A new working woodlands trust and parcel-scale woodland prioritization tool

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The Nova Scotia Working Woodlands Trust (NSWWT) will be the first and only legal holder of working forest community easements through the Nova Scotia Community Easements Act. The Mission of NSWWT is to uphold and promote the long-term stewardship of private forested lands for the rich diversity of values that they provide through ecological forestry and conservation. This is done through direct acquisition and by developing, monitoring, and enforcing easements. NSWWT promotes ecological forestry on private woodlands and ultimately helps facilitate habitat continuity on a landscape level. Many woodlot owners are aging, and their successors often have moved away. With few options for succession planning, woodlands are often sold to the highest bidder and poor practices follow. Liquidation logging has immediate local impacts and cumulative detriment to the landscape. NSWWT provides structure for landowners to steward their woodlands while ensuring measures are in place to maintain ecological integrity for generations. Therefore, communities can build their forest assets with an economically viable alternative to liquidation logging. The prioritization tool utilizes existing conservation and forest data to spatially identify high value forest habitat. Individual properties are scored through a Forest Value Index in the context of landscape connectivity. Regional land trusts, woodlot service providers, and conservation organizations will use the tool to prioritize properties for targeted acquisition, easement development, and conservation or species at risk outreach. Both projects aim to protect a network of high value private woodlands, restoring wildlife habitat and climate resilience by mitigating fragmentation and unsustainable forestry practices.

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