

## NO TO PLANTATION FORESTRY

I was astounded and dismayed to read the article by Vivian Pharis, (Chair, Forestry, Lands and Wildlife Committee) ‘World Pulp Trends Bode Ill For Industry; Well For Its Forests’, in the June 1992 issue. The main thrust of this article, which contains some interesting material, is to promote plantation forestry”; and also to give advice from a pulp and paper industry economic and non-ecological perspective, on how to retain/increase world pulp market share in Alberta and Canada, using industry trends from other countries as justification. This intensely polluting industry, both in its mill and forestry operations, is described by the writer as remarkably resilient and innovative”, and as having admirable technological agility”. While there is an “editorial disclaimer” in the paper, one has to assume that the chair of a caucus is articulating a position with support from within the Alberta Wilderness Association.

Such plantations are a reality and are the industry’s pulpwood forestry model in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. So it is not correct to say, “Right now, plantation forestry essentially does not exist in Canada.” The ecological and human health costs of the promotion of plantation forestry, as a forestry model in Canada, are totally unacceptable. However, the question of what to do about existing forestry plantations in our country has to be a real concern.

As a contribution to a wide-ranging critical discussion on plantation forestry, I would refer readers to the Forest Treaty negotiated by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) at the Global Forum, in June 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This alternative Treaty is a six-page document (a copy of which was sent to **Wilderness Alberta**, but it can also be obtained from the Green Web) negotiated by consensus over a period of six days by representatives of many nations from the South and the North. The process involved protracted discussions on plantations and what was called “agroforestry.”

In this discussion, there were delegates from New Zealand and Australia giving the kind of position advocated by Ms. Pharis, but there was strong opposition from Latin American and Japanese delegates, as well as the Canadians. There were presentations on the ecological damage of planting eucalyptus and pine in Brazil, Chile, Portugal and Asia, and literature was distributed describing the worldwide role of Japanese companies in promoting eucalyptus plantations in a number of countries. An international network against planting eucalyptus was proposed.

Because of the varied views, the Forest Treaty is a compromise document on plantation forestry which was nevertheless acceptable to all. The Treaty’s concern with the various problems associated with plantation forestry and related matters could fruitfully be considered in any further discussion taking place in **Wilderness Alberta**. Here I bring to attention one of the plantation references in the Treaty:

10c. Plantation forestry should only occur on non-forested areas, degraded areas, and areas no longer able to support natural regeneration of the native forests, and that are not suitable for

food crops. Plantations should not be subject to chemical or biological control or non-organic fertilizers.

There is some support for plantation forestry in the Treaty, but this is conditional, not open-ended. The various conditions for utilizing forest plantations have nothing to do with revitalizing the pulp and paper industry – an industry which needs to be drastically downsized here in Canada, as around the world.

Boosterism for the pulp and paper industry and a legitimization of corporate forestry practices can be best left to the trade magazines, not the pages of **Wilderness Alberta**. Promoting plantation forestry is no solution for the preservation of old growth forests in Canada.

Yours sincerely,  
David Orton  
Member of the Green Web  
Salt Springs, Nova Scotia

*(Ed. note: readers wishing to receive a copy of the six-page Forest Treaty, please send a SASE to the AWA office with your request.)*

Published in **Wilderness Alberta** Vol. 22 No. 4 December 1992

Vivian Pharis responds:

David Orton reads things into my article on world pulp trends that just aren't there. The article in no way promotes the pulp and paper industry, much less the increased use of Alberta and Canada's forests for such. The article was written to inform our readers of new directions in the pulp and paper industry. It does not reflect AWA policy. It is a research summary followed by a researched opinion on plantation forestry. The article was also written under the premise that despite new trends and innovations that may reduce our use of wood fiber, wood fiber will form the basis the world's paper for some time yet. The question is, where will it come from? I would rather not have it come from native forests, especially old growth forests.

There can be little dispute that the pulp a paper industry is one of the most technologically advanced and innovative resource-based industries in the world. Whether we like it or not, this industry is cat-quick in terms of being able to respond to changing consumer demand. A clear message from my article is that an excellent way to change the pulp and paper industry, is to influence consumer demand. This is not opinion, it is observation, based on examining the literature, examining the industry and talking to international forestry and pulp and paper experts.

Mr. Orton is correct that in my article, I promote plantation forestry. But a re-examination of what I wrote should indicate that my promotion is very much in line with section 10c of the NGO Forestry Treaty of June 1992. I am careful to explain that I do not advocate the clearing of native forests for plantation growth, rather I advocate the use of already cleared (marginal), flat, and accessible lands. I find plantation forests as sterile and unappealing as does Mr. Orton,

however, I also know that they are the direction of world forestry, and that their early application in parts of Canada may help us to save some of our native and old growth forests.

---

To obtain any of the Green Web publications, write to us at:  
Green Web, R.R. #3, Saltsprings, Nova Scotia, Canada, BOK 1PO  
E-mail us at: [greenweb@tncwireless.ca](mailto:greenweb@tncwireless.ca)

---

Back to  
[The Green Web](#)  
[A Taste of Green Web Writings and Left Biocentrism](#)

---

[http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/No\\_to\\_Plantation\\_Forestry.pdf](http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/No_to_Plantation_Forestry.pdf)

Last updated: September 10, 2012