



Saving Nova Scotia's last old growth forests

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There are places in Nova Scotia where cool, fast-flowing streams still meander through impressive stands of towering, untouched old-growth forest. These few precious ecological gems have managed, against great odds, to escape centuries of disturbance by humans in one of the longest settled areas of North America.

But, just how much longer these incredible places will remain is unclear, as industry ramps up pressure to exploit the forests in an endless search for more and more wood supply.

Forest harvesting in Nova Scotia has reached unprecedented levels. Each year, fifty-thousand hectares of forest are harvested, an area roughly equivalent in size to Kejimikujik National Park. Upwards of 90% of this harvesting is done using clearcuts, supported by a spidery network of roads that if pieced end-to-end would stretch around the Earth two-and-a-half times.

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The fight to protect wilderness in Nova Scotia has been going on for years, and has brought ordinary citizens from rural areas and cities alike to the frontlines of this campaign. Clearcuts abound behind the thin veils of green kept standing along the scenic roadways. Nova Scotians are fed-up with the inaction and are demanding change.

CPAWS is supporting this public advocacy campaign with scientific credibility and expertise. We are developing and run-

ning a province-wide conservation analysis to identify and protect the most ecologically-significant areas remaining in the province, including sites important for wilderness values, old forest, rare species, significant ecosystems, and connectivity.

And, we're starting to get results. Early in 2007, the provincial government committed to expanding the protected areas system in Nova Scotia by 50% over the next seven years and took the extra step of enshrining a 12% protected areas target in a new piece of environmental legislation.

This was followed by the single largest purchase of conservation lands in Nova Scotia's history: \$27 million worth of high conservation value properties from Bowater-Mersey Paper Inc. These acquisitions resulted in the creation of 27 new protected natural areas in parks and nature reserves.

We are encouraged by the progress being made, but all too aware of the urgency to keep moving forward. There is no room for second best. The future of our forests are at stake and a lot of people are counting on our success.

For now, only time will tell if that cool-running stream will continue to flow through the old-growth forest, or if it will be forced to run empty through a clearcut. ●

Chris Miller is an ecologist and Wilderness Conservation Coordinator for CPAWS Nova Scotia.

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