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Good morning, I'm here to tell you a little about The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands, and our primary program, the Northeast Master Logger Certification Program.



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In 1995 a group of loggers, now known as the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine or PLC, decided to make sure they had a voice in this rapidly changing forest industry. Forward thinking as they were, they embarked on the first in the world Master Logger Certification Program and had the resolve to set as their mission to be professional loggers. Realizing the challenges they faced in their own businesses, they wanted to promote “lessons learned” to move from survival to a thriving model of small business success. In 2000, after several years seeking input from various stakeholder groups, developing standards, and becoming certified, PLC started the first in the world Master Logger Certification Program, a point-of-harvest certification program, offering third-party independent certification of logging companies' harvesting practices. With this program's great progress, in 2003 PLC formed the independent non-profit organization , the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands to administer it.



TCNEF

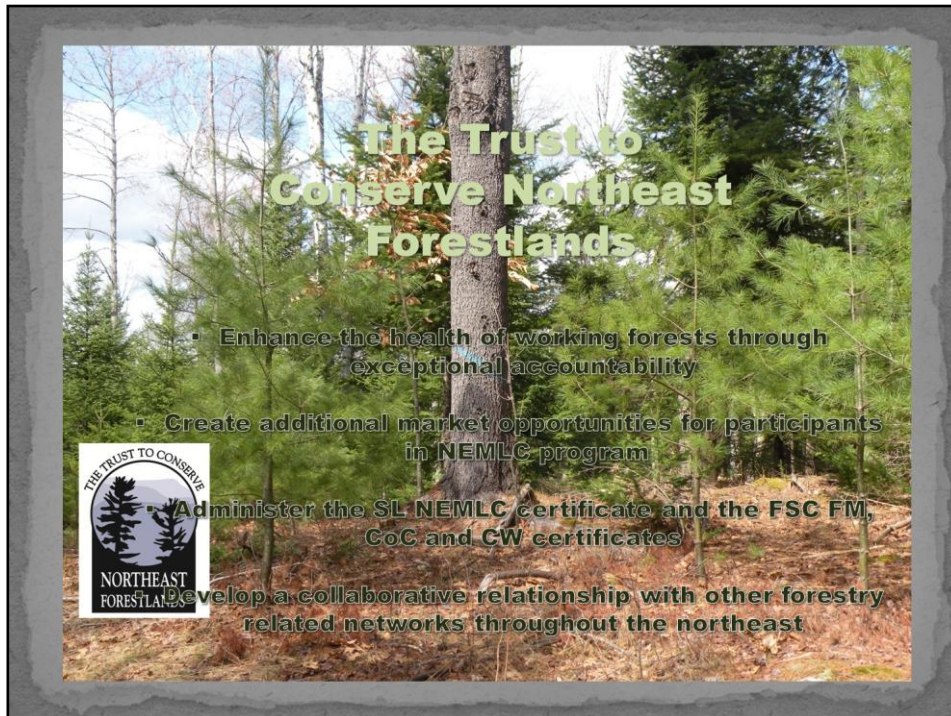


- **First in the World Master Logger Certification Program**
- **First in the World independent certification, pioneered the adoption of certified harvest practices**
- **SmartLogging**
- **FSC Forest Management Certification**
- **Chain of Custody Certification**

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Wood harvesting companies have perhaps the **greatest direct impact** on the health of the forest ecosystem. Harvesting operations **supply raw material** for the wood products industries, but they also have the **potential to conserve or compromise** water and soil quality, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and forest aesthetics. It is now **expected** that companies efficiently extract the resource while minimizing impacts to the landscape. Realizing that **harvesting is not just about “cutting trees,”** and with the world looking for new assurances of loggers’ commitment to excellence, the ML Program began in 2000 when a draft document outlining ML certification requirements was written and widely distributed to wood harvesters, forest products industry representatives, and policy makers. What resulted from this work was the first certification system built around standards that have been cross-referenced to the world's major green certification systems, and adopted by several other North American states and Canadian provinces. Our certification system has enabled the sole proprietor or contractor to be certified by a third-party system, point-of-harvest system, now recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The Trust is dedicated to **supporting exemplary forest professionals**; acknowledging those who are **highly trained and open to third party certification**; and **increasing partnerships** by acknowledging common goals among landowners, loggers, foresters, and other interested in sound logging practices.



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Since its inception, the Trust's primary goal has been to "Enhance the health of working forests through exceptional accountability." The Trust wants to see loggers successful and to do this relates to the next 4 goals. Being able to sell wood means identifying and creating possible markets. It means becoming involved in and offering certification and training, and it means opening doors, building bridges and re-establishing connections with other like-minded organizations.



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Since 2003 when TCNEF was formed to oversee the administration of the Maine MLC program and earned the first SmartLogging third-party certification it has grown. In 2007 the Maine MLC program became the Northeast Master Logger Certification Program (NEMLC) to loggers in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York. There are 115 third-party certified companies. While many of these companies are large contractors, some are small, independent sole proprietors, together they represent all areas of the northeast. In addition to NEMLC the Trust administers the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) SmartWood forest management and chain of custody group certificates. Membership in these certifications is also available to landowners, loggers, and wood processors throughout New England and New York.



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Northeast Master Logger Certification (NEMLC) is a unique program, based on broadly developed standards, that recognizes what the logging company *actually does in the forest* and how they *plan to keep improving*. This program does not represent standards developed by the wood products industry, nor does it recognize a company based on the seat-time or longevity. The NEMLC standards are widely recognized as the definitive harvest practice certification standards, and it is up to the administration, the Certification Board, the field verifiers and most of all the loggers to maintain the ongoing integrity of these standards. The NEMLC program is a certification program, not a training program, though we do and will offer workshops to our membership and others who are interested.

NEMLC Goals - Standards

- Document Harvest Planning
- Protect Water Quality
- Maintain Soil Productivity
- Sustain Forest Ecosystems
- Manage Forest Aesthetics
- Ensure Workplace Safety
- Demonstrate Continuous Improvement
- Ensure Business Viability
- Uphold Certificate Integrity

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In order to provide logging companies with a definitive, measurable means of achieving certification, with SmartWood, NEMLC developed nine goals, the end to which all efforts of harvesting are directed. The goals are further defined by harvest responsibilities, each with its' own set of performance standards. These standards, when met, enable a company to achieve the nine goals and earn NEMLC certification. These 9 standards our ML must **meet** and continue to **demonstrate** through **random audits and recertification** are detailed. Not many companies choose to apply and those that do, do not always finish or meet standards.

Goal Two: Protect Water Quality

- Harvest Responsibility #1: Organized and plan road construction and access to harvest location in a manner that prevents soil erosion and does not impede water flow.
- Performance Standards:
 - 2.1a: Field reconnaissance and planning occurs prior to commencement of road construction
 - 2.1b: Truck road construction is minimized
 - 2.1c: Roads are kept from streams and from lakes
 - 2.1d: Cut/fill banks are stabilized outside road bed near water
 - 2.1e: Drainage ditches are adequate to divert water out from road
 - 2.1f: Road grades are broken prior to stream crossings to manage water flow into filter strips
 - 2.1g: Road surfaces are out-sloped, in-sloped, or crowned as appropriate to the situation
 - 2.1h: Culverts are setback from junction and placed to sufficiently manage water flow
 - 2.1i: Culverts are installed so that subsequent road maintenance does not result in damage to culverts
 - 2.1j: Culverts are installed in a manner not to impede fish passage
 - 2.1k: Culverts are sized for periods of high volume water flow

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As mentioned, the goals are further defined by harvest responsibilities, each with its' own set of performance standards. This is an example of 1 of the 6 harvest responsibilities that is assessed under Goal Two. Notice there are 11 performance standards used as indicators of assessing professional logging capabilities.

Independent Certification = Third-Party Certification

- Northeast Master Loggers are:
 - Not determined by self to be professional **I am good**
 - Not determined to be professional by a peer group **We are good**
 - Are determined to be professional by outside assessors, whose process is also audited **They are good!**

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Our certification process is a third-party process that involves the independent evaluation of a claim by expert unbiased sources. This is unlike a *first party certification* where the individual or organization providing the good or service offers the recipient some type of assurance as to claims being made by that product or service, or *second party certification* where an association to which the individual or organization belongs provides the assurance.

Each of these certification approaches is based on the level of connectedness and degree of trust between the seller and the consumer. In general, the more direct the linkage and the higher the trust, the lower the level of certification required. Today, most environmentally related activities are turning to third party evaluation systems because activities that impact the environment are both global in nature (extremely indirect) and highly controversial (very little trust).

The Trust is annually audited by an outside auditor contracted by the Rainforest Alliance and our loggers are certified by a board, which is what I'll discuss next.



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A harvesting company decides to seek Master Logger Certification. The company contacts the Northeast Master Logger program to obtain a readiness folder that outlines the program requirements and certification process. A three- to five-hour, on-site interview is then conducted, during which the program standards and company performance are discussed, past and current harvest sites are identified, and professional references are obtained. To maintain confidentiality and impartiality, candidate companies are assigned a number code which is used as an identifier in all application materials. The interview will become Part I of the application packet that is submitted to NEMLC's independent Certifying Board.

Step 2 Field Inspection



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A NEMLC field verifier visits several of the candidate company's harvest sites to assess harvest practices and determine whether the company meets NEMLC performance standards.

Verifiers

NEMLC verifiers are professional loggers or foresters, and sometimes both. They are contracted consultants who work according to a set of standards. They are charged with observing logging practices in the woods, putting them in context, and tying them to the recognized NEMLC goals, harvest responsibilities and performance standards. The verifiers attend annual trainings to update their knowledge of the goals and review the processes of field verification. Their work is evaluated by the administration as well as the Certification Board to ensure that their representations of the logger's work is done in a consistently accurate and fair manner. A verifier will evaluate the work of an applicant, and if necessary, additional verifiers are sent out to resolve any questions that remain about an individual company's practices on the ground. The assessments become Part II of the NEMLC application packet.

Verifiers DO:

- Maintain *total confidentiality* of each company
- Excuse themselves from any situation creating a conflict of interest
- Field verifications involve approved NEMLC standards in an auditing capacity
- Make themselves available to the independent Certification Board to clarify any questions about reports
- Communicate with administrative staff for clarity, consistency, and problem-solving
- Provide logging companies with suggestions on alternatives, option, and additional useful contacts

Verifiers DO NOT:

- Act as a consultant to logging companies
- Dictate specific actions to companies
- Offer their personal opinions to the Certification Board, other than those based in factual observations of environmental conditions or the political-economic structure of the forest products industry



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The company is provided with a copy of Parts I and II of the NEMLC application packet to review for accuracy, clarification or explanation, signs code of ethics, and signs a release form indicating a desire to move the application forward and approves sending application to certification board. If the company wants to challenge any conclusion, its comments must be submitted in writing. The comments or challenges will be included in the application packet that goes to the Certifying Board.

We tell the applicants to expect:

~to receive a copy of the report before the Certification Board meets to review them, and know that your comments are important and taken into consideration.

~to receive any material that they request from the visit – contact information, harvest plan forms, safety plan templates, instructions on how to use resources like the Maine Natural Areas program, or other things that come up during the verification.

~that if, for any reason, they have an issue with the verification process, the NEMLC administration will handle it with fairness and confidentiality.

~that if they want to make suggestions about the NEMLC program, the administration will listen. Everything is taken as a positive and used to improve the program and its systems.

Step 4

Certifying Board reviews application



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The application packet is copied and sent to each member of the NEMLC Certifying Board. This Certifying Board is a multi-stakeholder board of people from the northeastern states. Each has expertise in one or more aspects of natural resource management and rural economic development and has no conflicting interests.

Step 5

Certifying Board meets and votes



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Certification Board

The NEMLC Certification Board effectively makes all certification decisions, and the company remains anonymous to the members throughout the process. The Certifying Board meets and thoroughly reviews each application and must come to a consensus on the decision to certify each candidate. During the deliberations, the NEMLC administration makes note of all the NEMLC Certification Board's comments on a company for inclusion in a letter to the company regarding reasons for the Board's decision and critical areas of continuous improvement to be addressed by the company before certification or recertification. If issues are unresolved, the board may request that additional information be obtained by another field verifier before a vote of acceptance is taken. To be certified, all applicants must receive a unanimous vote of acceptance from the Board.



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Lastly, the newly certified NEMLC companies are announced at a public reception.

Random Audits and Recertification

Trust Audits

Recertification

Random Audits

1-800 Calls

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To remain certified a new ML company will go through a recertification process at year two. If that goes well and there are no issues, then the next recertification will be in four years. During the years in between certifications, ML's may be involved in the Trusts audit process or they may be called for a random audit. On occasion, we receive calls on our 1-800 line to report a harvesting concern. This process involves a field verifier and may, or may not, involve state or local officials needed to address or remediate the concern. All of these types of harvest audits are in place to ensure continued adherence to NEMLC standards.

Costs and Return on Investment

- **Costs**
 - Application process \$3800
 - “Soft” costs –
 - Certification
 - Training
 - Harvest selection, management and planning
 - Equipment
- **Return on Investment**
 - Secure or maintain contracts with mills and landowners
 - Intrinsic value
 - A professional credential, *“I set myself apart from everyone else.”* NH, NEML
 - Some loggers report no ROI.
 - Marketing potential, *“ML is a tool like a chainsaw – if you don’t fire it up it will not work for you.”* ME, NEML
 - *“Loggers who have invested the time necessary to achieve certified status should be rewarded with the more desirable work situations.”* FM Group Member

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Costs 800 to begin interview process
 3000 to continue with the field verification

Soft Costs certification process and paperwork is timely, especially for companies who do not have a large staff to handle the tracking processes

 Selecting what harvests to contract for (do I want my company to take this job or not) and then planning and managing for these harvest, done mindfully and correctly takes time and extra steps – such as researching natural areas or protection areas, planning logging trails to not cross streams (meaning longer haul distances) add costs to time and fuel

 NEMLC companies also make contentious equipment purchases, such as excavators to close-out trails, create water bars and log yards, or that has less psi on the soil. I have heard upwards of 100K to “do it right” equipment and staff wise to adhere to NEMLC standards!

ROI – As you can see a company’s ROI varies across the spectrum. I mentioned earlier that we do some training. Our training is limited, but we are planning for workshops on small business management. To us, if we don’t seek people to invest with us in this training then we may not have a professional logging community available to assist the landowner in meeting their forest management objectives.



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Regardless of our relationship in the forest management and wood utilization continuum, we know there is an increasing demand for certified processes and products. Two links in this process that I see need strengthening and support are the certified wood supply, standing timber, and the harvesting process. There is a need for certified forestlands and a need for well-trained loggers to harvest to internationally recognized standards, thus meeting the certification needs of landowners and wood processors.

Thank you.



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