

Woodland PEI

Newsletter of the PEI Woodlot Owners Association



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Above: Craig Sabeau horse-logging with his team, Idaho (left) and Pat

BOARD NEWS AND NOTES...



PEIWOA is celebrating the re-launch of our website at www.peiwoa.ca. You can now **subscribe** or **renew your membership online** when it is due. The latest quarterly newsletters are on the main page, with older issues back to 2012 in the 'Archives' section. Click on the menu to find other sections like 'Events'.

With 2020 behind us and the promise of "herd immunity" within sight, we invite you to value, manage and improve your woodlot with PEIWOA's help.

Board member Doug Millington shares more of his well-researched stories on page 3 with his piece about horse-logging. On page 6, Perry Jantzi offers up experienced, practical advice on what to cut and what to save in your woodlot. Be sure to send us your opinion in reply to the Forestry question on page 7.

Woodlot owners and friends of the forest are strongly invited to attend our free **2021 Symposium and AGM** on **Saturday, April 24** at **Tracadie Community Centre, 8:30 - 2:30 p.m.**, lunch included. Due to COVID precautions still in place, **please pre-register**, maintain physical distancing and wear your mask. To reserve your spot, send your name in an email with 'AGM' in the subject line to peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com. Visit our website www.peiwoa.ca and like the PEI Woodlot Owners Association on **Facebook**.

The busy PEIWOA Board meets monthly and has kept up-to-date on developments at the national level through CFFO; PEIWOA is also a contributor to its *Peter DeMarsh Memorial Scholarship Fund*. Jeanne Maki represents us virtually on a Canada-wide research initiative by the Federal Government on Species at Risk, locally known as the *PEI Forested Landscape Priority Place Project* (PEI FLPP). Past President John Rowe represents us virtually at CFFO and the PEI Federation of Agriculture (PEIFA) where we are a commodity group.

In January we met with PEI's former Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change within which the Forestry Division operates; we hope for further dialogue with the new Minister, Hon. Steven Myers and his staff. In March we presented a brief on behalf of woodlot owners to a public consultation with the Minister of Agriculture on the *Lands Protection Act* and other issues relating to forested land.

Public outreach happened in February too, as we hosted a kiosk at the Winter Woodlot Tour in Rustico which was organized by several groups from the PEI Watershed Alliance. With good weather and COVID precautions in place, 800 or more members of the public participated. In early April we held a well-attended workshop and walk on Tree Identification in the Wood Islands area with an incentive for people to join the Association.

The next newsletter (Summer 2021) will be released in July. If you have news and notes about your woodlot or about managing woodland in general, email them to us at peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com; you may also post your stories, relevant articles and photos on our **Facebook** page. Much appreciated!

--Kathy Stuart, Chair of the Board, PEIWOA

PEIWOA BOARD MEMBERS (2020-21)

Kings County: John Keuper, James MacDonald, Patrick Martens, Kathy Stuart

Queens County: Jesse Argent, Thomas Baglole, Jeanne Maki, Doug Millington

Prince County: Bruce Craig, Matt Mclver, John Arthur Ramsay, Elwin Sharpe



Horse-Logging Fundamentals

by Doug Millington

A few years ago, **Craig Sabean** decided to try something a little different. At the time, he was in New Brunswick working for J.D. Irving as a forest technician, managing private woodlot contracts. His job gave him operational freedom and a good salary with benefits but he saw an opportunity to head in a different direction. He was finding many smaller stands of valuable cedar that could easily be sold to certain buyers he knew. But Irving only dealt with huge stands harvested by massive machinery. An Irving rig could chew through a 10-acre lot in a day, but Craig knew that a 10-acre lot could represent a couple of weeks of work for a horse-logging operation. Horse-logging was in his bloodline. His grandfathers and great-grandfathers had all logged with horses. Even though he knew it was a crazy idea to quit the best job he'd ever had, in the spring of 2017 he left Irving and started at ground-zero in the horse-logging business.

At that time the price of horses was exploding. The Chinese meat market paid \$4/lb. so a draft horse could cost upwards of \$4,000. Craig got lucky, finding a Percheron mare for just \$2,800. He teamed up with an experienced horse-logger, his partner doing the cutting with Craig hauling wood to a hired forwarder.

He had a lot to learn, mostly by trial and error, with many of the errors involving his horse. The mare was not working out. *"You don't know what you're going to get with a mare some days. She would run away, break equipment, anything she could do to get into trouble, she'd do it."* He was asking himself, *"what did I do, quitting a full-time job with pension and benefits?"*

Then he got lucky again. An Ontario horse-logger messaged on Facebook that he was retiring and wanted to help out anyone getting into the trade. He offered his grey Percheron gelding, "Idaho", for free. All Craig had to do was cover the shipping which, with the help of a friend, only cost \$400.

Idaho was a game-changer, says Craig, *"like having another guy working with you in the woods. Idaho knows just knows what to do."* To Craig's amazement, Idaho would be told to do one thing but would end up doing another, and it would be the right choice.

Craig sold the mare for \$4,000 and bought Pat, a Belgian gelding, for \$3,000. Now he had two strong, quiet horses



Perry Jantzi's draft horse "Ruby" standing ready...

but with very different personalities. Pat is curious, approaches strangers, encourages neck-scratching. With Idaho, *"a train could go by him, he wouldn't even look sideways."* Craig takes Pat to the easier jobs. Idaho is his 'war horse'. He puts them together for heavier trees, or to haul out spruce 'tree-length' for increased productivity.

With two reliable horses, one of them apparently a bit of a logging savant, the horsepower side of his new business was on solid ground.

It took a while to get the transportation side worked out. He had started out trucking his own logs to mills, but trucking was costing him a day in the woods and often led to repair expenses. He moved to hiring trucks to haul wood to mills, and he bought a trailer to transport his horses to job sites.

He also diversified into lot clearing and cleanup for hourly pay. After hurricane Dorian there were customers who might have a couple of acres of lawn and lots of white spruce blown down. They wanted the spruce cleaned up but didn't want a lot of lawn damage from heavy equipment. He found he could generate a couple thousand dollars of income charging by the hour.

With luck and creativity, Craig Sabean's company, Horse & Forest, is surviving with a business model that is half a century out of date. Fifty years ago, horse-logging was common on PEI when the farm woodlot served as the winter fuel source and horses were no farther away than the barn. The advent of cheap and powerful machinery almost brought an end to the practice. But there are still part-time Island horse-loggers, mostly in eastern PEI.

In the Dundas area, **Kevin Taylor** and his son **Scott** use three teams of horses to log their own and crown land. Just off the top of his head, Kevin Taylor could name three neighbours who horse-log on a regular basis. One of those neighbours is **Tony Wallbank**, a retired businessman who has farmed and logged with horses for decades. He often takes his two Percherons to the woods with the help of some Amish neighbours. After moving to PEI eight years ago, Tony was instrumental in recruiting the first wave of what has become a sizeable Amish immigration to his area.

One of those Amish arrivals, **Perry Jantzi**, lives not far away in Farmington and makes extensive use of his two cross-bred draft horses to manage his 75-acre woodlot. Last year Perry horse-logged 80 bush cords of firewood. This winter he will bring that number down to a more sustainable harvest of 50 cords. Working with a helper, he can typically harvest five cords in a day.

Perry Jantzi came to PEI three years ago from the Owen Sound area of Ontario where mature hardwood stands are a common feature of the landscape. Working as a commercial horse-logger, he successfully competed for contracts with mechanized loggers. Horsepower gave him several advantages. His equipment, animals, rigging and trailering represented an investment of \$10-15 thousand. His competitors needed gear worth half a million dollars or more. The operating expenses for horses, hay, shoes and vet supplies were far below the repair invoices and fuel bills of his mechanized competitors. Using horses also allowed him to easily get into places the big machines just couldn't go, and they kept regeneration damage to a minimum.

But the contract logging came to an end when Perry moved his family to PEI. Compared to Ontario, he doesn't see a market for commercial horse-logging here. He finds on PEI the value of softwood is too low, there is very little quality hardwood and very little mill and kiln-drying capacity. So, he focuses on using his horses to manage his own 75 acres.

On a grey, chilly January afternoon, Perry takes a visitor on a sleigh ride through the twisting trails of his woodlot, stopping occasionally to 'mark' some



Above: The amazing forestry prism: the relationship of the tree image within the prism boundary versus the tree image outside the prism boundary can speak volumes to a trained forester.

areas he intends for treatment. In marking, Perry uses a specially designed oval of glass called a 'wedge prism' to estimate total lumber mass in an area, then applies years of experience to select which trees to take for the overall health of the stand. In Ontario his marking skill brought him regular employment, but in PEI he finds that marking is seldom done due to the prevalence of clearcutting.

"The problem out here is, the woodlots are so low value, if somebody wants to cut it, they want to clearcut it. Because it's low value. If they've got \$700-800K in equipment, they don't want to spend time picking a little \$5 tree here, a \$5 tree there, it doesn't pay 'em."

Craig Sabean would agree with that view. He came to PEI to be closer to family, but he finds there is not much hardwood demand here for anything but firewood. Demand for softwood is stronger but the prices are too low to sustain his business. Cutting, limbing and piling by hand, he can do two or three cords/day. But after stumpage to the landowner and operating expenses, those 2 or 3 cords might only yield \$100 in his pocket. Even with provincial forestry incentives, it's still not enough for a comfortable living.

So, he's always looking for avenues to make the horses more profitable, because *"the woods just aren't cutting it these days. If you want to stay in the game with horses, you have to be creative."*

For instance, last year he was doing a job clearing hemlock for a client making a gravel pit. Craig charged

Horse Logging Fundamentals – (cont'd)

\$1,000 to clear the hemlock, but dropped the price by \$200 to buy some of the larger logs, taking them to an Amish mill on the 48 Road. The milled product was sitting on his property last summer when someone came along and bought it all.

Craig decided it was time to get into the milling business, buying a milling attachment for his chainsaw. That initiative soon paid off in spades. He did a job clearing a patch of old field spruce that contained over-sized hemlocks, some over 3 feet in diameter. The hemlocks yielded half a dozen 8-foot sections per tree, each section so massive he had to double-team the horses to get them to the



Above: Value-added: Craig Sabean stands next to one of his woodlot-milled, live-edge slabs.

roadside. He could have sold those sections to a mill for \$60 each. Instead, he set to work with his new milling attachment, cutting each one into thick, live-edge planks. He put a message on Facebook and in two days the planks were gone, multiplying his income on those hemlocks tenfold.

Craig plans to do a lot more on-site chainsaw-milling. He also takes every opportunity to promote his business at woodlot tours and other public events.

He's been lucky so far, but sometimes you make your own luck. Not long ago his Husqvarna 365 was stolen, a thousand-dollar loss. His girlfriend wrote Husqvarna, letting them know about his horse-logging, hoping for a bit of a deal on a new saw. The company got back saying they really wanted to support his work and they were sending a free replacement. They just wanted some pictures of Craig working with the horses and the saw. So aside from a free saw, somewhere he is probably featured in a Husqvarna ad.

Idaho is already a star of the big screen. Craig recently learned that before he owned the horse, it had been filmed as part of an award-winning documentary called 'Workhorse' which has been shown at several International film festivals.

Craig Sabean is optimistic about horse-logging, in spite of the challenges of his business and the problems with PEI's forest industry and resources. *"There's nothing greener. At the end of the day, you can't do a better job than a horse or an ox. It's the perfect thing for the Island, because there's no big forestry companies over here. People own ten acres here, twenty acres there, so small forestry is perfect for the Island."*

For **Perry Jantzi**, working with horses is an inseparable part of his Amish heritage, so horse-logging will continue to be central to his woodlot management. But he worries about the state of PEI's forests, the predominance of even-aged plantations, the diminished stock of healthy hardwood, and especially the frequent practice of clearcutting. *"In the long term it's never going to change until people actually decide...well, I know I'm going to lose money or I'm not going to make much but I'm going to do it right. And they won't get anything out of it, but the children will."*

--Doug Millington

What to Cut, and What to Leave

by Perry Jantzi

As a former horse-logger and former employee of Lands and Forest Consulting, I have walked hundreds of woodlots in my life. One thing I find all woodlots have in common is there are trees that should or could be harvested for the health of the forest. This includes my own 75 acres of woods. Because trees continue to grow, this is a job that never ends. Talk about sustainability!

In my last article [newsletter Fall 2020], I wrote about the “worst first” approach. I would like to go a little more into detail into what I look for when selecting trees to cut. Foremost in my mind would be density (basal area) of the woodlot. This can be calculated by using a prism [see p. 4] and is very easy to use. Another easy way to tell, are there any seedlings growing? However, each woodlot, or even different areas in your woodlot, is unique so a “one size fits all” should not apply. Even though I do not promote clearcutting, there are some cases where this might be appropriate—for example, a small patch of mature white spruce that is starting to blow down. This would be a good spot to replant a mixture of species.

Species is something else I consider—what do I want my forest to look like in 40 years? If I see hundreds of red maples before coming across a yellow birch that is stunted and will never make a log, I leave that birch. Hopefully it will produce seed. Diversity is a sign of a healthy woodlot. I do try to promote more valuable species but I want to keep as many species as possible: this will feed many different kinds of birds and animals.



Rough-barked tree: “a sign of stress (think wrinkles)”



Forked tree: “the lower the fork, the more critical”

With our high winds on the Island, another important thing to watch for is forks in the trunk of the tree. The lower the fork, the more critical as sometimes you can lose half the tree. This is considered major damage. The U-shaped forks are not as prone to split as the V-shaped forks because they do not get the same pressure as the tree grows.

The vitality of the tree is another consideration. As a rule of thumb, with two trees of the same size and species, the one with the smoother bark is healthier.

This tree will respond to release (room to grow) much better than the rough-barked tree. The rough bark is a sign of stress (think wrinkles) for whatever reason: could be too crowded, or overtopped by another tree, or diseased, or numerous other reasons.

What to Cut, and What to Leave (cont'd)

As the tree ages, the roughness will naturally increase. Certain species of trees are more elastic (respond better to release) than other species. But one thing they all need is a nice-sized, healthy top to respond well.

Probably near the bottom of the list of reasons to cut a tree is because he will make a good log. Things to ask yourself would be, will the tree decline before the next cutting cycle? Is there a good healthy tree waiting to take its place? Is there a sufficient amount of trees of the same species in your woodlot? If the answer is yes to these questions, then by all means go ahead and cut it without feeling guilty.

* * * * *

Now I want to talk about the most important part of your management, the trees you leave. This will have a greater impact on your future forest than what you cut. I believe the dominant trees are the most important trees in your woodlot. The dominant trees are the ones with big healthy tops that stand 10 feet above the neighbouring trees. Height promotes height: if you have tall trees, then the young trees stretch more for the sun and in turn become tall themselves. They are a heavy seed producer with good genetics. This is where we want our young trees to come from. If you have a healthy beech tree, then leave it as long as possible as this is an important food source for wildlife and there are so few healthy beech on the Island.

To sum it up, what do I like to see on a woodlot? I like to see hundreds of seedlings, lots of saplings, dozens of pole size, some log sizes and a few dominant trees of many species, conifers and hardwoods, filling every different height level of the forest. And that is, in my opinion, the way to grow the most board feet per acre per year as possible in your woodlot throughout the coming years.

--Perry Jantzi
Farmington, PEI

Q.

Question for our Members from PEI Forestry Division:

Would you be in favour of the Provincial government planting trees on clear-cuts which are not under any program, such as the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP)?

>>>Please send your thoughts to:
peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com

Thank you! Join the discussion on this and other topics at the Symposium and AGM on April 24!

See back page for how to register for the meeting.



Membership Application

The **PEI Woodlot Owners Association**, through its Board of Directors (who are all unpaid volunteers), represents your interests and seeks resources for you to manage your woodlot sustainably.

PEIWOA’s goals are aligned with education, sustainability and promotion of locally produced, value-added forest products and services.

Your continued support, as a member of our non-profit Association and a patron of Prince Edward Island businesses and services, will enable PEIWOA to grow and move forward.

2021 Membership Rates:

1-yr ending 31/03/22	\$ 25.00
2-yr ending 31/03/23	40.00
50% discount for PEIFA or NFU members, 2-yr ending 31/03/23.....	20.00

To join as a new member, or simply to renew if your current membership has expired, you may do so at www.peiwoa.ca.

We collect your **current mailing address**, the **County** where your woodlot is located (if you own a woodlot), your **e-mail address** and your **phone number** so you don’t miss out on any of our communications.

You can use online banking to **E-TRANSFER** your payment to the **PEI Woodlot Owners Association** at etransfer@peiwoa.ca.

Or if you prefer, mail your cheque with above information to:

PEI Woodlot Owners Association
81 Prince Street, Charlottetown PE C1A 4R3

Space may be available here and on our website at www.peiwoa.ca from time-to-time for business-card-sized advertising, subject to Board discretion on behalf of the membership.

For more information, contact us at peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com.

Notice of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are invited to attend the **PEI Woodlot Owners Association 2021 Symposium & Annual General Meeting**

Saturday, April 24, 2021
at **Tracadie Community Centre**
from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Limited to 50 attendees due to public health precautions

TO RESERVE A SEAT, email your name to peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com with ‘AGM’ in subject line.