Reflections after 12 years of community-led, ecologically inspired forestry at the Medway Community Forest Co-op

Matt Miller[1]

[1]*Medway Community Forest, Caledonia, Nova Scotia*

The Medway Community Forest Co-op (MCFC) was founded in 2016 with a mission to support rural communities though multi-value, ecologically based stewardship on their 15,000-hectare license area located near Caledonia, in Annapolis County. Early on, MCFC's adaptations of existing decision support tools led to meaningful change on the ground, including expanded watercourse buffers and "light-touch" buffers surrounding adjacent conservation areas. Several of these early adaptations, such as excluding wet soils from harvest areas and increasing structural diversity through harvesting small canopy gaps in simplified stands, later became integrated into standard Crown land policy following the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia, commonly known as the Lahey Review. Reflecting back on over a decade of stewardship, MCFC will share several cases that demonstrate the capacity of ecological forestry, in particular gap-based irregular shelterwoods, to maintain and enhance biodiversity and pose a question for consideration; can the application of ecological forestry change the arithmetic for some site-specific buffers?

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