

7 groups vying to manage old Bowater forest land

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The Nova Scotia NDP government is lining up a short list of groups who will get a chance to manage some of the old Bowater forest land in a community forest agreement pilot project.

In December the Nova Scotia government bought a large tract of private forest land that belonged to Resolute Forest Products Ltd. Now the province controls 220,000 hectares of woodlands in Nova Scotia's southwestern region, along with a power generation plant, a factory site and the wood fibre inventory of a defunct paper mill.

The St Margarets Bay Stewardship Association is one of seven groups bidding for a piece of the land.

“We have an opportunity, an opportunity of a lifetime to actually take control of it and manage it,” said spokesman Geoff Le Boutillier.

His group wants to buy the St. Margarets Bay District, 45,000 hectares of wildness outside Halifax.

In addition to harvesting, community forests can be used for tourism, habitat protection and recreation

Still, the province has made it clear the land must be profitable.

Le Boutillier’s business plan includes creating a co-op to manage timber sales.

“The mills want good wood that they can use for lumber. We have three mills surrounding this area who are backing us and they are hungry for the product we can deliver,” he said.

Not all mills are on side with his group. A consortium of saw mills led by Freemans Lumber in Queens County has submitted its own bid.

The province said it will ask one or more proponent to submit a detailed plan at the end of the month.

Resolute Forest Products Ltd. closed the former Bowater-Mersey paper mill near Liverpool in June, throwing about 320 people out of work