

Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee

February 29, 2024

7:02 – 9:08 pm in person @ CCUBIC and Zoom

Call to order 7:02 pm

Meeting Chair – Jeff Black

In Attendance: Co-Chairs – Jonathan McClelland and Jeff Black; Sec / Treasurer – Ron; Directors – Mac; Members – Alice, Emily, Ernie, Jason, Keith, and Peter.

Item 1 – Admin

Jeff opened the meeting. He welcomed everyone, acknowledged those in attendance and asked if there were to be additional agenda items. “Friends of Northern Pulp” was added to the agenda in section 4c Other.

Approval of Agenda: Mac moved for the approval of the agenda, seconded by Peter, Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2023, meeting was made by Ernie and seconded by Mac. Motion carried.

Item 2 – Business Arising from the Minutes

CFAC Signs and placement – It was reported that the original sign on the fence across from the pumphouse at Harrison’s Amherst was noticed as missing and has been discovered in a snow pile around the corner of the fence. It’s been judged as too damaged and vandalised to be reused. Jeff committed to installing one of the two new signs in its place. Mac indicated that he would help as he could. Discussion led to Jeff agreeing to follow up on placement of the second sign on the fence of the former Lion’s property in Oxford across from the Tim Horton’s. There is agreement that we should commission additional signs as the finances allow it, including one in Parrsboro at the Harrison’s store there once the new fence is completed, and another in the vicinity of the Pugwash Farmer’s Market.

Item 3 - Reports:

Forestry Contractors group update – A key topic currently being discussed by the NS Forestry Contractors Association is road closures. One of the key points that came out of the discussion is that all that it takes to close a road regardless of the weather conditions is a citizen complaint. Once a complaint has been received, it appears that there is no other investigative process in place to determine if it’s a legitimate issue or a punitive action ahead of simply closing the road. With a number of members of the NSFCA in attendance our discussion included the suggestion that if she was agreeable in doing so, there may be value in Angela providing the Province with a draft permit application for their consideration in around September 2024. The NSFCA are currently in talks with the Department of Transportation over uniformity and communication and have a follow up meeting which will include the area managers for the

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Department from across the province, and representatives of the mills, so that everyone is hearing the same message. With the absence of Katrina at this meeting the eco-forestry harvesting equipment program was still discussed but as far as any update, they are still working on the application and approval process but not quite there yet. In a “save the date” announcement the NSFC will be having their AGM on April 19th at the Debert Hospitality Centre.

Ministerial Advisory Committee update (Mackie) - Mac provided an overview of the topics for discussion at the Feb. 8th meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. The committee had invited representatives of the Department of the Environment and one of the issues they brought up with the Committee was a target of increasing the percentage of land under management as conservation areas from 15 to 20 percent by 2025 or 2026. This would require another 850,000 acres of land to be put into conservation.

Mac indicated that the Department of Environment was anticipating outright purchasing the land. They didn't appear to be open to the concept of private property owners registering areas of their property that could be held as conservation areas and never harvested as a way to achieve this 20% conservation target. The current impediment to that concept was the process for creating and managing such a registry. DNRR may already have a list of such lands that could provide a contact list to get conversation on such a project with landowners moving forward.

In addition to 20% of land assigned as conservation areas Mac reported that the Committee discussed the Environmental Assessment process and what the key approval factors are. What he took away from the discussion was be it Class 1 or Class 2, and with scientific targets being met, one deal maker or breaker, is if the project has the approval of the Minister and the social license to be accepted by the host community. The lack of Social License can often override the scientific facts in determining if the EA recommends a project or not.

CFAC Newsletter Update (Emily) Emily provided an update on the newsletter reminding the committee that the next newsletter is scheduled for the first week of April with a need to get information for publication into her hands ahead of her sending out the draft copy at the end of March. It was suggested that the Economic Impact of Forestry document would be good to include.

Having the minutes linked to the newsletter so that they are available to members was brought up and between Ron and Jonathan, there was a commitment to have the Connector website updated with that in mind.

Of note we have approximately 200 subscribers and a 61% opening rate for the newsletter. That's awesome Emily! It was noted that we should likely include the photos of the two new signs once they were put up in Amherst and Oxford.

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Financial Report (Ron) – Ron provided an update of the financials for the CFAC. As of the end of February 2024 we have \$384 on deposit.

Item 4 – New Business

Wood to Biodiesel Plant – A news article about talks breaking down between a company looking to establish a Biodiesel Plant in PEI and the PEI Government led to a meeting in Halifax between Jonathan and a company representative. The news article indicated their next locations of interest were Debert, NS or Thunder Bay, ON and that was confirmed during the meeting in Halifax. Current operational plans project yearly consumption of 400,000 tons of wood into 100 million liters of Biodiesel fuel. Production timeline is forecast to be 18 months following all Government approvals. We will continue to monitor this proposed project. Discussion raised the question of what the issue with the proposed PEI project was. We're not currently aware of the answer to that question.

Potential for NSFCA (Nova Scotia Forestry Contractors Association) to contribute to the CFAC Newsletter – It has been suggested that there could be a strategic partnership between the NSFCA and CFAC through the newsletter. If there are no major objections NSFCA would offer the CFAC newsletter to their members as a value of membership and contribute funds to CFAC that can be used to service the public education mandate. Exact details of cost and any potential content additions are yet to be decided, but the potential of a collaboration was brought forward for discussion. The concept was well received.

Lack of Silviculture Workforce – As a follow up to the last meeting's discussion on the lack of silviculture workers, a CFAC member had the opportunity to see a mechanical pre-commercial thinning project in operation. Originally sceptical of the expected efficiency and ecological footprint, he was pleasantly surprised to see that the equipment footprint was minimal and the efficiency of even a novice machine operator (with solid wood knowledge) surpassed a skilled team of workers. It was pointed out that the block being treated had been refused by silviculture contractors as not being practical to manually do a pre-commercial thinning. As a heads up, the company testing out the mechanical preconditioning concept is expecting to do more demonstrations as they zero in on the capacity and costs.

Other – Friends of Northern Pulp – Group hasn't met since December. As to the Environmental Assessment process, Northern Pulp was still doing studies in the fall but no word on where they are with the process or the studies. There was an update expected in January but no news yet. Any people still working for Northern Pulp are now working from home and the plant site is closed. Paper Excellence continues to say they want a craft paper mill in NS and mediation is reported to be continuing, but there are no more details available than that.

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Discussion Lack of Pulp Markets – It was shared that the Sheet Harbour plant had been offline that the world supply and demand conditions meant that there wasn't enough market for their products to be viable. Since then, it appears that they have found a new customer and expect to have a busy summer. The day-to-day fluctuation of inventory needs of Mills continues to complicate harvesting planning and this year's weather hasn't made it any easier.

Item 5 – Closing Comments Jeff thanked everyone for participating and the next meeting was set for May 30th.