

## **Maine's Healthy Forestry Initiative**

### **Initial Meeting, 5/24/12, Maine Forest Products Council**

#### **Executive Summary**

On 24 May, the Maine Forest Service (MFS), along with Maine Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Resources Association (FRA), convened a meeting of stakeholders to initiate a discussion of ways to increase active forest management by coastal and southern Maine woodland owners. Stakeholders (see attached list) including industry representatives, economic advisors, foresters, wildlife biologists, loggers, landowners, and researchers met to learn more about the issue, discuss current research on family forest owner, and to begin identifying potential recommendations for action.

According to MFS inventory data, total growth for all species currently exceeds harvest in Maine's southernmost eight counties by a ratio of 2.5:1. The overall goal of this effort is to identify strategies that lead to increased active management on these woodlands. Success will include strategies to improve forest health, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, water quality, aesthetics and wood availability. Ultimately, this effort will increase family woodland owner enjoyment and support jobs and the state's economy.

Common themes emerged from the background presentations (see attached agenda) and associated discussion, including:

- The current situation/trend began in 1995.
- Further research into how this trend started is needed.
- MFS data may provide insight into mill closures, declining parcel sizes, and the changing harvest levels associated with changes in forest land ownership patterns, markets, and the forest industry.
- Department of Labor data may provide an understanding of loss in logging capacity.
- The forest industry can help answer the question as to when they discontinued their landowner assistance programs.

While the group felt the need to drill down into the issue to determine the leading causes of the decline in harvesting, the group also agreed that more time is needed to be spent on education. Much of the infrastructure and capacity to deliver educational programming already exists through the Maine Forest Service, SWOAM, Tree Farm, and the county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Some suggested that MFS should partner with organizations such as Maine Audubon, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and land trusts to deliver messaging, particularly to landowners, to encourage active management. Programming for local assessors, loggers, foresters, and biologists also should be developed on a variety of topics to help address the issue.

Next steps include the formation of task oriented teams to continue development of action items, focusing initially on additional research and development of targeted educational programming.

*Jan Ames Santerre*

**Southern Maine Family Forest Initiative**  
May 24  
9 AM – 3M  
Maine Forest Products Council, Conference Room

- 9:00 AM     **Welcome and Introductions – Kevin Doran**
- Why is more active management important to you/your company?
- 9:15         **Overview of Project and Outcomes for the day - Jan Santerre**
- GOAL – Increasing/Improving Active Forest Management on Southern and Coastal Maine Family Forests
- 9:30         Background
- **Demographics - Brett Butler**
  - **Kennebec Woodlands Partnership Survey and Results - Jessica Leahy**
- 11:00        **Break**
- 11:15        Background (cont'd)
- **Forest Inventory - Ken Laustsen**
- 11:45        **Discussion – Kevin Doran**
- What are the issues that struck you in the presentations this morning?
  - Are there any issues that agree with your experiences in the field? Disagree?
- 12 PM        **Lunch – provided**
- 12:45        **Break out discussion**
- What would success look like in the effort to encourage active management?
  - Identify Possible Solutions
  - Rank the top 3
- 1:30         **Break**
- 1:45         **Review – Kevin Doran**
- Review small group discussions and top 3 solutions.
  - Identify common issues, solutions and ask clarifying questions.
- 2:30         **Next Steps – Kevin Doran**
- Where do we go from here?
  - Who else should be involved in the implementation?
  - Develop plan of action.
- 3:00 PM     **Adjourn**

Attendees:

Joel Swanton, Forest Resources Association  
Ken Lamond, Logger  
Wayne Field, Logger  
Bill Guest, Logger  
Ken Lausten, MFS  
Tom Doak, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine  
Bill Williams, SWOAM  
Mark Vannah, Robbins Lumber, Forester  
Erik Carlson, Forester/Logger  
Ken Canfield, MFS  
Sherry Huber, Maine TREE Foundation  
Brett Butler, United States Forest Service  
Doug Denico, MFS  
Randy Irish, Corinth Wood Pellets  
Mike Watts, Verso  
John Starrett, Sappi Fine Paper  
Brian Reader, Wadsworth Woodlands  
Jesse Duplin, Wadsworth Woodlands  
Scott Pease, Hancock Lumber  
Rosaire Pelletier, Department of Economic and Community Development  
Pat Strauch, Maine Forest Products Council  
Ryan Robichaud, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
Andy Shultz, MFS  
Mike Quartuch, University of Maine  
Steve Gettle, Forester  
Jo Peirce, Maine Tree Farm  
Jack Witham, UMaine, Kennebec Estuary Land Trust  
Don Mansius, MFS  
Jan Santerre, MFS  
Kevin Doran, MFS  
Willie Cole, Trees LTD., Logger

Why is more active management in Southern Maine important to you or your company/organization?

- Its an issue statewide, not just in southern Maine, with non-industrial private landowners – Ken Lamond
- 50-100 acre lots, landowner relations – Wayne Field
- Plenty of work for the good loggers – Bill Guest
- Big chunk of SWOAM membership is in this area – Tom Doak
- Untapped resource in southern and coastal Maine – Mark Vannah
- Desire to learn about the different pieces leading to difficulty in active management – Erik Carlson
- As a landowner, sharing enjoyment in utilization of the resource – Sherry Huber
- Small landowners need assistance, Corinth Wood Pellets receives many requests for assistance – Randy Irish
- Company interest from a wood supply point of view – Mike Watts

- Active forest is a healthy and productive forest, which helps landowners hold on to their land – John Starrett
- More work! – Brian Reader
- There is a lot of competition, particularly with loggers not managing private lands well – Jesse Duplin
- Interest in supply, as well as stewardship – Scott Pease
- There is a bottleneck in availability, price. We need to make sure the state is attractive for investment – Rosaire Pelletier
- Policy is driven by population in Southern Maine, efforts to increase harvesting, landowner education may influence future policy decisions – Pat Strauch
- Desire to learn more about the demographics of landowners that don't need the money from harvesting – what drives their decision making? Those that can't afford the land strip and sell it off – Steve Gettle
- Sustainable forest management is what Tree Farm is all about – Jo Pierce
- Many values are all achieved by good management – Doug Denico
- Active management will be helpful in addressing climate change, forest health issues and more – Doug Denico

## Presentations

### Brett Butler – National Woodland Owner Survey

- We cannot change the mind set of landowners
- As practitioners we have to see the land through their eyes
- They are landowners referring to their land, or their woods, not family forest owners
- The era of public forest conservation is done – conserving large tracts like those in the National Forest and Parks systems is not how future forests will be conserved.
- Maine is roughly 1/3 family forests
- The National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) reveals that 60% of the family forests are less than 10 acres.
- That said, half of the land base is in acreage greater than 50 acres.
- 65% of woodland owners harvest, 35% have forest management plans, and 43% seek advice.
- Landowner concerns
  1. property taxes
  2. family legacy
  3. fire
  4. insect and plant diseases
  5. air and water pollution

The Sustaining Family Forests Initiative has conducted additional landowner segmentation based on responses in the NWOS:

- 34% are Woodland Retreat owners, this characterizes much of the ownership in Maine
- 15% own it for Supplemental Income
- 31% Work the Land – they have multiple objectives
- 20% are Uninvolved – many widows in this category

- Model landowners (20%), and Prime Prospects (57%) look favorably upon forest management, while Potential Defectors (17%), and Write-Offs (6%) have an unfavorable opinion of management.

#### Jessica Leahy – Kennebec Woodland Owners Survey

- Survey responses show 50% of landowners are harvesting timber, and half of those are satisfied with the harvest.
- 15% are not satisfied with the harvest
- 38% of landowners that have never harvested would consider it.
- There is a strong preference for print materials for outreach.

#### Recommendations:

- We have limited time, money, and energy – we have to focus efforts
- There are many opportunities
- There are also many threats and challenges
- The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) has done a good job of prioritizing outreach efforts
  - Taxes
  - Federal assistance programs
  - Markets
  - Renewable energy
  - Pests and diseases
  - Water, climate, and other
- Outdoor recreation relies on private land in Maine
- Outdoor recreation is key to high quality of life for many Mainers
- Many problems with keeping land open, because of that 30% plan to restrict access to their land in the near term
- 40% are owners older than 65
- Succession planning is an issue, 41% of woodland owners do not have a will
- Landowners should not be viewed as suppliers, that is not how they view their land

#### Other efforts

- Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE), <http://www.engaginglandowners.org/>
- Mass ACORN (A Cooperative Resource Network), <http://massacorn.net/>
- Mass Woods, <http://masswoods.net/>
- NY Master Forest Owner program, <http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/mfo/>

#### Ken Laustsen – Forest Inventory and Analysis

##### Analysis of the forest resource in the southern 8 counties

- 73% of the region is forest
- Loss of forest is largely due to conversion
- 14% of the state land base, but accounts for 40% of the land conversion
- 41% maple, beech, and birch cover type
- 45% saw timber, as compared with the statewide average of 33%
- 52% is fully stocked, meaning it has a density of 66%-100%
- Road distance is less than ½ mile for 94% of the forest in the region.
- Merchantable timber is largely pine and oak
- Average harvest has dropped by 34% over the last 15 years – WHY???
- Biomass harvesting is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> more than that of other mega regions in the State of Maine

- 1.9% of the acreage is cut on an annual basis, 2.6% statewide, but harvest amounts are greater on a per acre basis, 38.7 green tons per acre in the south, and 32.6 green tons statewide.

What would lead to this? Ken's data does not answer the why, but some thoughts:

- Landowner objectives – more like weeding the woodlot, this could lead to lower quality material and more biomass
- Conversion creates more biomass
- Saw timber is staying on the stump for aesthetic purposes
- Pellet market does not factor in here – this uses round wood
- Wood is going to Portsmouth and Westbrook as biomass, sawmill market is much smaller
- \*we need to tease out the data on where the wood is going
- \*what have we lost as saw log markets due to the economy and housing

What are the causes?

- Change in markets/prices – housing is down, store on the stump
- Landownership sizes
- Landowner opinions
- Change in procurement staff
- Media highlights fire risk
- Landowners remember peak prices
  - Costs have escalated
  - Prices (delivered) have not
- Impacts/risk of invasives
  - May motivate to improve forest health
- Money not a motivator for some
- Aesthetic barrier
- “Martha Stewart Syndrome”
- Fire/blowdown risk may motivate some
- Stumpage price data may help
- Timber stand improvement to improve “legacy”
- Target landowner audience for messages
  - Larger
  - Education
  - ?
- Infrastructure gap?
  - Logging? Equipment mix and numbers
  - Mills/Markets
- Conversion primary source of stumpage?
- Landowner mindset around logging – how do we change?
- Focus on other landowner benefits
  - Aesthetics, wildlife, etc. to motivate landowners
- TREE Tours on demonstration harvests in local areas
- Landowner preference for harvest equipment?
  - Want a “clean” job
  - Misperception that preservation is best

- Many land trusts support that idea
- Show landowners harvested trees, poor condition, and why they were harvested
- Need for outreach
  - What are the messages?
- Landowner expectations on monetary return
  - Small landowners may need to accept some cost for service
- Should we work toward logger licensing to promote professionalism??
- Tree Growth
  - Outdated management plans
  - Inadequate plans to develop harvest plans
  - Lack of compliance/Towns don't pursue
  - Opportunity for outreach

Group Discussions:

Group 1. (Pat Sirois)

What would success look like?

- Increased
  - Numbers of landowners managing
  - Volume of timber produced
- Greater landowner satisfaction with harvest
  - Get at this through landowner survey such as the Kennebec study
  - Landowner reports
    - Satisfied Dissatisfied
  - With a call back option and phone number

Landowner fears and problems:

- Getting it right
- Neighbors opinions of the harvest
- Many don't know what they own
- Fear of harvest looking like what they see driving around
- Small loggers don't usually market directly

Solutions:

- Increase emphasis on aesthetics
- Manage expectations of landowners regarding aesthetics
- Approach landowners with a message of improved wildlife habitat and increased wildlife presence. Also helps offset aesthetic challenge
- Conduct local demonstration project to show: (from unbiased source i.e. MFS)
  - Value of plans
  - Importance of knowing boundaries of property
  - Sense of standing timber value
- Meetings – maybe a host like Audubon or Land Trusts might reach other landowners than the “choir”
- Communication – forest management can mitigate pest infestations
- Banner or umbrella statement: “improve your woodlot health through active (stewardship)
- We need a couple hardwood mills in southern Maine

## Group 2 (Andy Shultz)

\*First need to identify why harvest levels dropped starting 15 years ago

What would success look like?

- Readable/useable forest management plans
  - Not too short or too long
  - Include cruise?
  - Tax benefit of depletion
- Landowners more aware of all benefits of management
- Increased TGTL acres
- Increase number of harvested acres; harvest/growth ratio, etc.
- Increase number of landowners satisfied with harvest
- Harvesting to provide services =/+ \$
- Should not be perceived as industry push
- More assistance to landowners – wildlife biologists, LF, etc.

Solutions:

- Enforce TGTL – at state level
- More forest management plans written by resource professionals
- Identify trustworthy professionals (licensed foresters, loggers, etc.)
- More time/effort on wildlife habitat and management issues
  - By State
  - By resource professionals
- Inform landowners that by cutting wood, other benefits accrue
- Good work will be passed word-of-mouth
- Encourage/bring back single owner/operator
- Better coordinate efforts of industry, government, et al.
- Show benefit of good ???
- Tax incentive to maintain habitat
- Reward for maintaining habitat
- Who are the trusted sources? Not feds? Not gov't?
- Licensed foresters to follow up on TGTL FMP's – updates and scheduled harvests
- Focus on landowners not getting any advice now

Actions

- Correlate parcel size change with harvest levels
- Determine if landowners are in fact the problem

## Group 3 – Joel Swanton

Solutions:

- Improved compliance with Tree Growth Tax Law
  - Landowners
  - Assessors (inconsistent)
  - Assessors need to enforce
    - But minimal tax dollars to do so, what is the incentive?
  - Town newsletters
  - Letters from assessors
  - Maine revenue services rule?

- MFS monitoring – Coastal?
- Stress active management and harvesting in plans
- Better inform/educate landowners on requirements

#### Education/information

- More educated and informed landowners – help them understand options and benefits
  - Management
  - harvesting
- Multiple media (you tube, etc.)
- MFS – PA’s, Ads (see below)
- Cole Brothers Calendar
- Tours of active jobs
- Awards/recognition for good management
  - Landowners (Tree Farm)
  - Loggers (MFPC, CLP, PLC)
  - Wildlife habitat?
  - PUBLICIZE!
- Team up with wildlife biologists
- Wildlife partnerships
  - COVERTS
  - Forestry for the Birds (VT)
- Educate land trusts
- MFS should promote good results, not just convictions

#### Improved markets and stumpage prices

- Impact of global economy/market cycles
- Promote “buy local wood”? (Mass.)
  - Work with builders
- Help consumers understand where products come from local sources
  - Educate during harvest planning
- Economic ripple effects/benefits
- Benefits of certification
- Recognize benefits and impacts of landowners to local economy
  - Downsides – trash, recreation
- Recognize value of landowner stability to community

#### Making long term management pay (as opposed to short term gain)

- Benefits from selling higher value to markets – economic gain
- Recognize other values – hunting, aesthetics, etc.
- Different message to different owners
- Incentives
  - Streamline cost sharing
  - Others?
- Promote fee for services instead of % of harvest income
  - Management and other needs

#### Group 4 – Don Mansius

Solutions: change perceptions

- Support for infrastructure to reach out to landowners (SWOAM, MFS, Etc.)
- Switching from stumpage payment model to investment in landowner objectives
- List of reputable logger and foresters (MFS)
- Logger licensing
- PSA's
- Personal contacts
- Fill gaps in enforcement (FONS)
- Professionalize – perceptions
- Partnering with NGO's may lead to changing perceptions
- Cultural shift to ensure survival of the whole supply chain

What would success look like?

- More acres in TGTL (plans)
- Positive media articles on managed land (including NGO newsletters)
- Increase membership in SWOAM, ATFS
- Tracking new contacts (where, how)
- Vibrant industry – all sectors
- Sustainable workforce

### **Additional Action Items:**

#### **Explore the possible causes for the decline in harvesting in southern ME:**

1 - mill closures (including temporary shutdowns)

MFS's Greg Lord \*might\* be able to take snapshots of mills that reported operations during a given year, and we could look at consumption by large product class - pulp, saw, biomass to see if there are any major drivers, such as the NewPage shutdowns (possibly). A year to year examination for the last 15-20 years probably would be best, but it also would be very time consuming. Confounding factor here is NH, where a lot of southern ME wood can go, depending on markets.

2 - parcel size

Greg L. probably could look at the size of the parcels being harvested from year to year and see if there are any trends.

3 - TIMO's and REIT's

If we generate a list of the former industrial owners and their harvest levels for a given year(s), maybe an average for 1990-1994, and compare that to the harvest levels for a similar period of time after the TIMO's and REIT's acquired the land bases, we could see if the new owners ramped up harvesting so much that mills didn't need so much wood from southern ME. This will be tough because the big ownerships often went to several different new owners, but it's not undoable for some ownerships.

4 - Loss of logging capacity

MFS can get logging employment figures from Labor, and the numbers go back quite a ways. The issue here is that they only report "covered employment" and not self-employed loggers, who probably are the norm in southern ME. We may be able to get at this from querying FON's. Certified Logging Program data may also be helpful.

5 - Loss of industry Landowner Assistance Programs

Pretty sure we could ask the major players who had LAP's when they stopped. Andy probably knows more about this than anyone. We can also identify who's started or restarted LAP's in the recent past (SAPPI and Robbins). Not sure what this will tell us or whether it will correlate w/harvest levels, but it would be interesting to document the history of LAP's.

**Education:**

1 – SFI is working on an education module focused on aesthetics. Sappi has agreed to sponsor a pilot of this new upgraded aesthetics program in the fall of 2012. Target audience is Sappi staff and core contractors they work with.

2- Healthy Forests training. SFI is also revisiting the old model of teaming up with Soil and Water Conservation Districts to deliver programming. One thought is to develop programming for family forest owners about invasive pests and how healthy forests are more resilient. Working with additional co-sponsors such as The Nature Conservancy or Maine Audubon might also extend the reach beyond the choir of landowners already actively managing their land.