

Appendix 4

Guidelines for a Management Policy for Crown Peatlands

The conflict between increased exploitation of North American peat, for horticultural and indigenous energy purposes, and wildlife production, crop production, and recreational activities (hunting and nature appreciation), has led to a need for a planned management of peatlands. Several jurisdictions in Canada, and in the U.S. have comprehensive legislation or policies that protect and manage their peat resources in such a way as to allow for multi-use planning.

To date, pressures to exploit Nova Scotia peatland areas have been minimal. However the extent of peatland resources outlined in this report, and the broad variety of implications that can result from peatland development in these areas, may well increase pressures to manage the resource, even over the next decade.

The majority of Nova Scotia's peatlands lie on Crown or crown-lease lands. Therefore it falls upon the Province to manage or direct activities associated with these activities to ensure protection or proper use of peatlands and to ensure that the maximum return for this valuable resource is realized.

Since peat occurs at the surface of the land, it is not classed as a mineral and as such is administered through the Department of Lands and Forests. This department would ultimately be responsible for devising a policy of peatland management.

Peatland value lies in three fairly distinct areas of concern:

1. wetland ecosystems
2. in situ utilization
3. peat extraction

The best way to effectively deal with these concerns, is to implement a peatland policy which first evaluates the ecological sensitivity and value of the specific deposits to

the environment. Only when it has been determined that development of the peatland area would not cause significant detrimental effects to the surrounding environment, should development of the bog or peat deposit be considered.

In such a policy, developers of peatlands (either for in-situ use or for peat extraction) should be held responsible for environmental impacts resulting from their operations. Upon abandonment, they should also be responsible for rehabilitation of the site, either through conscientious effort or performance bonds held by the Province.

Peat is a valuable resource that requires a policy strategy that is flexible enough to allow for the proper use or non-use of individual peatland areas, as well as to provide a base for the control of revenues, dissemination of permits and licenses and environmental protection. Such a policy should reflect the multi-use possibilities of peatlands and strive to:

1. Ensure maximum and optimum contribution to the Provincial economy,
2. Ensure the conservation or preservation of sensitive ecosystems of flora or fauna,
3. Ensure sound production and management practices that provide for:
 - a. the optimum and most efficient use of a peatland;
 - b. future rehabilitation and utilization; and
 - c. non-interference with neighbouring operations or the expansion into sensitive areas nearby,
4. Ensure that privately owned peatlands are as financially attractive to develop as those owned by the Province, and
5. Ensure environmental responsibility is taken by the developers with regard to fire protection and air and water quality arising from the development and utilization of peatlands.

Crown peatlands leased to developers would be protected and maximum benefits to the Province realized through a policy that would screen applications for development. Before a lease of a peatland would be considered:

1. the applicant should provide:
 - a. proof of financial capability to be able to carry out work required under the license and provide a plan for development and production, and
 - b. assurance that sufficient resource exists to sustain their operation.

The applicant(s) should then apply for an exploration license.

A license would be granted:

1. if payment of a fee for application or renewal,
2. if no other peatland exploration license is held by the applicant,
3. if a detailed outline of exploration program provided,
4. if exploration proposals cover less than 1000 ha,
5. if the proposal does not interfere or jeopardize the future availability of the peat resource for existing or neighbouring lease holders,
6. if it ensures a fair return to the Province for its resource as well as providing an avenue for the administration of tenure collection of revenues based on a dollar or intrinsic value of the resource, and
7. if it reduces land speculation and resource hoarding.

The infrastructure for the administration of such a policy exists within the Department of Mines and Energy and the Department of Lands and Forests. The development of a comprehensive policy would serve to simplify the administration of tenure, would ensure equal and fair treatment of prospective developers, and serve to attract developers to the Province as well protect the resource and the wetland environment of Nova Scotia.