

Volume 5 - Issue 2

Summer 2021

Woodland PEI

Newsletter of the PEI Woodlot Owners Association



**PEIWOA 10th
Anniversary
Issue**

Photo above:
PEI lumber for
sale in Dundas

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Celebrating PEIWOA's 10th Anniversary!



Back in 2012, the inaugural annual meeting of PEIWOA directors took place at the Hunter River Lions Club on Rennie's Road. According to our records, the main take-away that year was an overarching set of directives for the future of our organization, namely **EDUCATION**, **CONNECTION** and **REPRESENTATION**.

In this, PEIWOA's 10th Anniversary year, are these three directives still relevant to guide our activities towards sustainable woodland management throughout PEI?

It is my third year on the Board after innocently raising my hand to volunteer at the 2018 AGM, so it has taken me quite a while to get to the bottom of what makes this organization tick. At first, I felt that its future seemed bleak with complete reliance on volunteers who burn out or become distracted by other pressures in their lives. As time went on and I learned more, I recognized that the passion for sustainable forestry management had not been extinguished at all despite Dorian, COVID-19, Northern Pulp, protectionism to our south, climate change, haphazard land-use planning and any number of other obstacles.

If anything, your Association has been more than just ticking, it's starting to rock! There are enough human resources in each one of us to keep projects on the move as long as we continue to work cooperatively, creating more than the sum of the parts. At PEIWOA's ten-year mark, I hope you will agree from looking at your Board's long-term outcomes that EDUCATION, CONNECTION and REPRESENTATION are still as relevant and worthwhile as ever!

Kathy Stuart
Chair, Board of Directors, PEIWOA

2021 Symposium & Annual General Meeting

About 35 members and guests registered at our 2021 Symposium & Annual General Meeting on April 24th. This was a reasonable turnout considering public health limits during the pandemic. Held out East this year at the Community Centre in Tracadie Cross, our Past President John Rowe chaired the morning session with great enthusiasm.

On this day we were honoured to welcome Senator Diane Griffin, Chair of Canada's Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, as well as Hon. Steven Myers, PEI's new Minister of Environment, Energy & Climate Action, as they addressed our Symposium. Following their encouraging remarks, Geomatics Specialist Andrew Ing presented detailed information on the Province's 10-year *Land Use Inventory* underway now until its completion in 2022.

Next, we turned inward to our Board members for their expertise and were not disappointed by the quality of their panel on *Maintaining Value*. Excellent presentations were made by Thomas Baglolle (values in woodlot management) and Matthew McIver (values in forested wetland and marginal land). John Arthur Ramsay creatively highlighted the need for a thorough review and update of provincial forestry programming to adequately reflect the broad range of values now held by woodlot owners.

After free lunch and door prizes, a quorum of voting members remained for the AGM. It was chaired by Kathy Stuart who noted that in the six months since the previous AGM, five regular Board meetings had been held as well as several executive meetings on Zoom. Members were kept informed through three

2021 Symposium & AGM Report...cont'd

8-page newsletters, www.peiwoa.ca, Facebook and peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com. Minutes from the October 3, 2020 AGM and the Treasurer's Report by John Keuper were approved as presented.

In her President's Report, Stuart highlighted how the three directives were motivating our Association. Key **education** resources about PEI woodlands, ecosystems and the forest floor are brought to the attention of woodlot owners who choose to use the information. Having strong representation on the Canadian Federation of Forest Organizations (CFFO) is one way to stay abreast of forestry science and the complex federal political landscape in which we reside.

Our education goals are well served by *Atlantic Forestry Review (AFR)* and our own *Woodland PEI* newsletter which offers timely material particularly relevant to PEI. Locally, Board members in Queens County hosted an educational kiosk at the 2021 winter woodlot tour in Rustico. If our Tree Identification Workshop this May in southern Kings County is any indication, members in each of the three Counties could create further educational events with their own local expertise and have a great time doing it. This would extend the effectiveness of the Association on many levels.

It has long been a challenge to balance the connection between the Board and the membership. Regarding the **connection** directive, the pandemic forced us to do things differently. Great strides were made in 2020-21 as we renovated the www.peiwoa.ca website and the PEI Woodlot Owners Association Facebook page. Improved technical capability helps us reach a broader and younger audience of members and the public. The percentage

of new members more than doubled over the previous year, helped by our ability to accept e-transfers of membership fees. The Board embraces our new capacity to make things happen. The 2021 Symposium presentations in April were recorded on audio and video for the first time and distributed soon after to the full membership and beyond.

The third directive is **representation**. By opening doors to dialogue with government, we are better placed to make a difference. This past year we responded to the *Land Matters* public consultation with a position paper on the issue of disappearing farm woodlots. We also sent an exploratory delegation to visit the previous Minister of Environment at her office to discuss provincial forestry programming, particularly in Prince County. We were successful in securing representation from Senator Diane Griffin and Steven Myers as they addressed our Symposium, along with information on the provincial forestry mapping program. By early June we had secured further periodic meetings with Minister Myers and his staff going forward.

The agenda moved on to airing members' issues of concern and finally to the Nominating Committee Report presented by John Rowe. Marcel Arsenault and Barry Murray were elected to fill vacancies on the Board from the departure of James MacDonald, Elwin Sharpe, Jeanne Maki and Matt McIver. Two vacancies remain. John Rowe stays on as *Ex-Officio* member representing PEIWOA on the CFFO and the PEI Federation of Agriculture (PEIFA).

--Kathy Stuart, President, PEIWOA

PEIWOA BOARD MEMBERS (2021-22)

Kings County: John Keuper, Patrick Martens, Kathy Stuart, vacancy

Queens County: Jesse Argent, Thomas Baglole, Doug Millington, vacancy

Prince County: Marcel Arsenault, Bruce Craig, Barry Murray, John Arthur Ramsay

Ex Officio: John J. Rowe, Representative to CFFO and PEIFA



Board Secretary Doug Millington, our intrepid investigative journalist, uncovers the hidden significance of lumber grading—not just for woodlot owners wanting to harvest and sell Island lumber, but also for consumers and manufacturers seeking high quality wood products made locally.

Lumber Grading on PEI

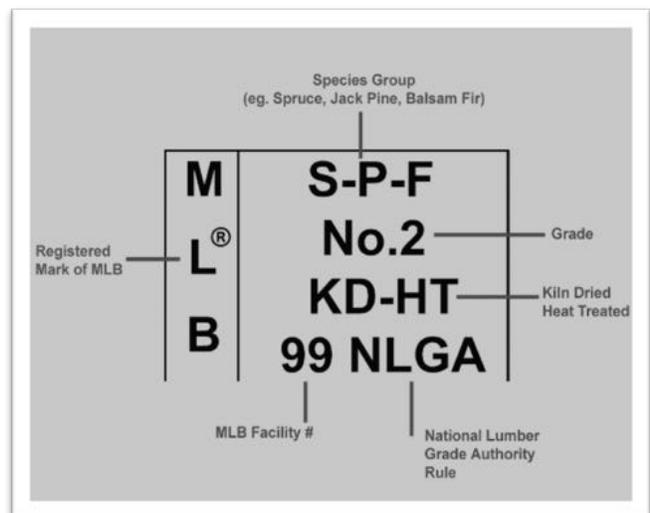
by Doug Millington

Island woodlot owners have been facing a confusing disconnect between sky-high lumber prices and very low revenue for their harvested wood.

That disconnect is in large part due to the cost of transporting PEI trees to and from the off-Island mills that are licensed to create “stamped” lumber, dimensional wood products marked with a cryptic tattoo naming the species, grade, moisture content and originating mill of that particular chunk of wood. Due to newly expanded building code regulations, most PEI building projects require the use of graded and stamped lumber.

The absence of that precious stamp, the federally regulated grading certificate required by the *National Building Code*, is one of the biggest hurdles preventing PEI mill owners from directly selling into the overheated lumber market, and depressing the revenue woodlot owners receive from harvesting the trees on their properties. And unfortunately, it looks like the situation will not improve soon.

A world of information is relayed in the cryptic shorthand of the grade stamp



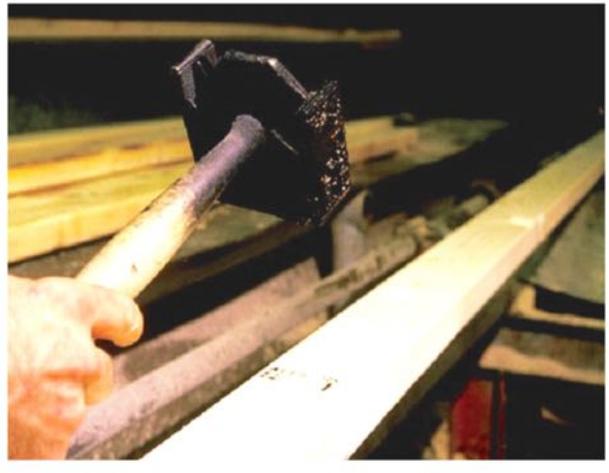
No one on PEI is currently authorized to grade and stamp lumber. No one has “got a stamp”, even though there is strong demand for one. To get one, a mill worker or owner must attend and pass a special grading course. There are now 28 Islanders with their name on a waiting list to attend a grading course in Amherst, Nova Scotia, the only such course offered in the Maritimes. Unfortunately, the waiting list for that course has recently grown exponentially.

The Amherst course is administered by the Maritime Lumber Bureau (MLB), a nationally accredited quality control agency. In normal times, the waiting list to take the course is up to 40 people, but with the COVID home-renovation surge and the new National Building Code requirements, the Amherst course waiting list has ballooned to 315.

Just as demand for the course has surged, its availability has tanked. Even before COVID, availability was limited. The course can only take 15 students at a time. Since the pandemic struck, MLB has offered only ten courses and attendance has been low, with only 8 in the last course. There are no courses currently being offered.

MLB says they have looked into offering an extra course on PEI, but the majority of the course work involves handling specific species and sizes of wood, and they feel there isn't a PEI sawmill that can present the scope of lumber needed for teaching purposes. As well, MLB instructors are also field inspectors, so tying instructors down to a PEI course takes them out of the inspector role for 2 weeks. For now, if requested, they will send an inspector to an Island mill to grade a particular load of lumber. But for a grading stamp that stays on PEI, the long line to Amherst remains.

The MLB course at the end of that line is not for the weak of mind. Students are trained to judge such characteristics as “the presence of wane (bark remnant on the outer edge), size and location of knots, the slope of grain relative to the long axis and the size of shakes, splits and checks.”



A typical hammer stamp, to be swung on PEI only by a graduate of a grading course at the Maritime Lumber Bureau in Amherst, Nova Scotia

And there's a fair bit of math involved, as shown by this bit of dialogue from a training video: “We got a 12-foot length, we're gonna read the surface measure on the 12-foot scale, this'll give us a '9', so we've got a 9-foot surface measure. So... no problem as far as FAS... 83%. We roll the board over...”

And the course is not cheap. There's a course fee of \$525, plus the cost of lodging in Nova Scotia or daily travel from PEI. The successful graduate is then entitled to stamp lumber at their own mill or the mill of their employer. If they want to stamp at their own mill, they must become an MLB member, a further annual expense of \$695. An accredited grader can only use their stamp at one mill, either their own or the mill at which they are employed. There are also incidental expenses, like the hammer stamp itself. The Maritime Lumber Bureau puts the total cost of accreditation at between \$1,200 and \$1,500 plus taxes, travel and living expenses.

Lumber Grading on PEI... (cont'd)

Assuming the MLB courses start up soon and a few islanders make it through the waiting list, what will it mean for those lucky Island mill workers or owners?



Dennis Somers has his name on the MLB list. Until just before COVID, he was in Alberta working pipelines as a crew foreman. While waiting out COVID on PEI, Dennis decided to try setting up a milling operation in Hopefield. With a Wood Mizer (28" width capacity) he founded Cutting Edge Forest Products. He's now in the final stages of setting up a 100,000 BF kiln using a computerized system designed by Bruce Craig of Craig Wood Products.

Dennis plans to buy milled product from the Amish and produce kiln-dried dimensional lumber as well as special pieces like table-tops. He says it's been a hard slog getting the financing together and finding contractors to do jobs like hooking up power. But he recently finalized the financing paperwork and was hoping to be operational in a couple of months. That time frame might need adjusting. He had not heard of the long waiting list at Amherst and had been assuming that the grading course would be available soon.

Allison Coles is the founder and former owner of Coles Doors, and currently runs Coles Molding and Woodworking on the New Glasgow Road in North Milton. His 20,000 ft² facility has a wealth of productive capacity; a molder, sander, planer, trim saw, band saw, straight-line rip saw, Baker band re-saw, and of special note, a kiln with 30,000 board foot capacity. He thinks grading and stamping would be an important service to offer small sawmills, and he'd like to be able to add value to his own production.

Alison directs a visitor toward a stack of 2x4's that, if graded and sold at today's prices would fetch \$15-thousand. "I don't know whether it's a good idea or not, but there's 2 piles of lumber there, that's all been through the planer. It's not graded. Not a thing wrong with it. but if it was graded it wouldn't be there."



Stacked lumber near the kiln door at Coles Molding and Woodworking Ltd. in North Milton



If a few Islanders like Alison Coles and Dennis Somers manage to make their way into the Amherst course and start stamping lumber on PEI, what effect might that have on PEI forestry?

Dan Dupont is a prominent Island forester who has been working to create a co-operative of sustainably managed woodlots, now incorporated as the Sustainable Forestry Alliance (SFA). He would love to see grading and stamping taking place right here on PEI.

Dupont's name is not on that MLB waiting list of 28 Islanders. His plans for the time being are actually for anything *but* dimensional lumber. For now, he wants to focus the SFA on sustainable practices, inventory volumes and carbon data, and eventually the production of such wood products as aspen baseboards and wood (not MDF) moldings conducive to selectively harvested stock.

Still, Dan Dupont sees an opportunity for Island Forestry if the ability to stamp can be brought to PEI in the right hands:

"Potentially two stamps with the right people backing it up on the Island... even if they can satisfy 25% of domestic demand... that's significant. Just having locally sourced lumber---I mean if you want to take it one step further, and put some kind of a certification on it, from a sustainably managed source---now you're starting to talk my language. But even just to have something from the Island alone would be awesome."



The PEI Woodlot Owners Association represents your interests through its Board of Directors (who are all unpaid volunteers). It 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 PEI businesses and services is critical, enabling PEIWOA to grow and move forward.

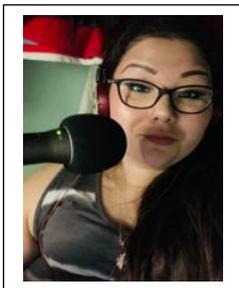
Visit our website www.peiwoa.ca or e-mail peiwoodlotowners@gmail.com.

Collaboration Opportunity with Mi'kmaw Artists



Editor's Note: PEIWOA was approached recently by Kelly Robinson, spokesperson from Charlottetown for three Mi'kmaw artists from PEI (two from Abegweit FN and one from Lennox FN) who are collectively known as the Epekwithk Quill Sisters. These talented artists produce lovely traditional works of art on birch bark and use other woodland products as well in their work. Harvest time, on now, is very short, signaled by the arrival of fireflies. The artists are hoping to find woodlot owners who have birch and would be willing to allow the women (who have special training) to come onto the land to harvest birch bark.

According to Ms. Robinson, "I am confident in saying this possible partnership will not negatively impact the woodlot owners' trees in any way. They use traditional methods that do not harm the tree nor the wood quality. The tree grows a "scab" and, just like skin, white bark grows beneath and when it's good, the scab falls off. The women (and the Mi'kmaq generally) only harvest from a tree once every 15 years."



There is much more to this story as these artists have now produced a series of podcasts about their work that is receiving national attention in the arts. See Podcast May 31/21 on birches and harvesting. Visit Epekwithk Quill Sisters on Facebook.

To help these women obtain birch bark to make art, contact Kelly Robinson at krobinson@pei.sympatico.ca.



Photos courtesy of Epekwithk Quill Sisters

Membership in PEIWOA

To join as a new member of PEIWOA, or simply renew if your current membership has expired, just do two things: (1) fill out our membership form online at www.peiwoa.ca, and (2) e-transfer from your bank to etransfer@peiwoa.ca where it will be auto-deposited securely into our account.

2021-22 Membership Rates

One-year PEIWOA membership*, ending March 31, 2022	\$ 25.00
Two-year membership, ending March 31, 2023	40.00
50% discounted rate for members of PEIFA or NFU, ending March 31, 2023	20.00

*You will be asked for the **County** where your woodlot is located to become an **Active** (voting) member. **Associate** (non-voting) members pay the same rates but are not required to own a woodlot. We appreciate your support.

If you prefer, mail your cheque with your **current civic address**, **e-mail address** and **phone number** to:
PEI Woodlot Owners Association, 81 Prince Street, Charlottetown PE C1A 4R3