



Steve Spicer's woodlot has been impacted by a Bark Beetle infestation. Damaged trees are easy identified as they turn brown and the value of timber is much less and a reason why a pulp mill in the province is required. (Spicer Photo)



A truckload of quality logs from Peter Spicer's woodlot is ready to make the trek to a sawmill. Ron Slocum, Glenholme provides most of the trucking service for Peter Spicer from the Cumberland County woodlots. (Spicer Photo)

The Friends of Northern Pulp

By Peter Spicer

(Editor's Note: Peter Spicer, who owns and operates the Cumberland County family owned business, Seven Gulches Forest Products, claims to be a small player in the forest sector, is a frequent contributor to The Shoreline Journal / South Cumberland News is a member of the group who are Friends of Northern Pulp has submitted the following article)

Who we are?

A group of people involved in the Forestry industry that are interested in supporting the attempt by Northern Pulp to transform their pulp mill in Abercrombie, Pictou County to one of the cleanest craft pulp mills in the world. I was very pleased to be asked to join this group. I am a very small player in the industry but have been quite active in supporting it for a number of years.

Our founding Steering Committee includes; Robin Wilber, Elmsdale Lumber; Peter Spicer, Seven Gulches Forest Products; Ryan Scott, Scott & Stewart Forestry; Andy MacGregor, MacGregor's Industrial Group and Earle Miller, Woodlot Owner and property manager.

Our purpose

We are trying to educate the public on what the company has planned to create a new mill that will meet or exceed environmental requirements. Their proposal would make this mill one of the cleanest in the world, if allowed to proceed.

The Friends of Northern Pulp want to ensure that the environmental approval process is a fair, non-political process, conducted by independent, appointed experts, in a scientific manner with clearly stated goals or targets for the company to meet. We feel that this process should not be carried out by a government department that may have biases or political influence, rather it should be carried out by a panel of independent experts in the field. This type of process would be fair for all and should appeal to politicians of all stripes as well, as whatever the outcome, a political party wouldn't wear it so to speak.

Schedule

The draft terms of reference document for the project were released on December 21 and is now open to public comment until January 31. The final document will give the company its guidance as to how to proceed with the environmental assessment. In the last go around, in 2019, the terms of

reference were very vague and the government continually asked for more information, basically making it nearly impossible for the company to succeed in getting an approval on their environmental assessment, either by design or by poor organization, on the part of the government. That won't be acceptable in this current process.

The document itself is over 50 pages long and doesn't give actual numbers for clear targets to be met so it leaves some vagueness in the process

Forest industry

Much of the media attention to the forest industry of late has been focused on the implementation of the Lahey report recommendations and of the plight of the mainland moose population that has been endangered for decades. While these are important and often misrepresented issues, the affect of the closure of the pulp mill is a much more serious problem for the economy of rural Nova Scotia and the forestry industry and the new project proposal to rebuild a more modern mill has not seen much coverage at all.

In my own harvests, I cut mainly mature trees and weaker, diseased, or damaged, trees to improve areas I am cutting and actually probably unwittingly follow most of the recommendations of the not yet implemented Lahey report, as do most forestry people, but without a pulp mill, I can not sell the poor quality or insect damaged trees I harvest and even the large mature trees I cut are now only being partially utilized as almost 50% of every individual tree, large or small would normally end up going to a pulp mill as mill waste (bark, chips, etc.) along with the parts that are too small to make dimensional lumber.

I have witnessed the real problems that the industry now faces with the closure of the mill. Contractors that employ a lot of people are really struggling. Some have downsized and some have gone out of business. Friends, neighbours, and people all over rural NS have lost income from their woodlots or lost jobs from the closure.

The pandemic created an artificial situation in the lumber market that caused world prices to rise, that allowed sawmills to operate, despite losing their market for mill residue. At the same time, they kept their prices paid to primary producers very high to share in this "wealth". But that

can't last for long and the dire predictions that were made prior to the closure of the mill will eventually play out without some form of intervention or the restart of the mill.

The much talked about transition fund of \$50 million has done very little to help those that were actually in the industry, and some of it has gone to groups that were supporting the closure of the mill. A large part of this political prop has been put in trust and it is hard to find out much about it.

The forest industry is always under intense scrutiny, particularly in Nova Scotia. The same activists that have been critical of the mill for decades seem oblivious to the fact that this group of owners inherited the problems associated with the mill when they purchased it back in 2011-12 and have constantly tried to improve it. The modernization plan they have put together has addressed the major complaints by opponents of the mill. Our group hopes that science will determine the outcome of this project.

The fact that the industry is entirely consumer driven seems to escape the largest critics. If the market wasn't there, businesses wouldn't produce the product. We have a chance here in Nova Scotia to supply our own products from the forest, under some of the toughest

environmental regulations on the planet, but the continual bombardment of incorrect information by the same half dozen activists, mostly from urban areas, makes it more and more difficult for the industry to compete with companies that produce the same products in countries with little or no consideration for the environment. To me that seems a bit hypocritical and not in the best interest of Nova Scotians.

We have an excellent website that has a lot of good, scientific information on what the company has in its plans to modernize the mill.

Interested parties can check out our contact info to see how you can support the project.

Contacts: Web site - <https://friendsofnwnc.ca/>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/FriendsofNewNP/ and Email contact: info@friendsofnwnc.ca
(see also photos on page 14)



A fine example of what a hardwood stand looks like after years of silviculture treatment. (Spicer Photo)



This photo shows a portion of Peter Spicer's managed softwood acreage in Cumberland County. (Spicer Photo)

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