
July 17, 2008

NEW POLL FINDS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CLEARCUTTING RULES

A new opinion poll suggests the provincial government would have overwhelming public support for introducing regulations aimed at controlling clearcutting in Nova Scotia.

The poll, conducted between May 15 and June 1 by Corporate Research Associates for the Ecology Action Centre, found that 95% of respondents favoured either a ban on clearcutting (27% of all respondents), or regulations to restrict clearcutting to certain forest types (68% of all respondents). 4% of respondents felt there should be no regulations to restrict clearcutting. One percent had no opinion.

The poll had a sample size of 400 and is considered accurate to within 4.9 percent 19 times out of 20. There were no significant differences in responses from urban and rural residents.

The timing of the poll overlapped with province-wide consultations conducted by the Voluntary Planning agency, which the provincial Department of Natural Resources (DNR) tasked with gathering public input into a new provincial forest strategy. Many citizens who attended those consultations complained about the amount of clearcutting.

According to Kermit deGooyer, a forestry campaigner with the Ecology Action Centre, the reduction of clearcutting will need to figure prominently in the new forest strategy if it is to meet public aspirations. "With growing public concerns over forest degradation, wildlife, water, global warming, and the need to diversify the industry, widespread clearcutting is rightly seen as antiquated and harmful."

He added that regulations are only one way to curtail clearcutting. "But we could be headed down that road unless there's a substantial shift to better harvesting methods." DeGooyer added that, in moving to a greener and more sustainable economy, the province needs to be a full partner in aggressively helping companies and landowners make the transition away from widespread clearcutting. Viable alternatives to clearcutting are out there, he said, but they need to be promoted and supported by government. "I think the public would be thrilled if DNR took a leadership role in moving Nova Scotia away from clearcutting. To date, they have been slow to recognize the public mood and respond to it."

Jamie Simpson, a forester with the Centre, suggests that provincial silviculture money should be diverted from treatments that encourage clearcutting, such as creating plantations and spraying herbicides, into quality improvement activities such as selection harvesting. "The government has taken small steps in this direction, but there's still a long way to go."

According to the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, about 500km² of Nova Scotia forests are clearcut annually, accounting for 94% of all timber harvesting in Nova Scotia by area¹. The Forest Products Association of Nova Scotia pegs the figure at about 85%.²

The poll results mirror those of a research study conducted by the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in 2000. That survey of people living in central Nova Scotia found 85% of respondents were in favour of clearcutting regulations – 38% for a full ban, and 47% for restrictions based on forest type³.

For further information contact Kermit deGooyer at (902) 442-5008 or (902) 802-6668, or Jamie Simpson at (902) 429-1335. Full survey results are attached on next page.

Background information

References:

¹ http://nfdp.ccfm.org/compendium/data/2008_06/tables/com61e.htm

² <http://www.fpans.ca/content/faq.aspx>

³ See page 38 in Sanderson, L. K. Beesley, and R. Colborne. 2000. Public Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Sustainable Forest Management: Central Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro, NS. This report can be downloaded from <http://www.novaforestalliance.com/media/documents/publicperceptions.pdf>

Full Survey Results:

THE ATLANTIC QUARTERLY[®] - SPRING 2008

- Ecology Action Centre -

TABLE E1:

Some seek a ban on clearcutting in Nova Scotia as a method of forest harvesting, while others would like regulations that limit clearcutting to certain forest types, and still others say there should be no regulations restricting clearcutting.

Which one of the following three statements best represents your opinion of clearcutting?

	NOVA SCOTIA %	REGION			GENDER		INCOME			AGE			EDUCATION			
		Metro	Cape Breton	Rest of mainland	M	F	L.T. \$50K	\$50- <\$75K	\$75K+	18- 34	35- 54	55+	L.T. H.S.	Grad H.S.	Some P.S.	Grad P.S.
There should be a ban on clearcutting in Nova Scotia	27	24	23	32	27	28	27	27	33	28	26	29	23	24	29	30
There should be regulations that restrict where clearcutting can occur	68	71	72	63	68	68	69	70	61	66	70	66	72	70	68	66
There should be no regulations restricting clearcutting	4	2	6	4	4	3	2	3	5	3	3	4	4	4	2	3
Don't know/No answer	1	2	0	1	1	2	2	0	2	3	1	1	0	2	2	1
WEIGHTED SAMPLE SIZE (#)	400	163	62	174	190	210	146	78	122	94	164	141	55	88	50	203
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE SIZE (#)	400	144	62	194	180	220	150	77	115	70	169	161	61	89	51	195