

CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Fall 2018

# ecoalert

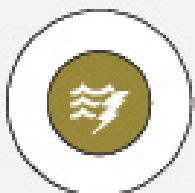


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editorial

BY LOIS CORBETT

## Cast a ballot for the environment this fall

There is something different about this provincial election campaign, isn't there?

In conversations on the street, around dinner tables, at community events, and in the news, we're hearing a lot more about the environment this election, across a broad scope of issues.

People are fed up with herbicide spraying and large-scale clear-cutting in our Crown forest, and review of how government manages our Crown lands is long overdue. New Brunswickers want more protections — enshrined in law — for our drinking water, our rivers, streams, wetlands and magnificent coastal waters from the Bay of Fundy to the Northumberland Strait. We want energy efficiency and renewables, not fracking and risky mines. We want sustainability, not plastic waste. And New Brunswickers want meaningful action on climate change to ensure their communities and families remain healthy and safe in the face of more extreme weather, storms, and flooding.

That's why it really is up to us and other provincial and community groups clear across the province to take the environment straight to the candidates.

In this issue you'll find articles about New Brunswickers who are working to make a difference in their communities, from installing solar panels, organizing to end plastic pollution, to protecting our Bay of Fundy. We break down pressing issues facing our environment today, and arm you with the right questions to ask those asking for your vote this September.

Thank you for doing your part to ensure our province takes meaningful action on environmental protection, and seizes the abundant opportunities afforded through a clean energy economy and investments in energy efficiency and renewable power. Please share this EcoAlert with your family and friends!

You'll find more great resources on our website, [conservationcouncil.ca](http://conservationcouncil.ca), and on our [Facebook page](#).

**Thank you, again, for all that you do.**

Lois



Lois Corbett is the Executive Director of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick.

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## Celebrating our CCNB members

We'd like to give a hearty shout out to three talented volunteers, supporters, and occasional guest bloggers — whom were all recently nominated as finalists in the magazine category for the prestigious 2017 Atlantic Journalism Awards. Kudos to Deborah Carr for her *Saltscapes* article "*The Lightkeeper's Daughters*," the story of a family of lightkeepers on Grindstone Island in the Bay of Fundy, and to Tom Cheney and Nick Hawkins for their article "*Sons of the River*" which appeared in *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, about life and fishing on the mighty Miramichi River.

## A coal-free Canada means:

Cleaner air

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AND CLIMATE  
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\*Environment and Climate Change Canada calculated estimates between 2019-2055  
\*Environment and Climate Change Canada's estimate of equivalent emissions reductions in 2030.



## Moving toward a coal-free Canada

The writing is on the wall. Coal is out and renewables are in. That's why our Executive Director, Lois Corbett, is excited to be working with the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, Catherine McKenna, as the co-chair of the Just Transition Task Force for coal workers and communities. Created in response to the federal government's commitment to phase-out coal-fired electricity by 2030, the task force is currently working with Minister McKenna to develop recommendations that ensure a fair transition for workers and communities, like those in northern New Brunswick, who are directly impacted by the accelerated phase-out of coal-fired electricity in Canada.





Nick Hawkins

## Restoring the Bay of Fundy

Canada's Coastal Restoration Fund made waves along New Brunswick coasts this summer. The federal government announced in July that the Coastal Restoration Fund will provide the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) Nation with \$1,656,000 over the next five years for the restoration and protection of habitats throughout the Peskotomuhkati territory ranging from the the Lepreau to the Skutik (St. Croix) rivers. Our Fundy Baykeeper, Matt Abbott, is excited and honoured to be assisting the Peskotomuhkati Nation in managing this collaborative project.



## More than 1,000 voices speaking for the Nashwaak River

We asked, you answered — in droves! This spring, your Conservation Council, in partnership with the Nashwaak Watershed Association, made it easy to speak up to help protect the pristine Nashwaak Watershed from the controversial Sisson Mine proposal. More than 1,000 New Brunswickers participated in our letter-writing campaign to let the federal government know that the Nashwaak River and its tributaries are too precious to risk for a risky, short-term mining project. Thank you to everyone who spoke up for our rivers!



## Passport to a low carbon future

Our first-ever **Passport to a Low Carbon Future EcoHomes Tour** this summer was a fabulous success! Dozens of New Brunswickers were inspired during the self-guided tour of New Brunswick homes and public buildings boasting the latest clean energy technology and energy-efficient designs. Find photos from the tour and descriptions of the homes on our website, and stay tuned for the return of this popular event!





## Election 2018

Ask candidates in your riding...

Will you commit to aggressive investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy that will create good-paying jobs for tradespeople in New Brunswick?



# Hard hats and work boots: energy efficiency could create 25,000+ jobs in New Brunswick

**T**he transition to an energy-efficient economy would create more than 25,000 full-time jobs in New Brunswick and increase the provincial GDP by \$4.9 billion over the next 13 years, according to a new study from Dunsky Energy Consulting.

The study, *The Economic Impact of Improved Energy Efficiency in Canada*, calculates the carbon pollution we could reduce and how many jobs we could create by following the federal government's *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (PCF)*.

In total, the study determined that investments in energy efficiency would create 25,879 jobs in New Brunswick between 2017-2030. That breaks down to approximately 6,696 new jobs in the electricity sector, 3,365 in natural gas, and 15,715 in refined petroleum products.

The overall impact for homeowners and businesses? More money in your pocket. The study estimates \$1.5 billion in savings on commercial and industrial energy bills over the study period (2017-2030) in New Brunswick, while households would save approximately \$1,482, or \$147 per year.

That's under a scenario where only measures in the PCF are followed. The PCF plans to use tools such as new building codes, new standards for heating equipment and other appliances, and pricing carbon pollution, among other measures, to help homes, businesses and industries transition to more efficient energy management systems.

In a second scenario in the study, which looked at the impact of more ambitious actions and investments than just the PCF alone, Dunsky Energy Consulting determined New Brunswick could create more

than 48,000 new jobs over the study period.

For Canada as a whole, the study determined that energy efficiency actions outlined in the PCF would add approximately 1,655,965 new jobs across the country over the next 13 years.

Although the transition to energy efficiency requires a significant up-front investment, the study determined that the Canadian economy would see a net increase of \$356 billion from 2017-2030.

The study authors conclude that following the energy efficiency actions laid out in the PCF could be a key contributor to helping us reach Canada's 2030 emissions target, expecting a calculated decrease in carbon pollution of 52 million tonnes by 2030, while adding good, new jobs in the growing renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors from coast to coast to coast.

By Hannah Moore





## Election 2018

Ask candidates in your riding...

Will you commit to protecting at least 10 per cent of land and water in New Brunswick by 2020, including increases to buffer zones along our rivers and streams, and protecting drinking water, watersheds and wetlands in our Crown forest?

# Resilience by nature

Hitting New Brunswick's land and water protection goals

New Brunswickers can all agree that we live in a beautiful province, full of towering trees and magnificent coastal views. Many who live here feel deeply rooted to nature, as it connects us to our families, communities and identities, and sustains the livelihoods of thousands in our working economy.

So why is it that New Brunswick is the worst province in Canada when it comes to protecting our natural landscapes?

A mere 4.6 per cent of New Brunswick is protected right now. That leaves more than 95 per cent of our land, waters and ocean unprotected, leaving vital ecosystems vulnerable to development, climate change and pollution. (Although Prince Edward Island only protects 3.19 per cent, the island is an anomaly, since 90 per cent of land is privately owned.)

Roberta Clowater, executive



director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's New Brunswick Chapter, says our province lacks the right policies to protect the spaces we love and depend upon.

CPAWS, and partner organizations like your Conservation Council, are working to change that.

This summer, CPAWS released its Annual Parks Report, providing a roadmap for federal, provincial and Indigenous governments to work together to achieve Canada's international commitment

to protect 17 per cent of our landscape by 2020.

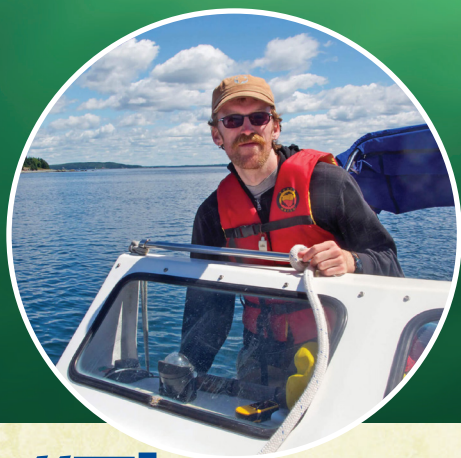
The report, *What's Next: Parks and Protected Areas to 2020 and Beyond*, highlights New Brunswick's bottom-of-the-pack rankings for land protection, and offers recommendations for how our province can contribute to Canada's conservation goal.

"Protecting land and water is even more important now in this age of climate change," Clowater told the Conservation Council. "Protected areas provide us with clean air and fresh water, they help protect our communities from climate change impacts like floods and droughts, and they give us much-needed connections to nature — we need to get this right."

CPAWS' report recommends immediate actions New Brunswick can take to protect up to 10 per cent of the province.

*Continued on page 7*





**Election  
2018**

*Ask candidates in your riding...*

**Will you commit to cracking down on pesticide use that threatens wild fish and critical fisheries, such as lobster and scallop, in the Bay of Fundy?**

# “They put their own interests well above their neighbours”

Fundy Baykeeper, Environment Commissioner say governments need to *up their game* on aquaculture oversight

Those were among the key findings of Auditor General Kim MacPherson’s report on the province’s silviculture program, which she presented to MLAs in the legislature on Tuesday, June 23.

Just weeks after Canada’s top environmental watchdog called for big improvements to government regulation and enforcement of aquaculture companies, a court case involving illegal pesticide use at a New Brunswick fish farm brought her concerns straight to home.

In April, Julie Gelfand, Canada’s Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, released a damning report



blasting government for failing to manage the risks associated with salmon aquaculture in Canada, and particularly in Atlantic Canada.

Then, just three weeks later, a court case put a local spotlight on Gelfand’s findings, as New Brunswick-based Northern Harvest

Sea Farms pled guilty in provincial court to the illegal use of pesticides in an effort to stop a sea lice outbreak at one of its Grand Manan fish farms last summer.

“I wish I was surprised,” our Fundy Baykeeper, Matt Abbott, told reporters when asked about the case. “But this case, like the others before it in New Brunswick, demonstrate that far too often, aquaculture companies put their own interests well above their neighbours.

“It reinforces our Environment Commissioner’s findings that the fish farm industry in Atlantic Canada is severely lacking effective regulation and enforcement.”



"I suggest that the department is at risk of being seen to be promoting aquaculture over the protection of wild fish."

Julie Gelfand, Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development



The first low-hanging fruit is expanding protection in the Restigouche watershed, home to one of Eastern Canada's most famous rivers for fishing Atlantic salmon and supporting a variety of other important and iconic species, from moose to the Canada lynx.

The report says expanding protection from its current level at 29,000 hectares to 60,000 hectares would help safeguard one of New Brunswick's most beloved natural treasures and the economic benefits it provides.

The report also recommends upgrading existing management measures in New Brunswick to full protected area status. This would protect areas including peatlands, drinking water watersheds on Crown land, drinking water watersheds owned by municipalities, old growth forest communities and habitats, coastal areas, and provincially-significant wetlands.

"New Brunswickers know climate change is here, happening now, in our communities," said Lois Corbett, executive director of the Conservation Council. "And we know that protecting our land and water is one of the best ways we can ensure the health and safety of our communities in a changing climate."

"CPAWS has given governments, from coast to coast to coast, a smart, science-based pathway to meet this challenge and protect the spaces we love and so desperately need."

By Hannah Moore



In mid May, Northern Harvest Sea Farms was fined \$12,000 for violating New Brunswick's *Pesticides Control Act* — a sum frustrated fishers in the region, some of whose lobster catch was put at risk by the pesticide use, called "a slap on the wrist" and "the cost of doing business."

It's the second time in recent years that a New Brunswick aquaculture company admitted to deliberately using an illegal pesticide in the Bay of Fundy. Kelly Cove Salmon, a subsidiary of Cooke Aquaculture, which operates the majority of the roughly 100 open net-pen fish farm sites in the Bay of Fundy, **was charged under the Fisheries Act in 2011** for the illegal use of cypermethrin that killed hundreds of lobsters in nearby traps and holding areas. The company was required to pay \$500,000 in fines and payments, the largest penalty ever levied under the *Fisheries Act* in New Brunswick and among the largest ever levied in Canada.

"It makes me seriously worried," Gelfand said of the "significant

deficiencies" her audit revealed around oversight and enforcement in Atlantic Canada.

Her key findings concluded that: there is a clear lack of enforcement of regulations in Atlantic Canada, where no new enforcement officers have been hired since 2015; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans isn't doing enough to monitor diseases or understand the effect salmon farming has on the health of wild fish; the department isn't doing enough to confirm the accuracy of drug and pesticide reports submitted by aquaculture companies; and there is a clear lack of national standards for nets and anchoring equipment, something critically important in Atlantic Canada where escapes of farmed salmon and interbreeding with declining wild salmon populations happens more frequently.

"I suggest that the department is at risk of being seen to be promoting aquaculture over the protection of wild fish," Gelfand said.





# New Brunswick is blowing an opportunity we can't afford to blow

By Rick Doucet, President, New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners

**W**hen there is an injustice, at first it is usually just those who are directly impacted who complain. And those responsible for it can often just ignore those complaints. But then when word spreads of just how bad it is, others join in. Even if they are only impacted indirectly, they see unfairness for what it is, and step up to say whatever it is isn't right, and should not be allowed to continue. And when those voices get loud enough, that's when change happens.

That seems to be the point we have gotten to now in regards to how Crown land in New Brunswick has been mismanaged by successive governments. Here's a resource that is abundant in our province, that should be a major contributor to our provincial economy, but rather it may actually be costing us money.

The Auditor General has raised this point, and a review by the CIBC World Markets suggests that because of government mismanaging our Crown lands we

CIBC World Markets suggests that because of government mismanagement of Crown lands we are losing out on **100 million** every year.

are losing out on a whopping \$100 Million every year.

The problem stems from changes various governments made to the *Crown Lands and Forests Act* after it was adopted in 1980. Changes, mainly by the McKenna Liberals and Alward Conservatives combined that gave forestry companies more and more access to Crown land at less than market value, essentially shortchanging all New Brunswick taxpayers and putting New Brunswick woodlot owners at a competitive disadvantage when they wanted to sell their wood at fair market value.

From people sharing their opinions on the federation's website to comments we hear more and more from average New Brunswickers, to no less than four former Ministers of Natural Resources, there is a growing chorus who agree some serious changes are needed.

## An informed opinion on the problem and the solution

One of those is former Natural Resources Minister Jeannot Volpe. In an interview that was the basis of a segment of Charles Theriault's excellent video series *Is Our Forest Really Ours*, Volpe outlined what he sees as the problem and what we need to do. And he makes some points and questions that are well worth considering. Among them:

- Crown land belongs to all New Brunswickers, and shouldn't just benefit a few forestry companies.
- Communities who depend on forestry should have more say in how Crown lands are managed
- Crown forests should be managed for diversity, and the wood for value, not just volume.

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© Nick Hawkins/CCNB

Single species plantations should not be allowed, because forests are more than just trees.

- The people who manage our Crown land should not be the same people who make money off processing the wood.

Volpe says we need to ask ourselves some basic questions, and the most basic of all is this: **Are Crown Lands in New Brunswick being managed in the best interests of all New Brunswickers, or the best interests of just a few New Brunswickers?** He has others:

1. Is the *Crown Lands and Forests Act* that was developed and brought in more than 30 years ago still the best option?
2. Are rural communities receiving the benefits they should from Crown lands in their areas?
3. How many more forest-related jobs need to be lost in communities that rely on the forestry sector before we look at other options?

4. What is stopping government from having an open and transparent discussion on how our Crown lands are being managed, and looking at other options, if any, that could bring greater benefit to all the people of the province?

5. Is it normal for New Brunswick to subsidize forestry companies to take our Crown wood for a diminishing number of jobs, when other jurisdictions are seeing jobs and collecting revenue from their Crown land?

Some might wonder why Volpe is saying all of this now, rather than making changes when he was Minister. He says he tried, but failed. He says the forest industry lobby is just too strong. He says the way to counter this is for New Brunswickers to stand up and demand changes. He says we have to take back control of what belongs to us.


Volpe feels people are starting to understand what is going on here and they don't like it.

We agree. Judging from responses to the various items we have produced recently on our website, and from many of the people we speak with both who are in the forestry sector and those only involved in the sense they are taxpayers, too, there is a general and growing understanding that one of the biggest reasons why we are an economic basket case is because we don't have control over the strongest part of our economy, our Crown forests.

As we inch closer to a provincial election, we encourage all of you to ask those who will be searching out your vote, exactly what they plan to do about our Crown land situation. Our hope is that if enough people let it be known that the status quo isn't acceptable, then perhaps the various parties will start seriously addressing this and make it part of their election platform.

**So speak up. We all, you included, deserve better.**





Saint John solar panel project energizes youth for renewable energy future

## “Their excitement about solar energy grew the more they learned”

Things are heating up at Saint John’s Social Enterprise Hub – it is now home to the largest solar project in the city. The 60-panel installation is expected to prevent about 15.6 tonnes of carbon pollution from entering the atmosphere each year by powering the Hub with solar power.

But the project has energized a lot more than just a building.

Students from the Saint John Learning Exchange GOALS program, and Outflow’s Catapult Construction, got some valuable and inspiration-sparking hands-on work experience through the project. By joining forces with NexGen Energy, they have been learning the basics of solar panels in the classroom, and assisting with the panel installation on the roof of the Hub.

“The youth were able to work directly alongside NexGen staff throughout the installation of the solar panels,” said GOALS program teacher, Kate Johnston.

“Their excitement about the potential for solar energy grew the more they learned.”

The project exposes youth to potential career paths that will likely be an asset in the future – as we continue to see the cost of renewable energy drop. Now completed, the project will also serve as a learning tool for others in the community.

Johnston said that several youth continued working with NexGen each day even after the set hours were completed – they didn’t want to miss out on any of the progress!

“Many of the youth expressed a desire to install solar panels on

their future homes as a result of this project. The work has also inspired some participants to continue studying in order to pursue a future career in the renewable energy realm,” she told the Conservation Council.

Seth Asimakos, co-founder of the Learning Exchange, calls the solar project a “triple bottom line.” Not only has it provided invaluable on-the-job experience for youth, but it’s also going to be great for the hub’s finances, and for the environment.

“For us, really, the Hub is about innovation, taking risks, kind of moving, nudging the ball ahead a little bit,” Asimakos said in an interview with the Conservation Council.

He also said that they will be building a viewing deck with an interpretation plaque which explains how solar power works and how much energy is produced by each panel every year.

Real-time solar production and energy production will also be available on the [Hub’s website](#). It will show a history of solar production against weather patterns, and provide open data for further research on solar energy.

“I think the project is showing how we can partner, and that this is what we need to do in order to scale impact.”

Asimakos believes that although this is currently the biggest solar installation in Saint John, he doesn’t imagine it will stay the largest for very long. He hopes that by opening up the installation to the public, it will inspire local home and business owners to consider the benefits of solar power and renewable energy.

*By Hannah Moore*





**Election 2018**

Ask candidates in your riding...

Will you protect our ocean, parks, rivers and lakes by committing to banning single-use plastic bags in New Brunswick?

## N.B. youth pushing for plastic bag ban

Lavallee Forbes, right, and Tristan Workman are part of a group of Fredericton youth petitioning for a ban on plastic bags in New Brunswick.

During a four-month exchange in Morocco, Africa, 21-year-old Lavallee Forbes was amazed by the vibrant markets flowing through the city streets.

The colourful shops offered a treasure trove of local goods and wares — but one type of item was conspicuously absent: plastic bags.

The North African country banned the production, import, sale and distribution of plastic bags in 2016.

Witnessing the success of the forward-thinking move first hand left Forbes, a Fredericton native studying at Queen’s University in Ontario, inspired.

“Spending four months living in a country that had successfully banned plastic bags showed me just how easy plastic bag bans are to implement, and left me

wondering why I couldn’t do the same back home,” she told the Conservation Council in a recent interview.

So, she is doing something about it.

**“Remembering to bring a bag to the store is as simple as remembering to bring your car keys to your car,” says petition founder, Lavallee Forbes.**

Forbes and her friends Rachèle Phinney, Rhys Briden, Tristan Workman, and Lucas Gutiérrez-Robert have launched a petition to ban plastic bags in New Brunswick. They’ve formed a group (**Ban Plastic Bags NB** - find them on social media) and have been going door-to-door collecting signatures in several N.B. communities.

She said merchants in Morocco replaced their stocks of plastic bags for small, thin fabric bags that are given for free to customers who don’t have reusable bags. People she spoke with during her exchange

said it didn’t take long for them to get used to the new law.

“I think some people are worried that a plastic bag ban will inconvenience them. But once you actually live in a place where

plastic bags are banned, you realize how little these bans affect your day-to-day life. Remembering to bring a bag

to the store is as simple as remembering to bring your car keys to your car,” Forbes said.

The group has collected more than 500 signatures in just a few weeks. Copies of the petition are posted at businesses in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, Oromocto and Stanley. The group plans to present the petition to the incoming provincial government following this September’s election.

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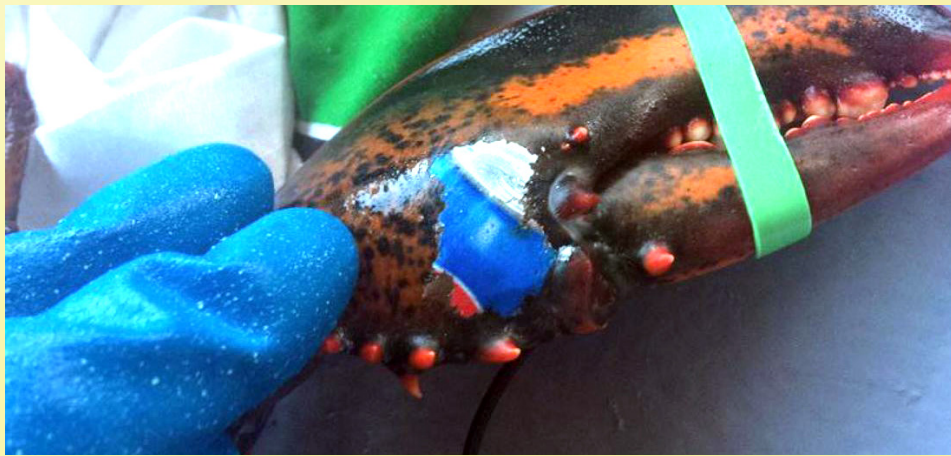




Spring Peeper Photo: Nick Hawkins

Help make a difference.

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\$15 Low income, senior, student  \$30 Individual

\$40 Family  \$55 Association

Are you a new member?  Y  N

I would like automatic membership renewal  Y  N

**I want to make a single gift of:**

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As a member, you'll receive:

- A subscription to *ecoalert* magazine
- *EcoNews*, our electronic newsletter
- Great member-only discounts

She said their **Facebook** page and an **Instagram** account are helping spread the word and have already received support from Facebook users across the world, including India and the United States. She's even had some classmates in Ontario reach out asking if they could launch a similar effort when she returns to Kingston for school this fall.

In an **information sheet**, the group explains how plastic bag bans have been successfully adopted in countries including Morocco, Kenya, Mauritania and Eritrea. They also note that China, Denmark, Germany, England and France have begun the process of discouraging the use of plastic bags.

In January, Montreal became the first Canadian city to implement a city-wide ban on plastic bags, and on July 1, Victoria, B.C. followed suit.

Momentum is growing closer to home, too. A poll released in March from Halifax-based Corporate Research Associates showed more than **70 per cent of people living in Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton support a plastic bag ban**. Moncton city council is considering a ban, while more and more businesses and restaurants across the province are turning away from single-use plastics such as straws.

A case involving plastic pollution in the Bay of Fundy made international headlines last fall when a lobster

caught off Grand Manan had been imprinted with a Pepsi can logo on its claw.

Speaking to reporters as far away as the BBC, our Fundy Baykeeper, Matt Abbott, said the 'Pepsi Lobster' shows just how widespread the issue of plastic pollution in our oceans is.

"We think of garbage floating around on top of the water and landing on beaches, but this case shows that its all through the water column and there's really no parts of the ocean that are free from the risk of damage from garbage and plastics," Abbott said, noting plastic is particularly harmful because it breaks down into microscopic pieces that stay in the water and are often mistook as food by ocean dwellers.

Abbott commended Forbes and her friends for raising the issue at home and working for legislative changes to fix it.

"We need leadership, from young people right up to our elected representatives, to tackle this problem together," he said. "We can make smarter choices, make smarter laws, and demand that companies make common sense choices around packaging for their products. We got on just fine before we had such reliance on plastic packaging, and I think we can find alternatives to it again."

*By Hannah Moore*





## Election 2018

*Ask candidates in your riding...*

If elected, what will you do to ensure the full implementation of the water protection strategy?

How does your party plan to develop and implement a new watershed protection act by 2020?



# Clean water should be top priority

*By Hannah Moore and Kaleigh Holder*

**F**looding, sewage overflow, blue-green algae and poor water quality have become all-too familiar issues in New Brunswick, and they are raising concern about the health of the province's bays, rivers and streams.

New Brunswick urgently needs watershed protection legislation now, more than ever.

## Issues in the St. John River and Northumberland Strait watersheds

New Brunswick is made up of 13 major watersheds, meaning the area that drains all the rivers, streams and wetlands. **About 40 per cent of New Brunswick's population gets their water supply from surface watersheds.**

Last spring, nightmares became reality when record-high flooding hit the St. John River, New Brunswick's largest watershed. The

historic flood left New Brunswick in a state of disarray – it devastated thousands of properties from Fredericton to Saint John, **causing upwards of \$80 million in damages.** And it did more than just that. The flooding compromised sewage systems and oil storage tanks, causing overflow into the St. John River, and contaminating the water.

Unfortunately, the 2018 flood wasn't the only sewage overflow the river has seen lately. A series of hot days in August with short, intense thunderstorms, caused a sewage treatment plant in Aroostook, Maine, to lose power and **release untreated sewage** into the upper reaches of the St. John River.

As if flooding and sewage leaks weren't enough, blooms of blue-green algae also became a threat to New Brunswick's watersheds in recent years. High temperatures

fed the toxic bacteria, helping it grow rapidly in rivers and lakes across the province. Blue-green algae is naturally occurring, but excess amounts of nutrients like phosphorus make it worse. Three dogs suddenly died after playing in the St. John River this summer and **blue-green algae was found to be the culprit.**

The Northumberland Strait, home to New Brunswick's iconic Parlee Beach, has also had its fair share of water quality issues. During the summer of 2016, Parlee Beach experienced poor water quality which left the water unsafe to swim in for a total of 10 days. In 2017, the provincial and federal governments invested \$3 million to fix the decades-old sewage system and the provincial government now follows Health Canada's guidelines for recreational water quality at Parlee, and eight other provincial park beaches.

*Continued on page 14...*





“Introducing a new water protection act over the next two years – legislation that will both make watershed protection action plans mandatory and legally enforceable and set science-based water quality standards – is a big move, and a smart one,”

Lois Corbett, CCNB executive director

This summer, there have been 21 no-swimming advisories in place – 11 because results failed to meet Health Canada’s guidelines for *E. coli* and/or *enterococci*. Business owners are struggling due to the low tourism numbers and citizens feel more work is needed to restore water quality and safeguard Parlee Beach from future contamination.

### Need for stronger laws and enforcement

Protecting our water is quickly becoming a major priority for New Brunswickers, as we increasingly feel the forces of climate change first hand. **A survey conducted by the Conservation Council found that 70% of New Brunswickers believe that governments are mismanaging fresh water supplies.**

In many cases, the province’s current water regulations do not have the strength they need to be enforceable, nor do they provide the appropriate resources for enforcement.

For example, the Water Classification Regulation was intended to provide a framework for watershed management in New Brunswick, but was never implemented due to **“deficiencies within the regulation that prevented its use”**.

Following the flood of 2018, CBC reported that watercourse and wetland alteration (WAWA) permits,

which are intended to protect watercourses and wetlands from the effects of development, have been on the rise, with the **Fredericton region having the highest number of permits in 2017, at 456, up nearly 200 permits from 2013.**

### Making watershed protection a priority

In December 2017, the provincial government released a water protection strategy which lays out smart steps to protect water and a timeline to enact them. Among the 29 actions is one that commits to develop new watershed protection legislation by 2020.

“Introducing a new water protection act over the next two years – legislation that will both make watershed protection action plans mandatory and legally enforceable and set science-based water quality standards – is a big move, and a smart one,” said our executive director, Lois Corbett, in response to the strategy.

The issues that we are seeing in the St. John River, along the Northumberland Strait, and the province’s other 11 major watersheds are not being comprehensively addressed by current legislation.

A watershed protection act is a holistic approach to management that recognizes that even in a healthy watershed, there are many factors that can comprise its overall

health. Watershed legislations means that protecting the health and resiliency of our wetlands, floodplains, forests and riparian areas is a priority, one that is detailed in law and coupled with strong enforcement.

A new watershed protection act, combined with a new regulation to protect coastal areas under the *Clean Water Act* (as described in the provincial water protection strategy) will go a long way to ensure the health of coastal waters so that communities along the Northumberland Strait, like Shediac and Pointe-du-Chêne, can enjoy the environmental and economic benefits that a health watershed provides.

Flooding, sewage overflows, blue-green algae and water quality concerns are fresh in New Brunswickers minds as this summer draws to a close and we prepare to head to the polls. Many New Brunswickers will be looking for a government that will follow through with the full implementation of the water protection strategy and take action to implement a new watershed protection act by 2020. Right now, it is up to our communities to raise their concerns about health issues in their watersheds and ask politicians how they plan to address them.





## Election 2018

*Ask candidates in your riding...*

**Will you commit to developing a new *Crown Land and Forests Act* that works for all New Brunswickers, creates well-paying jobs, is fair for private woodlot owners, protects water and biodiversity, and keeps people working, hunting, fishing and enjoying the woods for years to come.**

**Will you commit to ending the old-fashioned and unnecessary practice of spraying glyphosate-based herbicides to treat large tree plantations on Crown land?**



## When you go out in the woods today...

**A** lot of New Brunswickers have a picture of what our forest looks like in their mind.

Known as a tree-canopied province, we think of vast areas of towering hardwoods—of maples, oaks, birch and ash—sustaining our iconic moose and deer, mixed with thick softwoods— of red pines, balsam firs, tamaracks and hemlocks—sheltering smaller woodland critters, all connected through a web of rivers, brooks and streams that flow life into our communities, our towns, villages and cities.

This is the forest many generations of New Brunswickers grew up in—hunting, hiking, fishing, working. This rich, biodiverse setting, however, is harder and harder to come by

when you actually go out into the woods today.

Decades of mismanagement in our Crown forest, and especially its profit-driven reliance on larger-scale clearcutting, has significantly changed the face and feel of our woods. Huge swaths of once thriving Acadian forest have been stripped, replaced by tree farms of predominantly one or two softwood species. Thinning crews of men and women working in the woods have been replaced with helicopters that spray roughly 13,000 hectares of industrial tree farms each year with poisons to kill competing hardwoods. Private woodlots, once the lifeblood of so many families and communities, have been allowed to be boxed out by large forestry companies.

We're left today with a forest

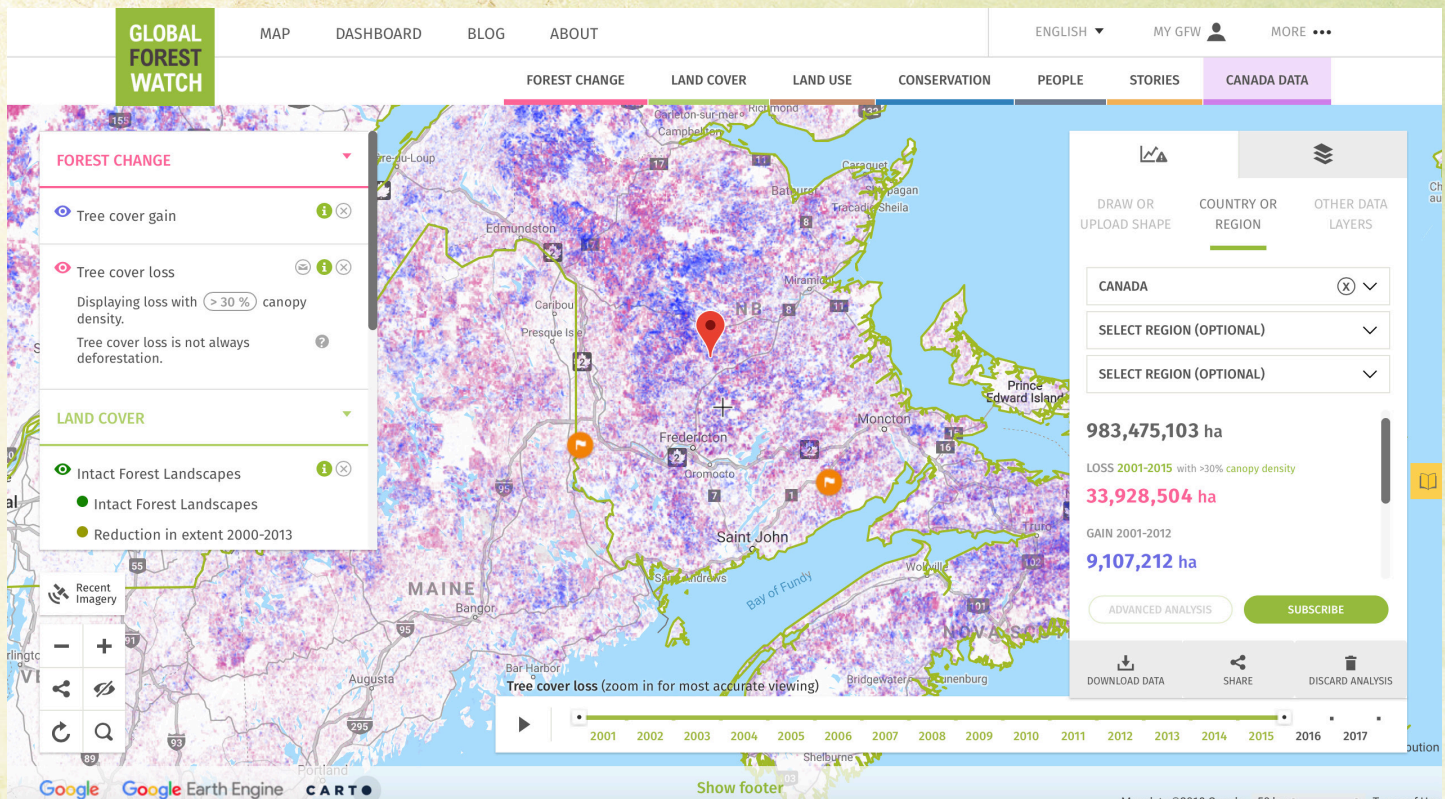
that is vastly different from what we think it is. Beyond the scrim of our tree-lined highways is a fractured, fragmented forest that no longer serves the needs of all New Brunswickers, our woods workers, our hunters and fishers, or the dozens of communities that grew up in and around the woods.

Frank Johnston knows this reality all too well. He's flown over it, walked through it, and has spent years poring over independent satellite data confirming the new face of our forest.

“Outside of protected areas and parks, there are essentially no large areas of intact, natural Acadian forest remaining in New Brunswick,” says Johnston, a member of the Conservation Council’s board of directors.

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For the past several years, Johnston, and other great volunteers from our South East Chapter, have used a small plane, ground expeditions, and satellite data from the University of Maryland’s **Global Forest Watch Program** to document what is happening to New Brunswick’s Crown forest.

“We’ve flown over the major quadrants of the province — the north west, the north east, the south east, the south west, the central part of the province— and wherever we go, we find the same pattern: you will see residual Acadian forest, generally hardwood, next to a stream; you will see a network of roads; you will see a large clearcut; you will see a plantation; another clearcut; then more residual forest probably next to a stream; and increasingly, you will find yourself next to a clearcut that has recently been sprayed with herbicide,” Johnston says.

“And this pattern will be repeated to the horizon.”

Johnston’s team documents cutting patterns in all regions of the province by analysing satellite data from Global Forest Watch,

then verifying it with aerial video surveillance and on-the-ground photography.

Global Forest Watch data shows that between 2000 and 2014, New Brunswick harvested 1.7-times more forest than it gained.

“This is an unsustainable practice, and it effectively means we’re liquidating the existing Acadian forest, and what we’re planting is not the same forest that we cut,” Johnston says.

“The satellite data also shows that New Brunswick is cutting the forest at an intensity twice that of our adjoining jurisdictions of Quebec and Maine.

“This intensity of cutting and the fragmented forest landscape it creates has a consequence. The ecosystem services we get from a natural forest—the prevention of flooding, the retention of water in the woods during the spring freshet and storms—is greatly reduced, and we’re left with a landscape that is extremely vulnerable to climate change.”

Johnston has been presenting his research to groups across the

province since September 2016. And while the content of his work can be disheartening— videos from their plane showing the fragmented forest landscape; photos from the ground of seemingly unending clear cuts and plantations; and timelapse videos of satellite imagery showing the bleak reality of more than a decade of clear cutting across all corners of New Brunswick—he always ends with a plan for action, and a vision for a restored, vibrant Acadian forest.

“We can have sustainable forestry practices in this province, practices that promote environmental stewardship,” he says. “This happens in other places in Canada and North America, and we can get it here.

“We need to take control of the management of our forests away from large companies and back into the hands of the people of New Brunswick. And we need to vigorously follow a policy of restoring and protecting the natural Acadian forest.”

*By Jon MacNeill*





Photo: Nick Hawkins

## A plea to the people of New Brunswick:

**Don't let it happen. The Sisson Mine is a disaster we can't afford.**

*By Tom Cheney*

**E**very summer I go trout fishing on the Nashwaak river. Actually, I mostly go fishing on one of its tributaries. It's a relatively healthy system, with no major dams and cold, clean water. I know a couple of good spots and even on a bad morning I still usually hook a fish or two.

In June there are lots of seatrout around, but I enjoy catching the smaller resident fish just as much. I play them quickly, land them gently in my net, and hold them in the water for just a moment before they swim free. They are beautiful and innocent, and my brief encounters with them always fill me with a simple but profound happiness.

It won't be too long before my children will be old enough to learn to cast flies for trout. More importantly, they will be old enough to learn the magic of wild fish in healthy ecosystems. I envisioned myself teaching them those lessons on that



little tributary of the Nashwaak. Now that vision is in danger because someone has decided that wild fish and their habitats are expendable — or at least exchangeable for a few jobs.

I'm not going to list all the ways that, simply by its construction, the Sisson Mine would be an ecological disaster. You can look those up. I will note that the former government

under Prime Minister Stephen Harper did everything it could to prop up weak mining projects like this one. That government stripped provisions to protect fish habitat — brooks and streams like the Napadogan and Sisson that feed the Nashwaak River — from the important *Fisheries Act*.

*Continued on page 18.*





*In August 2014, a massive breach at the Mount Polley Mine site sent 24 million cubic meters of waste water into nearby rivers and lakes. Canada has the second worst mining record in the world. During the last decade there have been seven known mine tailings spills in Canada, only one less than reported in China, which tops the list.*

Fortunately this gutting has now been reversed by legislation in front of our federal Senate. That's thanks to the tireless efforts of conservation groups from coast to coast, like our own Conservation Council of New Brunswick, Atlantic Salmon Federation, and many others. No legislation will protect all of our favourite streams and fishing spots. But it certainly helps. It gives me pause that the Sisson project found its voice only under a ravaged *Fisheries Act*.

I also won't list the consequences of a Sisson tailings pond failure. We all remember Mount Polley. In August 2014 a massive breach at the B.C. mine site sent 24 million cubic meters of waste water into nearby rivers and lakes. Think about this: Canada has the second worst mining record in the world. During the last decade there have been seven known mine tailings spills in Canada, only one less than in China, which tops the list.

My plea today is that you ask yourself how we've let such an atrocious proposal get as far as it has. Generations of New

Brunswickers have hunted, fished, foraged, and enjoyed the Nashwaak watershed. Why are we creating the potential for our children to be robbed of their natural heritage?

It's because we've been told over and over — so many times that we actually believe it — a story about natural resources and economic prosperity. That story is simple: the destruction of our natural resources may be unfortunate, but it is a necessary condition of 'progress' and 'economic development.' More and more New Brunswickers are seeing that this story just isn't working for us. Maybe it's time to tell a new one.

There are ways to develop resource industries that don't involve the permanent destruction of biodiversity and wildlife habitat. And there are paths to economic prosperity that don't even require resource development. We can have it both ways. And you don't need to look far to see examples that prove the point.

When the Sisson Mine's proponents tell us that the project

is a good way — or the only way — to economic prosperity, they're relying on us to believe that tired narrative. They're asking us to keep believing there are no better options. It's time to stand up and prove them wrong.

New Brunswickers are intelligent, creative, and dynamic. We deserve work of which we can be proud — not just jobs for us today, but for our children as well. We deserve to be in charge of our own economic future. We live in a beautiful province with precious natural resources. There's a way to have a healthy economy that protects our resources rather than destroys them.

The Sisson mine is projected to operate for 27 years. After that it will leave a hideous scar in the earth, ruined fish and wildlife habitat, and countless other ecological tragedies. Those jobs will be gone too. The mine's opponents see that it's not worth it — especially when there are better ways to create work. They've freed themselves of the weight of old narratives and are demanding a brighter, more sustainable future.

I should say that trout aren't the only thing I catch in the Nashwaak river. Every year I hook salmon parr — a surprising number of them. A small and endangered population of wild Atlantic salmon continue to spawn successfully in tributaries of the Nashwaak. If the right people work hard enough, and the right factors fall into place, they could rebound. There's no reason they can't.

Hope like that fuels conservation work — hope that one day my children might fish not just for trout in the Nashwaak, but salmon as well. I have hope for the salmon, and also for the province of New Brunswick. But I need reasons to keep that hope alive, and the Sisson Mine isn't one of them.