

Old-Growth Forest Policy Interpretation Bulletin No. 02-2023

This interpretation supports the operational definition of old-growth forest using the Forest Ecosystem Classification (FEC) vegetation types in section 3.0 of the Old-Growth Forest Policy (2022). The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables in March of 2023 released a new FEC (Neily et al. 2022). This new FEC has a few changes to existing vegetation types and some new vegetation types. The Department worked with authors of the FEC to translate old-growth forest vegetation types in the OGF Policy to the new FEC. No changes were made to Old-Growth Minimum Tree Age for Forest Groups.

Guidance: Field assessors should start transitioning to the new FEC guide (2002). All assessors should update their required FEC training through the department or The Association for Sustainable Forestry (ASF). All field assessments starting in 2024 should use the FEC 2022 Guide and associated vegetation-types for the assessment of old-growth forests.

Table 1: Old-Growth Forest Area Definitions based on FEC 2022

FEC Forest Group ^a	FEC Vegetation Types ^a	Old-Growth Minimum Tree Age ^b
Tolerant Hardwood	TH1, TH2, TH3, TH4, TH5, TH6, TH7, TH8, TH9	140
Spruce-Hemlock (red spruce dominant)	SH3, SH4, SH5, SH7	125
Spruce-Hemlock (hemlock dominant)	SH1, SH2	140
Mixedwood	MW1, MW2, MW3, MW4, MW11, MW13	125
Spruce-Pine	SP4, SP5, SP7, SP8	125
Wet Coniferous	WC1, WC2, WC5, WC8, WC10	100
Coastal Boreal	CB1, CB3	100
Coastal Acadian	CA1	125
Highland (balsam fir or white spruce dominant)	HL1, HL2, HL6	100
Highland (yellow birch dominant)	HL3, HL4	140
Wet Deciduous	WD3, WD4	115
Floodplain	FP1, FP2, FP3	125
Karst	KA1, KA2, KA3	125
Wet Mixedwood	WM1, WM2	115

^a (Neily et al. 2022) vegetation types listed

^b Minimum age-threshold based on published literature of old-forest community ages, published ages of the dominant tree species associated with the forest groups (and vegetation types) (see Appendix 9.2).

Neily, P., Basquill, S., Quigley, E., Keys, K., Maston, S., Stewart, B. 2022. Forest Ecosystem Classification for Nova Scotia (2022). Field Guide. Department of Natural Resources, Renewable Resources. Biodiversity Tech Report 2023-002. 330 pp.