

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a lush green forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and branches. The trees are tall and thin, with dense foliage. A large green circle is superimposed over the upper half of the image, containing the text.

Sustainable
Forest
Alliance Inc.
Semi-Annual
Newsletter

1st Edition July 23rd, 2026



Who We Are

The Sustainable Forest Alliance Inc. (SFA), formed in March 2021, is a non-profit co-operative of Prince Edward Island forest owners. The SFA has a desire to be the leader in ecologically sustainable and economically viable forest management on Island woodlots. The objective is to bring together ecologically minded forest owners across PEI to grow SFA membership over the long term.



Our Mission and Our Vision

The SFA is dedicated to the stewardship and economic growth of the Island's private and public forests. We are committed to the sustainability of forests and the forestry sector on Prince Edward Island.

We are a service-oriented organization with a mission to create markets and energy opportunities, and to provide resources, information and direct support to member forest owners. Our goal is to promote the implementation of sustainable forest management based on Forest Certification Council (FSC) certification and thereby improve the social, environmental and economic potential of members' woodlots. The SFA will implement a province-wide mission for Island forests while tailoring services to the needs and goals of individual woodlot owners.



In addition to working with the forest owner community, the SFA works with conservation organizations, the public, private enterprise and government to implement the vision of an Island-wide forest which provides economic, environmental and social benefits to owners and the public alike.



The mark of
responsible forestry



Meet Our Board

President

Jean-Paul Arsenault

Born in Wellington, Jean-Paul Arsenault enjoyed a varied career in both the public and private sectors, including twenty-one years with the provincial government and eight years with the federal government. His private sector experience included an eight-year association with a Charlottetown-based HR consulting firm. He spent eight years with the Forestry Division in the 1980s, the last five as Director. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from the University of New Brunswick and an MBA from Université Laval. Jean-Paul has been a member of the board of directors of the Winter River – Tracadie Bay Watershed

Association since 2013 and has a strong record of supporting environmental and land use planning causes. His interest in the SFA comes from a deep respect for those who choose to make a living in the forest industry and who see potential despite the many challenges they face. He believes the SFA can fill a need for woodlot owners who adhere to Forest Enhancement Program principles and can help the forest industry to grow in an environmentally responsible manner.

Jean-Paul has a deep love of the outdoors. Two of his favourite activities are trout fishing and cycling. He also has a great interest in Acadian history and genealogy. He and his wife, Elva, have travelled extensively. They have three grown children, and five grandchildren.





Treasurer

John Keuper

John's passion for the natural world and the environment meld with the need for societal benefit. He takes a multimodal approach to his woodlot, providing wood products while also providing recreational and wildlife opportunities. John believes in diversity of use in his woodlot while allowing a sustained harvest to meet his needs.

John graduated from the University of Vermont in 1981 with a degree in Plant Science with a major in ornamental plant science and a minor in soil science and woodlot management. Since 1989 he has lived in Wood Islands where he operates a garden centre. He has always been an active participant in the community where he raised his family, and he currently resides there with his wife, Anne. Contributions have included: serving as Head Coach for Canada Games three times; coaching Nordic sports; founding member of the Wood Islands and Area Development Corporation where he has served as Chair, Treasurer, and on many committees; and participation in the launch of several initiatives such as the high traffic lighthouse, Wood Islands Village, the Sea Glass Festival, the Ferry Festival, and the 70-mile Yard Sale.



Directors

Russell Compton

Russell Compton is a 5th generation PEI woodlot owner. His family have been involved in forestry on PEI since the 1850s, and operated lumber mills such as the wind-driven Compton Sawmill in Belle River run by his great-grandfather, grandfather and father over the years. His great-grandfather designed and ran the first portable sawmill in PEI until 1969.

Russ is an active community volunteer, participating on the Board of Directors of the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce, Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defense association, the Pinette Raceway and, most recently, the Sustainable Forest Alliance. He is also the founder of NorCan Marine Inc., having spent 40 years working internationally in the offshore energy industry.





Dan Dupont

Dan is a former president of the PEI Woodlot Owners Association. His vision for a stronger forest industry on PEI involves joint action by all PEI forest owners under a single cooperative structure; sustainable forest management of PEI's beautiful, temperate Acadian Forest; and open communication and cooperation with mill owners and others in the forest sector.



Dan received his forestry education at Sault College and Lakehead University, graduating in 1996. He was raised by very entrepreneurial parents and thus immersed in business and forestry from an early age. He brings over 30 years of operational experience in the forestry and energy industries throughout Canada and Scandinavia. His passion and understanding of forest dynamics and his desire for hands-on forestry has compelled him to help other forest owners in managing their forests sustainably, not only as long-term economic investments but especially as a significant contributor to a healthy ecosystem.

He came to PEI in 1998 from Longlac, Ontario, and resides in Montague with his wife, Wanda and twin daughters Gabby and Alexe.

Pat Binns

Pat is a founding board member of the SFA and in 2025 his deep commitment to forestry earned him the woodlot owner of the year award from the PEIWOA.

Born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, In 1971, he earned a Master of Arts in Community Development while working for the government of Alberta as a community development officer. In 1972, Binns began working for the Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council and met and married Carol MacMillan of Stratford.



Binns entered politics in 1978 when he was elected as a MLA for the district of 4th Kings. He was subsequently re-elected in 1979 and 1982, serving various portfolios as Minister of Industry (1983), Community Affairs (1980), Fisheries (1982–83), Environment (1979), Labour (1979), and Municipal Affairs (1979) under Premier James Lee.

Pat has a long history of public service, most notably being the 30th Premier of PEI for 11 years, during which time he was the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island.



Executive Director

Jesse Argent was on the board of the PEIWOA and then the SFA for many years before serving as the Executive Director of the organization. For the past several years, with guidance from the Board, he has kept the SFA running as its sole employee.

Jesse comes from the investment industry, with many years of experience in the field of mutual funds and customer service. He is also the owner of an agroforestry and high value timber nursery, Havenloft Tree Nursery in Charlottetown. Jesse's company has facilitated the planting of tens of thousands of specialty hardwoods including high value timber/agroforestry species such as heartnuts, black walnut, black cherry, hazelnut, hickory, edible chestnut and several types of fruit trees. These trees also fill his 10-acre plantation in Hazelbrook.

A father of three he has a passion for developing more diverse and sustainable forest options on PEI for the next generation.



Agroforestry plantation in Hazelbrook



Update on SFA Work in 2026

2026 has been a busy year for the SFA so far. Our AGM was a great success, with multiple speakers including the then newly appointed Minister of Land and Environment.

Spring held a great many accomplishments, including the completion of our beneficial management practices FSC standards for PEI. This document is available to the public upon request and will be on our website shortly. Completed after almost two years of work, this document marks the beginning of our next phase of FSC planning, that of generating economic benefits. With our first FSC harvest scheduled for early fall, we are excited to test our goal of generating higher economic returns through sustainable, ecological forestry.

We're working on a plan to improve returns to woodlot owners and contractors for biomass that meets FSC sourcing requirements. Our goal is to own gasifiers and to partner with private industry and both levels of government to help finance and operate them. Achieving such a model would be a world first, and it would serve as the gold standard for sustainable forestry on PEI.



Membership figures

- As of today, we are sitting around 98 members and 9,965 acres of land either under direct management or supporting our organization.
- We have already added over 500 acres of plans in process for 2026, with several hundred more coming down the pipeline.
- We have reached out to several contractors over the last year, gaining valuable insight to the challenges our industry faces, and with these contacts line up and coordinate SFA member work.
- We have approved almost 600 acres of sustainable harvesting through the FEP this summer and fall. This number does not include other silviculture work being done or scheduled, such as pre-commercial thinning and planting, which is also ongoing for members.





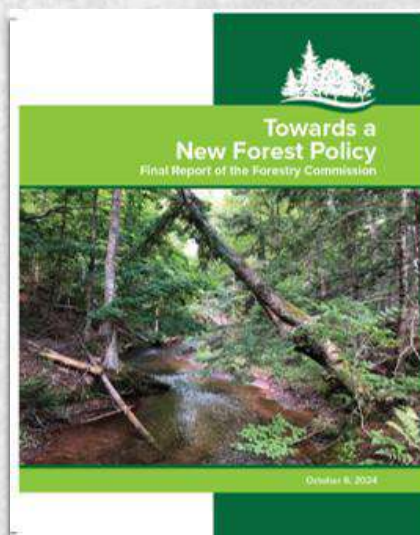
Update on Report of the Forestry Commission

By Jean-Paul Arsenault

In response to a request by Green Party member, Peter Bevan-Baker, during review of FY2026-2027 estimates of the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division, Minister Compton provided an update on work since the Commission's final report was presented to government in October 2024. The Minister responded to 11 of the 14 recommendations by stating only the following: "A renewed Forest Policy for PEI will be introduced following the updated Legislation". She indicated that updated legislation will be introduced in the fall 2026 session of the Legislature. No timeline was offered for the new Forest Policy.

Progress was reported on hardwood seedling production which will continue to expand, multi-year funding for the Woodlot Owners Association and the SFA, expanding the acquisition of public forest, a review of ECOPEI's license on 2,000 acres of public forest, a 2025 update of the Forest Standards Manual, and a renewed relationship with the forest industry. A recommendation regarding public forest was referred to the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat and one regarding government response to Fiona-like events was referred to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

The SFA will continue to advocate for actions identified in the Forestry Commission's report that will benefit its members.





The Current State of the Forest Industry (As Far As We Know...)

By Jean-Paul Arsenault

The FFWD conducted the Prince Edward Island Forestry Industry Capacity Report 2024, the first comprehensive sector profile since the late 1990s. One-on-one interviews were conducted with 61 individuals and company owners involved in the forest industry. The survey determined that:

1. 250 full-time, part-time, and seasonal workers are employed in consulting, planting, silviculture, harvesting, and sawmill operation.
2. Annual revenue from sales of forest products and services was estimated at \$36 million.
3. Only 10.8% of sawlogs and stud wood harvested are processed on-Island.

The FFWD acknowledges that the survey does not provide a complete picture and that the methodology could be improved in future sector profiles.

The forest industry is both a visible and an invisible sector of the province's economy. Much of what people see, clearcuts and the extensive damage caused by Dorian and Fiona, has a detrimental effect on our pastoral landscape and a corresponding impact on public opinion. Clearcuts have long been a lightning rod for public criticism of the forest industry and there is no indication that this will change.

The 2024 FFWD report acknowledges that the forest industry "is an essential component of sustainable forest management. It contributes to the success of the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP) and the goals of private woodlot owners, as well as being a significant contributor to the Island's economy."

The 2024 survey found that 13 individuals operate as consultants preparing FEP management plans, there are 14 planting and silviculture companies, 24 companies were listed as primarily harvesting contractors, and 10 sawmills process over 700 cubic meters of wood annually. The survey did not include private nurseries, biomass heat providers, or companies involved in trucking and residential tree maintenance. Across the Island, multi-generational forestry companies operate successfully, new companies are getting into the business, and recently arrived communities of Amish and Mennonites are becoming heavily involved in silviculture, harvesting, and sawmilling.

The SFA recognizes that the relationship between the forest industry and woodlot owners need to improve. There is a credibility gap. We believe we can play a role by acting as an intermediary, by matching the needs of our member woodlot owners with those of silviculture and harvesting contractors, sawmillers, and biomass users.



The total landed value of the oyster industry on Prince Edward Island in 2024 was approximately \$27 million. When factoring in processing, distribution, and broader economic spinoffs, its total economic value to the province was estimated to be around \$54 million. This would indicate that the values of the oyster industry and the forest industries were roughly equal in 2024. That the needs of the forest industry, including woodlot owners and forestry business owners, receive so little public attention tells us that more must be done. The SFA is uniquely positioned to fill this role, and it is within our mandate to do so.



Commercial thinning – public forest in Dromore – Working Forest PEI

Roadside Forest Problem

By Pat Binns

Every time I travel down a country road, I keep a watchful eye on woodlots adjacent to the highway. Occasionally I am impressed by how great the trees look. But, more often, I am not impressed at all. In fact, I am usually saddened by how bad these woodlots look. They are largely unmanaged, often overcrowded, and just plain ugly to observe. I suppose that Hurricane Fiona contributed to many downed trees, but in addition the trees are overcrowded, crooked and are not growing to their potential. I am sure that visitors, including tourists, are not impressed. The saddest part is that these woodlots will never be productive except for limited firewood or maybe wood chips. They are also fire traps as fires can move fast along the ground and firefighters lack access. We can surely do better.

By comparison, I think of woodlands that I have seen when watching old movies. Many of these movies were filmed in European forests. There are often trails or even roadways through these woodlands, and they are great looking, by comparison. The trees are remarkable in that they are spaced well apart. They are tall, stout and branches are well balanced around the tree. They look healthy. There is little competition on the forest floor. The trees all receive full sunlight and have access to rainwater without a lot of competition.



I keep asking myself, why couldn't our roadways and trails look like this? The answer is that they could. In fact, I think that they probably did, when the Island was being settled and wooden shipbuilding was a major industry. I remember reading that trees in the vicinity of Maclure's Dam at Murray River were as much as 3 ft. across at 100 ft. above ground. Such large healthy trees made great mast poles for wooden ships. Now we do well to find trees that are straight, tall and wide enough for a telephone pole.

Our new Minister of Environment agrees roadside trees management must change. Her own words are calling it "The roadside bonsai problem." This may be a bit of a misnomer as Bonsai trees are meticulously crafted and maintained, something our roadsides are not. An expensive, and disappointing hack job at a barbershop would be a better analogy.



Stretch of highway near Milton, one of many such examples (Via Google earth)

So, what's the answer? How do we change this? It can't be done overnight, but we can make a start. Here is an idea....

We create a competition among woodlot owners. Owners could live in the city or the country, if they owned a woodlot along a highway or road, anywhere on the Island. They would enter a competition and could be recognized for improvements made to their woodlot frontage. They would have to take pictures of the woodlot that would be improved and verify ownership. Once, the woodlot frontage was thinned out, leaving well spaced and hopefully straight trees, pictures would again be taken for comparison. The before and after pictures would be submitted to a Panel or Board who would confirm the improvements. Winners might be chosen from each County on an annual basis. They would receive a prize and receive a sign which could be displayed for achieving "Most Improved Woodlot Frontage - Kings County" or whichever County.

Such a project would require some coordinating with member groups such as the SFA. A possibility could be the PEI Rural Beautification Society, which has been recognizing rural improvement competitions for about 75 years. They could present prizes at their Annual Banquet, assuming they were interested. I think there is potential



to attract prize money. Many sponsors could likely be found from the business sector including chainsaw supply and repair companies, sawmillers, log haulers, and more. Competition would likely be catchy. Once a few started to improve their frontage, others would follow. I might just take some steps toward setting up such an Annual competition.

Improving woodlot frontages which have power and telephone lines has a special wrinkle. Safety must come first. Often the top of the trunk and high branches must be removed to prevent power, telephone and internet losses. These must have priority. For the most part what remains with these chopped trees do not look great. There must be better solutions which involve woodlot owners, Government, contractors and the utilities that own these lines. Your ideas are more than welcome.



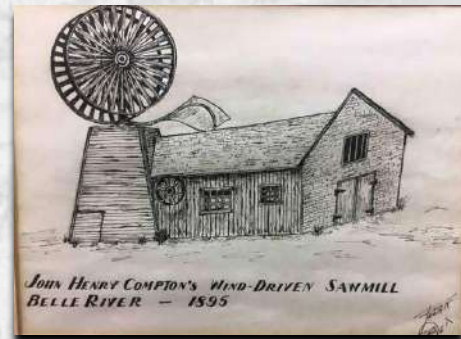
Dying trees, topped roadside in Vernon River (Via Google Earth)



Why I Support the SFA

By Russ Compton

For me, merely seeing, smelling, or being in the presence of the "woods," anywhere in the world, would, without fail, bring me home to the woods of Belle River and Culloden. The forests of Denmark, Norway, the UK, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, Venezuela, Brazil, Borneo, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia have all left their impressions on me. Yet wherever I have travelled, "the woods" have always brought me home to Belle River.



One memory, from 1991, remains especially vivid. With tribal elders, we travelled by traditional longboat, powered by an outboard motor, for more than four hours up the Kemena and Bantang Rivers to Labang, Sarawak, in East Malaysia. My purpose was to present offerings to an Iban tribal "Headman"—yes, in that context—and seek his blessing for drilling operations, offshore Bintulu.

Along the way, we passed a pepper plantation. The smell of acres of drying peppercorns remains with me to this day. The overwhelming sound of the jungle at night, along with their mandatory hospitality—food, drink, and smoke included—is indelible.

Experiences like this have taught me that forests are far more than collections of biomass. They are places of memory, culture, livelihood, shelter, food, spiritual energy, tribal identity, and even war. They are human places that connect generations and nations. That is what I now understand about my own father and grandfather.

My father may never have used the word "sustainable," but he lived by the principles of sustainability almost every day.

Dad understood the woods. He selectively harvested trees for houses, barns, boats, and heat—tree by suitable tree, choosing the right tree, at the right stage of its life, from the right woodlot, often purchased decades earlier.

He built only the necessary roads and harvested only what was required.

The mature stand.

I vividly remember walking through the woods with Dad in winter as he selected the exact hardwood for the next keel, stem, horn timber, and knees. He knew where to find the right hemlock for bilge stringers, floor joists, and the worm shoe. He understood the value of heavy hemlock for ballast, strength, and comfort.



He knew which softwood was right for planking. Eventually suitable logs were obtained only off-island! The lumber was sawn, carefully piled, and air-dried. It was covered correctly with slabs and stored on the dry side of the barn for at least one year—and never more than two—before the boat was built. Nothing was wasted, everything had a purpose.

Dad also built the dam on the Belle River and installed his own DC hydroelectric generator, providing electricity for our house and lighting for the barns during the wartime 1940s. Long before "renewable energy" and "sustainability" became common terms, our family was living those principles.

I worked at the mill every summer. Dad would advise people who brought him logs about what to harvest, when to harvest it, and how to properly "yard and age" the logs.

I often heard him tell us boys and his customers:

"Look after your woodland. You and your kids will need the trees—for a house or an outbuilding someday."



Those words have stayed with me.

My grandfather and father also understood the value of using what the land provided. For more than 100 years, if there was a mill in our family or nearby, our family heated our home, our water, the pumphouse, and the shops with sawdust. Our kitchen stove and wood furnace were modified to burn both wood and sawdust. Dad selectively harvested the "good stuff" from his portable mill, while the sawdust was collected and brought home to fuel our lives. It was hard work.

Sawdust was hauled home load by load and shovel by shovel. Hoppers were filled bucket by bucket. Before bed, there were chores: Fill the sawdust hopper. Put the correct amount of hardwood into the furnace. Split enough wood for the next day. Adjust the drafts according to the weather. Fill another ten five-gallon buckets. Lug them to the porch, then do it all again the next day.

Those chores taught us something that I fear is increasingly lost: that energy has value, resources have value, and the forest is not an endless supply of something to be consumed.

Later, after Dad sold his portable mill to Winston Hancock and began building boats, we sourced the "good stuff" from the mills of Charlie Cook, Winston, and perhaps even Moore's in Murray River. Charlie and Winston heated their homes with sawdust too.

When my brother and I eventually moved West to work in the oil industry—God forbid! —Dad slowly and reluctantly accepted some modern conveniences.

Mom insisted.



A homemade electric sawdust lift was installed and is still there and working today. It moved four buckets of sawdust at a time from the basement to the porch. A converted grain auger moved sawdust into the buckets. The same lift was used for vegetables, potatoes, preserves, and other supplies moving to and from the "cold room"—a converted rainwater cistern with a hand pump.

Finally, in his eighties, Dad gave in and installed an oil burner on the old wood furnace. Even then, he added firebricks and increased the water-storage capacity so the system could retain heat overnight.

The only other oil Dad would willingly burn was to steam and soften the ribs of his boats, using juniper selectively harvested from his own woodlots in Melville and Culloden. Looking back, I realize that my father was practicing a form of forestry and resource management that we now call "sustainable."

He was not following a policy.

He was not responding to a government program.

He was not using the latest terminology.

He was simply following a principle passed down through generations:

Take what you need. Use it wisely. Waste nothing. Protect the woodland, and leave enough for those who come after you.

That is why I support the SFA. I support the SFA because I believe our forests are more than an economic resource. They are part of who we are. They provide timber for our homes, boats, barns, and communities. They provide fuel and energy. They provide livelihoods. They provide habitat and biodiversity. They store carbon. They shape our landscapes. And they carry the memories of generations. My father's generation understood that you could harvest from the forest without destroying it. You could make a living from the woods while respecting the woods. You could take from the land while honouring the responsibility to care for it. That knowledge should not be lost.

The SFA, to me, represents that connection between the forest and the people who depend upon it. It represents responsible stewardship, practical knowledge, sustainable use, and respect for the land, its history, and its future. My father may never have used the word "sustainable."

But he lived it.

And I believe the best way to honour that legacy is to make sure that the woods of Belle River, Culloden, and PEI remain healthy, productive, and valued—not only for us, but for our children, our grandchildren, and generations yet to come.

That is why I support the SFA.

Look after the woodland; the woodland will look after you.



Market Report

As most people reading this will undoubtedly already know, our local and export timber markets are in some of the worst shape they've been in years. Trade wars, hurricanes, pulp and sawmill closures, inconsistent ferries, even not so simple equipment failure, have led to extraordinary losses in our sector.

Luckily our local firewood market is still seemingly going strong, and some contractors can even move biomass and stud wood. Though, they are being squeezed harder than ever before to make even the smallest profits. At this point most woodlot owners are making little if any on biomass, and stricter guidelines from the Irvings have led to more stud wood being left on the ground. Here are some of the current market prices: (*these are averages, larger diameter logs will be worth more and same with the opposite)



Average Prices for roundwood

At the gate prices Irving is paying \$120-ton (240 cord) delivered

Sawlogs- 16ft logs \$250 SW cord and 8ft logs (8inch small end) \$200 cord

Firewood

\$250 SW. \$275 HW blocked and split (\$300 delivered)

While we work closely with the Forest Fish and Wildlife Division, we realize that they are struggling with shrinking budgets and FEP dollars. Continued contractor engagement for FEP work overseen by the SFA will require increased incentives or product subsidies to match stricter requirements for FSC work. Since the FEP cannot survive without continued industry support, the issue of contractor profitability must be addressed.

For the SFA's part, we are doing all we can to get member work done, as we do have several hundred hectares planned for this year. But it is slow process as most contractors must chase the most lucrative woodlots that they can, just to keep food on the table and their gear payments up to date.

Our \$20 a ton product subsidy for FSC certified biomass going into SFA owned gasifiers, is a cutting-edge standard that would help alleviate a lot of the issues facing sustainable harvesting and ecological management. We have been pushing for several years now for new gasifiers to be built, using our FSC certification and partnership with the FEP to promote the gold standard in sustainability.

Only time will tell if we can make sustainable, ecological and economical forestry the new norm.



Final Thoughts

We would like to thank our members, contractors, consultants, sector NGO's and general supporters, for all their hard work to get us to this point, and we would like to thank you for reading our inaugural newsletter!

Special thanks to our partners in the Department of Land and Environment, FSC Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Nova Scotia Association for Woodland Certification, The Division of Forest Fish and Wildlife and The Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy for their continued support.

It is now more important than ever to show the need for more government and public support for our woodlots and our forest industry. Call your MP/MLA and let them know how important our forests are to you. We must strike while the iron is hot, or risk seeing our landscape-level forests fade to small, disjointed blocks that have little commercial or wildlife habitat value. Even NAPA designation does not mean protected in perpetuity, as we have seen happen before. The SFA believes we can achieve a better balance.

We look forward to becoming a much larger voice for sustainable, ecological and economic forestry on PEI and the trust we have been given to do this. From all our board and employees:



Thank you!

See you in the trees,

Interested in joining the SFA? Need more information? Visit us at www.Peiforests.ca or email us as Info@peiforests.ca for more information!