

## Full- and Whole-Tree Harvesting Policy on Crown Lands

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Chapter:

11. Forests

Section:

11.1 Full- and Whole-Tree Harvesting Policy on Crown Lands

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### DEPUTY MINISTER APPROVAL

Approved by:

  
Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Lands and Forestry

Approval date:

April 1, 2021

Effective date:

Upon approval

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### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPROVAL

Approved by:

Gerald Post, Executive Director, Renewable Resources,  
Peter Geddes, Executive Director, Regional Services,  
Heather MacDougall, Executive Director, Policy Planning and Support Services

Approval date:

March 29, 2021

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#### 1. Policy Statement

There shall be no whole-tree harvesting on Crown lands in any circumstances. There will be no full-tree harvesting where the harvest prescription (detailing the site and stand conditions) is any form of clearcut prescription, as detailed in the Harvest Plan.

#### 2. Definitions

**Clearcut:** Current definition can be found on the [Province of Nova Scotia's website](#).

**Full-tree harvesting:** A forest harvesting operation that removes the entire tree, including stem and branches, but excluding the stump and roots, out to a landing or roadside.

**Whole-tree harvesting:** A forest harvesting operation that removes the entire tree, including stem, branches, stump and roots, out to a landing or roadside.

**Harvest Plan:** Harvest Plans are mandatory for each area of Crown land to be harvested. They detail the location of planned harvest areas, the harvest prescription, the sequential order of harvest treatments (if applicable), the volume of timber to be harvested from each plan. They also include such information as road location and classification, new road construction, forwarding trails outside harvest area, and watercourse crossings.

**Salvage harvesting:** When timber suitable for sale is salvaged from an area after a natural disturbance (e.g. wind, insect infestation, fire) has caused detrimental effects to the health of the forest and before most trees have started decomposing and are no longer suitable for sale.

### 3. Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to prohibit the practice of whole-tree harvesting in any circumstances on Crown lands; and to prohibit full-tree harvesting on Crown lands when any form of clearcut prescription is used.

This policy objective recognizes that the health of our forest ecosystems is essential to the conservation and sustainable use of the province's rich biodiversity, and to the future sustainability of our forestry industry upon which many Nova Scotians rely. How we harvest timber has important impacts on nutrient sustainability that underpins the health of our forest ecosystems and the biodiversity in our forests. With full-tree harvesting, the stumps and roots hold soils in place, which reduces erosion, and provide ground cover and habitat for wildlife. The stumps and roots will gradually decompose and thereby deposit nutrients into the soil to provide for future plant growth. For these reasons, full-tree harvesting may be permitted in very rare circumstances. Whole-tree harvesting does not allow for this process and is therefore prohibited in any harvesting on Crown lands.

*The Natural Resources Strategy* (2011), committed Government to establish rules for whole-tree/full-tree harvesting. The Department of Lands and Forestry prohibited this practice on Crown lands through provisions within timber licences and Forest Utilization License Agreements between the Department and licensees operating on Crown lands.

More recently, provisions to prohibit full-tree harvesting when combined with clearcutting on Crown lands, with limited exceptions, through regulations was a recommendation in the *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* (August 2018). In response to this review, Government committed to formalizing this practice into policy (December 2018). This policy supports Government's commitment to prioritize the protection and enhancement of ecosystems and biodiversity when making decisions on how Nova Scotia's Crown forests are managed through the implementation of ecological forestry.

- 4. Application**

This policy applies to all licensees or anyone else operating on Crown lands during forest management. The policy does not apply to road construction to support forest management or in non-forestry uses of Crown lands.
- 5. Policy Directives**

The practice of whole- and full-tree harvesting on Crown lands, when any form of clearcut harvest prescription is used, is prohibited.
- 6. Policy Guidelines**

Exemptions to this policy related to full-tree harvesting may be considered in very rare circumstances by the Deputy Minister for salvage harvesting purposes, crop tree release or other non-forestry (e.g., thinning for sugar maple bush or a change in use for a site to install a cell tower or wind turbine) or cultural uses.
- 7. Accountability**

The Executive Director of Renewable Resources and the Director, Resource Management Division, are responsible for overseeing the policy objectives, implementation by staff and licensees, communications, and monitoring and review.
- 8. Monitoring**

The Forest Operation Monitoring Program of the Resource Management Division, Renewable Resources Branch shall conduct ongoing monitoring of the application of this policy through the Harvest Plan approval process.
- 9. References**
  - *Nova Scotia Forests Act*
  - *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* under the *Forests Act*
  - *Nova Scotia's Natural Resources Strategy (The Path We Share)*; August 2011
  - *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*; August 2018
  - *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*; December 2018
- 10. Enquiries, Review and History**

For enquiries contact: Director, Resource Management, Renewable Resources  
Next review date: April 1, 2023  
To be reviewed by: Director, Resource Management, Renewable Resources