

## AV GROUP NB INC.: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF NHRI'S SPS

AV Group NB Inc. was a founding industrial partner of the institute and has remained active and supportive throughout our growth. They operate two dissolving pulp mills in New Brunswick (Atholville and Nackawic) with a third kraft pulp mill in Terrace Bay, Ontario. At their New Brunswick locations, they utilize a mixture of hardwood species, but maple is key in the production of high value dissolving pulp destined for the clothing market. AV Group manages over 700,000 hectares of land in New Brunswick, including approximately 43,000 hectares of company owned ground, located mainly in the southern portion of the province. The management of their industrial freehold is important to their wood supply, providing approximately 81,000 m<sup>3</sup> per year.


Currently, the hardwood content of AV's freehold land sits at about 65% and is projected to increase by 5% over the next 50 years by actively managing for hardwood regeneration and reducing planting of softwood on mixedwood sites. However, demand for hardwood is projected to increase 10-20% over the next 10 years. In addition to increased demand, other stressors on the freehold land base including rising land value, maintaining conservation values, regeneration failure in past treatments, and the threat of climate change are impacting the hardwood supply.

# PROMISING PARTNERSHIP

## Implementation and review of NHRI's SPS



Careful management will be required to ensure hardwood stocks are not only maintained but increased in the face of these adversities. One of the most important tools that AV Group is using to accomplish their hardwood management goals is NHRI's Silviculture Prescription System (SPS).

A photograph of a forest management site. Several workers wearing orange safety vests and hard hats are standing in a wooded area with many trees and fallen branches on the ground. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the image.

“ After several years of application, we are now launching a retrospective study with the help of AV Group to revisit sites that were managed using the SPS System to assess whether the objectives have been met and identify any areas for improvement. ”

The SPS for hardwood dominated forests is a 5-step process that starts with a description of a stand and ultimately recommends specific treatments to maximize residual stand growth and increase the quantity and quality of hardwood regeneration. AV Group was one of the first official adopters of the SPS and has been a great partner in beta testing and providing meaningful feedback and monitoring. They have used the SPS to assign prescriptions such as uniform (UTA) and continuous cover two age class (CTA), progressive strip clear-cuts (PCC), and retention seed-tree cuts (RST) in mature stands and commercial thinning in developing stands. They have seen success in the application of the treatments with positive feedback from the operators in the ease of applying the treatments and maintenance of machine productivity, and from other stakeholders who prefer the partial harvest management options for a variety of reasons.

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After several years of application, we are now launching a retrospective study with the help of AV Group to revisit sites that were managed using the SPS System to assess whether the objectives have been met and identify any areas for improvement. The objectives of this project are to:



- **Measure the efficacy of the SPS as a tool to improve hardwood stocks in New Brunswick.**



- **Evaluate operational implementation.**



- **Explore opportunities for improvements to the SPS.**



- **Provide opportunities for further training and support for stakeholders wishing to implement the SPS in their operations.**

This endeavour will be mutually beneficial to ensure the best outcomes possible are realized through the thoughtful and appropriate application of the SPS.

In addition to actively increasing the hardwood component of their freehold ground, the use of the SPS has contributed to improve social engagement with local stakeholders for AV Group and their success in being the first in New Brunswick to achieve FSC Forest Management Certification along with the other third-party certifications they hold. This successful partnership will be showcased during the [Northern Hardwood Conference](#) field tour on August 3rd, 2023 in the Skiff Lake area. Tour stops will include visits to previously treated UTA, CTA, and commercial thinning sites as well as an opportunity for participants to work through the SPS system and prescribe a treatment to an untreated stand.



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