean-Paul Arsenault
Chair of the Prince Edward Island Forestry Commission

Dear Jean-Paul,

The PEI Woodlot Owners Association (PEIWOA) commends your efforts in developing future forest policy for a healthy and sustainable PEI forest. We have several requests we believe will enhance forest planning, policy, and programs.

Since being able to hire an Executive Director, the PEI Woodlot Owners Association is actively supporting its members and the public through various initiatives.

We will be hosting walks and events in partnership with other invested parties focusing on improving biodiversity for our species at risk, demonstrating monitoring techniques to identify invasive species, seed collection and propagation through seed stratification, rebuilding our damaged wood lots, and stewarding woodlots to produce high value wood products. We have also partnered with a master trail builder to do two trail planning and building workshops. We are also promoting the Fire Smart, and Don't move Fire Wood campaigns, and working with Farmers Talk to be able to deliver mental health supports for woodlot owners and for people who work in the forest industry.

We require ongoing funding from projects and Forest, Fish & Wildlife to support our work, benefiting all PEI woodlot owners. Our wish list includes:

1. Allowing FEP clients to purchase 1-gallon trees for Forest Enrichment treatments at the same price as watersheds. Larger trees are needed for enrichment plantings as the smaller seedlings can not compete with existing regeneration.
2. Increasing incentives for bird box placement in woodlots. The current rate is insufficient to encourage the building and installation of these boxes.
3. Offering a flexible template option for Forest Management Plans created for the FEP. We believe giving landowners and forest technicians the ability to have some flexibility would allow the plans to be more resilient towards climate change and better suit the needs for biodiversity, conservation, and enhancement.

4. Increasing incentives for Forest Management Plans to account for work and travel required for plans that may or may not involve harvesting.
5. Increase production at the J. Frank Gaudet Tree Nursery, for local long-lived deciduous seedlings and make these available to woodlot owners to help improve ecological forest management and improve our climate change resiliency. While the PEIWOA, recognizes the challenges associated with bringing in the additional expertise, infrastructure, resources, and technology to necessitate this increase, we also recognize other solutions such as incentivizing this production through private and non-profit organizations.
6. Restore FEP funding to previous levels. The restoration and silviculture treatments needed to have healthy productive PEI forests in the future require investments to help sustain a skilled silviculture workforce, and keep up with forest plantations and natural growth.
7. Recognize the value of forest stewardship in providing environmental, industrial, and societal benefits, and explore the financial compensation possibilities associated with these benefits.

We seek your Commission's recognition and support for our recommendations, including five-year core funding contracts for long-term planning and project management.

Respectfully yours,

Wanson Hemphill

Chair of the PEI Woodlot Owners Association

